

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 130, No. 17, October 25, 1986

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Subscription Department
231 West Center Street, Marion, Ohio 43305

Subscription rate: 1 yr., \$29.50; 2 yrs., \$50.00.
(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., and additional
mailing offices. Title registered as trademark U.S. and
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SCIENCE SERVICE, Inc., 1719 N St., N.W.,
Washington, D.C. 20036. (202-785-2255)
ISSN 0036-8423

Letters

Nothing but the truth

You say researcher Eric Eich has come up with a system of "asymmetric amnesia" to use as an indicator of feigned multiple personality, and psychologist Michael McCloskey still finds no handy guide to distinguish real from simulated amnesiacs ("Limited amnesia: Fair or foul?" SN: 9/6/86, p. 152).

There is a simple test that is quite useful for both feigned amnesia and multiple personality, and which is commonly used by psychologists who have a working friendship with a psychiatrist: Inject sodium amytol and then do questioning to ascertain previous veracity.

Ken Naysmith
Highland, Calif.

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Cover: "Growing Corn," a wood engraving by Paul Hambleton Landacre (1893-1963), is part of an exhibit of drawings, watercolors and prints of grasses that accompanied a recent scientific symposium on grasses at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The exhibit will travel to Pittsburgh, Hays, Kan., Pacific Grove, Calif., and other cities. (Engraving on loan from the Hunt Institute for Botanical Documentation, in Pittsburgh. Photo by Chip Clark, Smithsonian Institution.)



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Extinction: The next wave

The upcoming biological extinction wave that is going to hit this planet in the next 20 to 40 years ("Biological diversity: Going . . . going . . .?" SN: 9/27/86, p. 202) is much more important to the human race than about 97 percent of the past 20 issues of SCIENCE NEWS. I do not mean to be snippy. It's just that an awful lot of research and policymaking can be done just as well one, three, five and 10 years from now as now, but if the academic and research community lets the tropics slide under, that is irreversible and cannot be picked up later when we start to regret it. To be quite crass about it, you can grow new humans anytime, but once biological diversity has been snuffed out, you can't get it back.

And in that very important way, the upcoming extinction crisis is not like the previous ones, even the one that knocked out 97 per-

cent of the animal world (according to S.J. Gould). Humanity is not going to turn around and give the planet back to the other species so that they can get busy reinventing all the extinguished species.

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Please limit letters to 250 words.

OCTOBER 25, 1986

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