

mph, one might bear in mind that more fatalities occur in urban driving at speeds below 40 mph and that drunk driving is the leading cause of accidents. It might also be noted that fatality rates have been going down since about 1923. That trend is probably due to safer roads and automobiles. Thus, if we are really concerned about the automobile fatality rates, then I think the greater payoff continues to be in the area of further improvements in highway and automobile safety, rather than in clucking our tongues over the "nut behind the wheel" who embraces 55 mph about as enthusiastically as he did Prohibition.

John J. Brooks
Santa Ynez, Calif.

I am surprised to see a study by the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety (IIHS) described in your magazine. I expect SCIENCE NEWS either to avoid reporting on studies by organizations known to be biased or to identify that bias. I have read the article carefully and fail to find the phrase "funded entirely by insurance companies who stand to profit from lower speed limits."

Bob Koure
Walpole, Mass.

The IIHS does serve as the research arm of the insurance industry. However, the New Mexico study described in the article was funded entirely by state and federal agencies, to determine whether highway travelers themselves stand to profit — in terms of survival — from lower speed limits in that state. — J. Raloff

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Countdown to Glory: NASA's Trials and Triumphs in Space—Kent Alexander. A beautifully illustrated history of space exploration and aeronautics, covering such topics as ancient Chinese rockets, the monkeynauts and the proposed space station. Price Stern, 1989, 192 p., color/b&w illus., hardcover, \$29.95.

The Essential Guide to Prescription Drugs, 1990 Edition—James W. Long. The major part of the book includes 10 new drug profiles and more than 200 commonly prescribed drugs, addressing benefits and risks, available dosage forms and strengths, how the drugs work alone or in combination with others, their use during pregnancy, their side and adverse effects (including effects on sexual function) and more. Other sections include treatments for chronic disorders such as high cholesterol and psoriasis, a glossary of drug-related terms, a listing of drugs by class, tables of drug information, and brand and generic names. Har-Row, 1989, 1,094 p., hardcover, \$27.50, paperback, \$14.95.

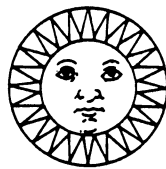
The Greenpeace Book of Antarctica: A New View of the Seventh Continent—John May. Describes Antarctica's physical features, wildlife, exploration and exploitation, and investigates the scientific research in progress on this icy continent. Readable text is complemented by gorgeous color photographs and satellite- and computer-generated images. Doubleday, 1989, 192 p., hardcover, \$24.95.

The North American Porcupine—Uldis Roze. The natural history of this most unusual herbivore, which defends itself with quills and stark black-and-white coloring that warns nocturnal predators of its presence. Roze notes that porcupine quills have antibiotic properties and come equipped with special barbs that pull them through flesh. The animal has been known to lick salted highways to sate its salt cravings, to eat sugar-maple buds for their high nitrogen content and to survive numerous falls from trees. Smithsonian Inst Pr, 1989, 261 p., illus., hardcover, \$29.95, paperback, \$19.95.

Poisons of the Past: Molds, Epidemics and History—Mary Kilbourne Matossian. Presents statistics and epidemiologic data pointing to microfungi in rye bread as the cause of outbreaks of infertility, bizarre behavior and sudden death in Europe from the 14th to 18th century. The author's research on colonial America links mold poisonings to a throat distemper epidemic, the Salem witchcraft persecution and the religious "Great Awakening" of 1741. Yale U Pr, 1989, 190 p., hardcover, \$22.50.

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