

# SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication  
Volume 127, No. 7, February 16, 1985

E. G. Sherburne Jr. Publisher  
Joel Greenberg Editor  
Dietrick E. Thomsen Senior Editor/  
Physical Sciences  
Laurie Jackson Phillips Managing Editor  
Wendy McCarren Production/Design  
Director  
Bruce Bower Behavioral Sciences  
Joanne Silberner Biomedicine  
Stefi Weisburd Earth Sciences  
Julie Ann Miller Life Sciences  
Janet Faloff, Policy/Technology  
Ivars Peterson  
Jonathan Eberhart Space Sciences  
Susan Welch Assistant to  
the Editor  
Dawn D. Bennett Science Writer Intern  
Jane M. Livermore Books  
Donald R. Harless Business Manager

Scherago Associates Advertising  
Fred Dieffenbach, Sales Director  
1515 Broadway, New York, N.Y. 10036

Copyright © 1985 by Science Service, Inc.,  
Editorial and Business Offices,  
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036.  
Republication of any portion of SCIENCE NEWS  
without written permission of the publisher is  
prohibited.

Subscription Department  
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43305

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$27.50; 2 yrs., \$47.50;  
3 yrs., \$67.00. (Foreign postage \$5.00 additional per  
year.) Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice  
is required. Please state exactly how magazine  
is to be addressed. Include zip code. For new  
subscriptions only call (1) 800-247-2160. Printed in  
U.S.A. Second class postage paid at Washington,  
D.C. Title registered as trademark U.S. and  
Canadian Patent Offices. Published every Saturday  
by SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc. 1719 N St., N.W.,  
Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255)  
ISSN 0036-8423

## Letters

### Early forecast of nuclear winter

Re "More support for nuclear winter theory"  
(SN: 12/22 & 29/84, p. 397), a quote from another  
of my favorite magazines:

*No, Senator, we don't know when these fine  
particles will settle. The heavier particles of rela-  
tively large diameter settle out unless the air  
currents sweep them back up again, and then we  
have these "soot showers." But the smaller parti-  
cles remain aloft and screen out part of the sun's  
radiation. Presumably they'll settle eventually;  
but in the meantime it's a good deal as if we'd  
moved the Arctic Circle down to about the fifty-  
fifth degree of latitude.*

The cause: a nuclear warhead which ignited  
an oil deposit.

The source: a short story ("Torch" by Chris-  
topher Anvil) in the April 1957 issue of AS-  
TOUNDING SCIENCE FICTION (NOW ANALOG).

Thomas G. Parsons  
Vancouver, Wash.

## This Week

- 100 Severe Depression Depresses Immunity
- 100 On the AIDS trail: Work continues on test, cure, vaccine
- 101 Columbia Glacier: The retreat is real
- 101 Three meteorites from the moon: How many launchings to earth?
- 102 More active engineering role for NSF
- 102 *Cereus* bacteria go for the gold
- 103 New lead guidelines
- 103 Vaccine for cats' number one killer
- 103 Toxic pollutants in 'Chemical Valley'

## Research Notes

- 104 Biomedicine
- 104 Computers
- 105 Earth Sciences
- 105 Physical Sciences

## Articles

- 106 Large Telescopes, Low Prices
- 108 Sulfide Searchers

## Departments

- 98 Books
- 99 Letters
- 109 Off the Beat—Run, Robot, Run

Cover: Some makers of personal robots would like you to think of their products as potential household pets—cute, friendly, eager to please. Actually, most of these cleverly packaged bits of industrial-robot technology are still expensive and primitive. More useful as teaching aids, they fall short of acting as capable household servants. (Illustration: Courtesy United Technologies Corp.)



Science Service Institution for the public understanding of science founded 1921; a nonprofit corporation.

Board of Trustees—President, Glenn T. Seaborg; Vice President, Gerald F. Tape; Treasurer, Willis Harlow Shapley; Secretary, Julius Duscha; Joseph W. Berg Jr.; Edward Bliss Jr.; Bowen C. Dees; David A. Goslin; Milton Harris; Hilleary F. Hoskinson; O. W. Riegel; H. Guyford Stever; John Troan; Deborah P. Wolfe.

Director: E. G. Sherburne Jr.; Assistant Director: Dorothy Schriver; Business Manager: Donald R. Harless.

## Down on the dumps

The current plans for radioactive waste disposal ("Finding a resting place for radwaste," SN: 1/5/85, p. 6) frighten me. Our immense problems with chemical waste dumps are indicative of our society's real ability to safely bury something hazardous: We can't do it. Deep-underground dumping is as crazy as deep-ocean dumping. How do we retrieve the mess when (and I do mean when) something goes wrong?

No spot on the earth is truly geologically stable. We should put all the nuclear garbage someplace like the middle of Nevada. It should stay on the surface so that we can fix anything that goes wrong. For security, we can surround this dump with military bases. This storage method would be almost free and would entail minimal future risk.

Siegfried N. Lodwig  
Chemistry Department  
Centralia College  
Centralia, Wash.

## Upside down reading

Re the article on macular scotomas ("Eyeing a Solution," SN: 12/15/84, p. 378), do you know if the bilingual man who could read Hebrew but not English tried reading English with the text upside down? It might help.

Anand Paul Patel  
Mt. Vernon, N.Y.

George Timberlake, who is working on macular scotomas, replies: *To the best of my knowledge, the gentleman in question didn't try it. It's not hard to learn to read upside down. We've tried it ourselves in the laboratory, and with a little practice you can get good at it. We haven't tried it yet with patients but may do so eventually.*

Address communications to  
Editor, Science News,  
1719 N Street, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20036  
Please limit letters to 250 words.

FEBRUARY 16, 1985

99