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Letters

Clarifying ambiguity

Regarding the article "Sexual ambiguity: Getting down to the gene" (SN: 4/14/84, p. 230):

What I said as conjecture — that if we had a human probe we could use it to make early prenatal diagnosis using chorionic villus biopsy — was reported as if it were accomplished. The paper describing the gene for bovine adrenal steroid 21-hydroxylase has been published by P. White, M. New and B. Dupont in the PROCEEDINGS OF THE NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES (April, 1984).

Studies are underway to use this probe to identify the human gene for steroid 21-hydroxylase. If the human probe is identified, it could be used to make early prenatal diagnosis of 21-hydroxylase deficiency using cells from chorionic villus biopsy.

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JUNE 16, 1984

This Week

- 372 Polio: Scars from an Old Foe
- 372 Sea urchins: Death in the Caribbean
- 373 Trace metals leave more than trace effects
- 373 Sakharov fate delays visit
- 374 The space shuttle's oft-changing future
- 374 Ancient Crete: Double dose destruction
- 375 Plant extract fights fungus
- 375 Rhesus pieces of the behavior puzzle
- 375 Insulin independence for some diabetics?

Research Notes

- 376 AAAS
- 377 Biomedicine

Articles

378 In Search of Gigalips Architectures

Cover: To reach the processing speeds expected to be necessary for "fifth-generation" systems, computer architects are dreaming up radical new designs for configuring system hardware. The concept depicted here illustrates an approach where a large number of processors (the outer layer), each with its own communications interface (second layer), share equal access to a common global memory, portrayed here as the inner sphere. (Art by Univ. of Calif./Lawrence Livermore Natl. Lab./DOE)



Departments

- 371 Letters
- 382 Books

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Star credit

Regarding "Recovered comet on track for rendezvous with ICE probe" (SN: 5/12/84, p. 293):

The credit goes to Stanislaus Djorgovski, Hyron Spinrad of the University of California, Berkeley, and George Will and Michael Belton at Kitt Peak National Observatory. Djorgovski and Spinrad made the observations, Will assisted at the telescope, and Djorgovski and Belton handled the data reduction and analysis.

The telescope time was not, as reported, "borrowed" — but Djorgovski and Spinrad, responding to their own and considerable community interest in the whereabouts and brightness of comet P/Giacobini-Zinner, following verbal reports of a negative result at the European Southern Observatory in January, managed to find time for four 150 sec exposures on the comet field in the course of a much larger and busy project in which they were engaged.

Michael J. S. Belton
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Death star credit

Some footnotes to Cheryl Simon's "Death Star" (SN: 4/21/84, p. 250) are in order. Anyone reading the references to our Solar Companion paper in NATURE (v. 308, 713, April 19, 1984) will notice that we reference Cheryl's first article (SN: 10/1/83, p. 212) and Roger Lewin's article in SCIENCE (9/2/83). These articles and a phone call to Cheryl were the only reference material we had on Raup and Sepkoski's fossil record paper. Unlike [the authors of] the four other papers in NATURE on the 19th of April we had not seen preprints of the fossil paper or the cratering record papers. A case of science reporters serving as a research source!

For the record let it be noted that besides Jack Hill's comet paper in the ASTRONOMICAL JOURNAL in 1981 J. Mottmann had proposed a comet-scattering stellar encounter in Icarus (v. 31, p. 412) in 1977 to explain early cratering in the solar system.

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371