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Letters

Return of the giant bee

Thanks for your interest in *Chalicodoma pluto* (SN: 5/12/84, p. 293). It is nice to know that one's favorite animals hold some general interest. I thought your readers might appreciate a close-up of the face of the female giant bee.

Adam Messer
University of Georgia
Athens, Ga.



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Cover: The legal fallout from Agent Orange spraying during the Vietnam War cleared up somewhat last week when a tentative settlement was reached in a five-year-old suit by a group of veterans against the chemical's manufacturers. Nevertheless, many of the issues concerning health effects remain clouded. (Photo: Wide World)



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Oil breathing

Regarding the article entitled "Fight ozone with a breath of Vitamin E?" (SN: 3/31/84, p. 197) — I'm confused. It mentions that the vitamin was administered by means of a mineral oil aerosol base. I had thought that it was dangerous for humans to aspirate mineral oil—that it could damage the lungs.

Lois Ann Horowitz, M.A.
Fair Lawn, N.J.

Mineral oil was used for the animal studies; the researchers say a different aerosol would have to be developed for use in administering the vitamin E to humans. —J. Raloff

Power lines

I read the article "DNA helix found to oscillate in resonance with microwaves" (SN: 4/21/84, p. 248) with interest because for the past two years I have been a private duty nurse for cancer patients in San Gabriel Valley and have been fascinated that so many of these patients' homes are very close to high voltage power lines.

It might be very revealing (oncogenes aside) to conduct a survey comparing the incidence of cancer in areas adjacent to power lines versus those that are not.

Mary Heussenstamm
La Crescenta, Calif.

Just to set the record straight, most power lines operate at 60 hertz, well below the billion-hertz range of microwaves. Since the biological effects of exposure to electromagnetic radiation depend strongly on frequency, one cannot draw a conclusion from one based on the other.

However, you are not alone in your concern about possible health effects of high voltage transmission lines. There have been a number of studies (see for example SN: 4/21/79, p. 263) suggesting possible links between leukemia and proximity to power lines over the past few years. A recent report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS report #84-579 STR; request through your congressional representative), summarizes the relevant studies. Like most epidemiological studies, it has been hard to draw definitive conclusions, and so the area is embroiled in controversy. —S. Weisburd