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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

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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.)



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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.*

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