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Letters

Fluffy explosion

Oregon's Dr. Leach has discussed the electrostatic charge that helps fungal spores disperse ("The electric life of plants gives fungal spores a charge," SN: 7/25/87, p.53). In a similar manner, the same-charged fluffy fibers of milkweed (and presumably other fuzzy seeds) spring apart from electrostatic repulsion when the fibers have dried out. This explosive fiber spreading at the right moment is beautiful and fascinating to watch, and is certainly effective in getting them airborne!

Ann F. Kah
Macedonia, Ohio

Invitations for verification

In reference to "Soviets to allow monitoring in USSR" (SN: 7/4/87, p.6), your readers should be aware that as far back as July 1985 President Reagan invited General Secretary

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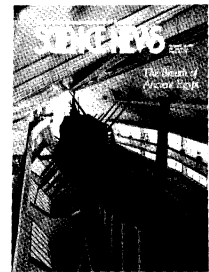
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Cover: In 1954, archaeologists opened a 4,600-year-old chamber near the Great Pyramid of Egypt and found the pieces of this wooden boat, but they left an identical neighboring chamber unopened. Now, a team of scientists is attempting to probe the inside of the second chamber to determine what the ancient atmosphere was like and to learn how to protect artifacts from the kind of decay that is now claiming the boat. (Photo: John Ross)



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Gorbachev to send technical experts to the U.S. nuclear test site to measure the yield of a U.S. test, bringing with them whatever equipment they deemed necessary. In December 1985, he proposed a meeting of official U.S. government and Soviet technical experts to discuss verification. In March 1986, the President invited Soviet experts to come to Nevada to examine the CORRTEX (Continuous Reflectometry for Radius versus Time Experiment) method for yield measurement, to receive a demonstration of the CORRTEX system and to measure a U.S. test. The Soviets never responded to any of the President's invitations to measure nuclear tests. They did, however, in the name of the Soviet Academy of Science, conclude an agreement to measure seismic occurrences with the Natural Resources Defense Council, a private organization. We believe that issues like nuclear testing have clear national-security implications and can only be settled in a

government-to-government context.

The United States is fully committed to seeking effective and verifiable agreements with the Soviet Union on nuclear testing limitations, and the President has proposed that the United States and USSR begin negotiations toward this end. The agenda for these negotiations would first be to improve verification provisions of the existing Threshold Test Ban Treaty and Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty. Once these verification concerns had been satisfied and the treaties ratified, the United States and USSR would engage in negotiations on ways to implement a step-by-step parallel program — in association with a program to reduce and ultimately eliminate all nuclear weapons — of limiting and ultimately ending nuclear testing.

Sig Cohen
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SEPTEMBER 12, 1987

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