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200 Wrestling With Wrinkles

Cover: Who is older? Believe it or not, this 91-year-old Zen monk is nearly 30 years older than the woman pictured in the inset. But while the 62-year-old Native American woman spent most of her life outdoors, exposed to huge doses of skin-damaging sunlight, the Japanese monk's face and pate have rarely seen the light of day. New research is helping scientists understand the molecular biology of skin aging and the possibilities for slowing or reversing the wrinkling process. (Photos: courtesy Kligman)



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Letters

Companionable planets

"Hints of planets circling nearby stars" (SN: 8/13/88, p. 103) seems to suggest that nine of 18 monitored stars do not have planets since they don't "wobble."

I wonder if anyone has considered doing a computer simulation of how our sun would look to an observer 100 light-years away. Would we appear to "wobble," or would the solar system's planets be too small to affect the sun's motion enough to be measured? Or perhaps the complex motion of the nine companions for the sun would cancel out any detectable "wobble."

If this is the case, it may suggest that the nine stars without observable "wobbles" are really candidates for a complex system of planetary companions. The evidence from

our solar system shows that stars, planets and moons seem to like lots of companions.

Jay H. Boylan
Orange, Calif.

incorrect as the first, but is at best misleading.
Harry H. Sisler
Distinguished Service Professor of Chemistry
University of Florida
Gainesville, Fla.

Conversion confusion

On reading "Plentiful Plankton Noticed At Last" (SN: 7/30/88, p.68), I find the startling sentence, "Almost all plants contain pigment molecules that capture sunlight, which is then converted into organic matter in a process called photosynthesis." Almost any college freshman knows that photosynthesis involves the conversion of carbon dioxide, water and other substances into organic matter, the sunlight serving as the source of energy for this endothermic process. Later in the same article we find the words, "an arrangement that allowed the host to live on sunlight." This phrase is not so blatantly

Art and anesthesia

In "Awakenings in Anesthesia" (SN: 8/13/88, p.110) the legend to the reproduced Hinckley painting of the famous ether dome scene erroneously states that William Morton performed the "first public operation using a general anesthetic." The surgeon was John Collins Warren.

F.A. Simeone
Professor of Medical Science
Brown University
Providence, R.I.

You're right. William Morton administered the anesthesia but did not perform the surgery itself, and is depicted in the foreground holding an ether flask.
— L. Beil

SEPTEMBER 24, 1988

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