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Letters

Naming volts

Hey! Is anybody using the term proton-volts ("800-GeV protons," SN: 3/3/84, p. 135)? After all, this is a study of protonics, er, nucleonics. Not electronics.

Also—have any studies been made of colliding proton-electron beams? At high energies, the two may interact differently, instead of forming hydrogen.

C.A.
No address given

Proton-volt or electron-volt is exactly the same amount. A single name avoids confusion. An apparatus to collide protons and electrons is about to be constructed at Hamburg. — D.E. Thomsen

Money, money

As a reader of your magazine who lives outside the scientific community, I find some distress in the inordinate amount of space given to the subject of funding, or even more simply—money.

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Cover: A portrait of a dog tick is one example of the power and appeal of scanning electron microscopy. The bloodsucking arachnid, magnified here 120-fold, is part of a new traveling exhibit on microscopes and the images they produce. (Micrograph from Smithsonian Institution National Museum of Natural History)



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It may be of vital interest to the success-minded technician, but is it science "news"?

Robert B. Conrad
Anaheim, Calif.

Perturbing Neptune

Your article "Mass Extinctions and Sister Stars" (SN: 2/25/84, p. 116) postulating that Sol has a dim sister star that periodically sends comets showering toward earth was very interesting. It made me think of another astronomical search in our solar neighborhood. We've long sought the cause of Neptune's orbital irregularities in the form of a tenth planet. Perhaps we should look for an object that would fit both criteria—to be able to nudge the comets as well as to perturb Neptune's orbit.

James Ricklef
Los Angeles, Calif.

Quasar qualifier

In the article "Gravitational Refractions" (SN: 3/10/84, p. 154) the quasar designation "1175+088" should read "1115+088."

Alan Hirshfeld
Cambridge, Mass.

Drug usage

In reading your article "Teen drug use drops, but problem remains" (SN: 2/18/84, p. 103), I have noticed the researchers' failure to address the possibility that students have become reluctant to admit drug abuse, even anonymously. The recent seizure of confidential school records by drug enforcement officials in New York shows their fears may be well founded. An increase in drug enforcement should produce a decrease in the number of people willing to admit drug abuse.

Johnston says the responses to the latest survey reveal "a greater caution about the regular use of marijuana." I suggest the survey may actually reveal a greater caution about admitting drug abuse.

Name withheld
New York, N.Y.

Correction: The photo of the praying mantis and milkweed bug (SN: 3/17/84, p. 167) was taken by James Sternburg, an entomologist at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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