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Letters

Migraines and Marriage

The medical researchers may be correct in their surmise that some unhappy marriages cause migraine attacks ("Marital woes: Migraine or yours?" SN:3/3/84, p. 138), but a more plausible connection has been suggested by psychiatrist William J. Lederer (author of *The Ugly American* and other books). In his book *Marital Choices* (Norton, 1981) Lederer reports findings by himself and other researchers showing that some 50 to 90 percent of marital difficulties are caused or greatly exacerbated by the faulty nutritional practices of one or both partners. Lederer includes migraines in a cluster of marriage-destructive symptoms he refers to as the "fatigue-irritability-irrational behavior syndrome." ...

Bernard Rimland, Ph.D.
Director, Institute for Child Behavior Research
San Diego, Calif.

Humanizing elephant seals

An otherwise informative article on the northern elephant seal ("Sex, Violence and

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Cover: Graphics based on a supercomputer calculation make a false color image of how infalling matter distributes itself in a fat accretion disk around a black hole. The black hole would be in the center where the two broad angles point. (Graphics courtesy John F. Hawley and Larry L. Smarr)



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Plenty of Rest," SN:2/25/84, p. 120) was marred by numerous anthropomorphic descriptions of seal behavior. Equating animal behavior with that of humans can only perpetuate the misconceptions commonly found in Disney caricatures and in well-meaning, but inaccurate nature movies and books. It is especially disturbing to read that even the researchers studying the elephant seal indulge in anthropomorphism. There is no purpose served in comparing the rate of "rape" between seals and humans, or in the use of terms such as "the Okie Bar Effect."

Our appreciation and understanding of ... animals is enhanced by objective scientific reporting, not anthropomorphism.

David L. Peterson
Riverside, Calif.

... and killing harp seals

The opponents of the baby harp seal hunt get my goat ("Harp seal pups are hunted again," SN:3/17/84, p. 164). These bleeding heart liberals also buy calves' liver, spring lamb, tender young ducklings and tender young chickens in their supermarkets as well as adorning themselves in calfskin belts and shoes. What rot. If the killing is done humanely there is no differ-

ence between harvesting baby harp seals and baby anything else. Lambs are cute too, you know. The real concerns are to enforce humane killing techniques and proper quotas, no more and no less.

John P. Wren
Shippensburg, Pa.

Dating eruptions

Using the bristlecone pine's annual rings to date "climatically affective eruptions" is not as reliable as LaMarche and Hirschboeck would have us believe ("Frost rings used to date eruptions," SN: 1/28/84, p. 54). This follows from the fact that frost rings do not attest the exceptionally large, disruptive eruption in A.D. 536 (see NATURE, 1/26/84, p. 344) and, conversely, frost rings occur which are not related to volcanism.

Since acid from the A.D. 536 eruption is evident in the Greenland ice cores, perhaps it is too soon to discount the ice core-derived date of circa 1390 B.C. for the eruption of Santorini in favor of circa 1626 B.C. inferred from the frost ring record.

C. Leory Ellenberger
St. Louis, MO

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