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## Letters

### Michigan confusion

In reference to "Altruism Absent in Mom Bats," (SN: 3/10/84, p. 148): As a graduate of both the University of Michigan and Michigan State University, I can state unequivocally that David S. Wilson is an evolutionary biologist at Michigan State University in East Lansing. The University of Michigan is located in Ann Arbor. I can understand the error, however, since the faculties at both universities feature outstanding evolutionary biologists.

Perry D. Clark  
Okemos, Mich.

### Crucifixion question

"The Passover Computation" (SN: 1/21/84, p. 40), assumed that the crucifixion was on a Friday in calculating its date. But this is not necessarily a true assumption, even though it has been traditionally believed by many. It would also conflict with the statement by Jesus that he would be in the earth three days and three nights, since by Sunday the body was gone. Though the crucifixion day was before the

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Cover: "Playing God" has been a prominent accusation in discussions of genetic engineering. Theologians and clergy continue to take stands on the ethics and morality, as well as the practical aspects, of the techniques. (Illustration from *Splicing Life*, the report of the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research.)



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"sabbath," this was not necessarily the Saturday sabbath. "Sabbath" can also refer to the Passover holiday, since the annual holy days were also called sabbaths by the Israelites. See, for example, Leviticus 16:31. Thus, the day Jesus was crucified could well have been on a Wednesday, which would allow for three days in the earth until Saturday afternoon. On Sunday morning the body was discovered missing. The day of the week needs to be established and not just presumed before astronomical calculations become meaningful in establishing the date of the crucifixion.

Fred E. Foldvary, Pastor  
Universal Ethic Fellowship  
Berkeley, Calif.

*What the texts say is that Jesus rose on the third day after his crucifixion. Everybody but Americans would count the day of the crucifixion (say Friday) as the first day, Saturday as the second, Sunday as the third. All four gospels date the resurrection explicitly on Sunday, remarking also that the Sabbath was past and so the women (Mary Magdalene and others) could go to the tomb to resume the embalming procedure that they had interrupted for the Sabbath. That*

*Sabbath had to be the ordinary Saturday even if it was also the first day of Passover.*

—D.E. Thomsen

### Solar system passage

Our essential point in C. Simon's report of our galactic theory of mass extinctions ("Mass Extinctions and Sister Stars," SN: 2/25/84, p. 116) is that the solar system passes vertically through the plane of the Milky Way Galaxy in a well-established cycle every  $33 \pm 3$  million years. This period is unrelated to the solar system's passage through spiral arms. Encounters with some of the larger interstellar clouds of gas and dust, which are concentrated toward the galactic plane in both arm and interarm regions, will periodically disturb the solar system's vast family of comets. Many of the comets in Hills's "inner reservoir," which lies outside the orbit of Pluto but inside the surrounding Oort comet cloud, are then focused into the inner regions of the solar system, leading to violent cometary impacts on the earth.

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MARCH 24, 1984

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