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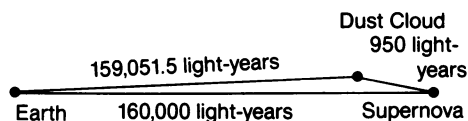
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Letters

If at first you don't succeed . . .

I hope by now SCIENCE NEWS has realized that the diagram illustrating Ivars Peterson's answer to Barrett Hurwitz's question (Letters, SN: 8/13/88, p.99) about supernova 1987A is incorrect. The written explanation is correct, but the diagram should look like this:



It might have helped Mr. Hurwitz if you had pointed out that the dust cloud is nearly in line with the direct course between Earth and supernova 1987A. Light going the 950 light-

This Week

- 180 New Research Clouds Pollution Picture
- 180 EPA study elevates concern over radon
- 181 Starlings star in X-ray movies
- 181 Mausoleum brings Moche culture to life
- 182 Bulimia's binges linked to hormone
- 182 Plant calorimeter may pick top crops
- 182 A swirl on the sun's blotchy face
- 183 Solid-ice volcanism on Uranian moons
- 183 Phobos 1: Trouble on the way to Mars

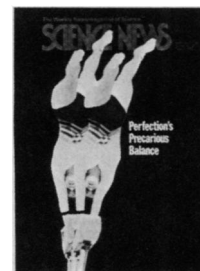
Research Notes

- 187 Behavior
- 187 Biomedicine
- 188 Biomedicine
- 188 Physical Sciences

Articles

- 184 Ice Age Insights
- 190 Of Joints and Juveniles

Cover: The Olympics inspire youngsters around the world to stretch their athletic abilities to new heights. But for every Nadia Comaneci and Mary Lou Retton, a thousand dreams die with painful injuries. Many adolescents remain unaware of the borderline between healthful exercise and harmful, until they have crossed it. (Illustration adapted from photo by John Kelly III)



Departments

- 179 Letters
- 191 Books

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years to the dust cloud was also going *almost* straight for us at the same time it was headed for the reflecting dust cloud.

Ron Mazurkiewicz
Milwaukee, Wis.

Our thanks go to the many alert readers who wrote in to clarify the confusion caused by an editing error in the diagram. — the Editors

AIDS before the '80s

Although Pasteur disproved spontaneous generation, the theory seems to be enjoying a revival. How else can scientists use a baseline of zero to project their alarming curve of AIDS contagion? If they accept Pasteur's proof, they have to admit the existence of a pre-1980 AIDS population. Hence the chart must include at least some of those millions who died in 1980 of wasting disease.

Such a slope would be flat. So what is to be made of that exponential curve that starts at zero and soars off the chart in five years? Could it not describe the spread of the *testing* rather than of the disease?

Two SCIENCE NEWS articles—one describing HIV strains that trace back several decades (SN: 6/11/88, p.373), another reporting that HIV frequently mutates (SN: 7/16/88, p.38) — raise the intriguing thought that AIDS has been around a long time, maybe centuries.

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Please limit letters to 250 words.
All letters subject to editing.

SEPTEMBER 17, 1988

179