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Letters

Next best thing to being there?

One project not covered in your update on NASA's plans for 1991 ("Space Sciences '91," SN: 1/12/91, p.28) is an ambitious experiment scheduled for early April, to be conducted onboard the shuttle Atlantis. The Shuttle Amateur Radio Experiment includes plans to bring space science into the classroom.

All five astronauts on the Atlantis crew are licensed amateur radio operators. The experiment will include contacts by radio with a number of schools, live television and digital communications with ham radio operators around the world.

More than 500,000 ham radio operators in the United States and more than 2 million worldwide will have the opportunity to talk to the shuttle directly. A recent change to the FCC rules (effective Feb. 14) created a new entry-level license for ham radio, dropping the traditional requirement to learn Morse code first.

Interested readers should write to the Amer-

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Cover: This 1827 lithograph shows a physician placing leeches on a patient's neck in an age-old "treatment" that typically extracted about a liter of blood. Though the practice fell from favor around the turn of the century, the primitive bloodsuckers may yet make their mark in modern pharmacology. Researchers have genetically engineered a compound nearly identical to an ingredient in leech saliva, and preliminary experiments suggest it holds promise as a potent blood-thinning drug. (Lithograph by Louis Bolilly/Yale Medical Historical Library)



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Advice to university scientists

Physicist Leon Lederman has discovered that 250 university science researchers want more federal money for university science research ("Double science funds, Nobel laureate urges," SN: 1/12/91, p.22).

For this he went to college?

I'll save someone the cost of three more mail surveys with the prediction that 250 military officers will want an increase in the defense budget, 250 social workers will want more money for social work, and 250 artists with National Endowment for the Arts grants will want an increase in NEA grant money.

I would suggest to the university science community, or at least that portion dependent on federal funding, that a diverse and vigorous scientific research program will result not from new taxes and funding (it won't happen)

but from a shift of emphasis away from gargantuan projects such as the Superconducting Super Collider and Space Station, and toward a broader array of endeavors that do not come with mind-numbing price tags.

Frederick Sands
Woodinville, Wash.

'Desecration of art'

The use of the Venus de Milo to represent heart disease on your Jan. 19 cover shows extreme insensitivity. It's hard to understand how any prestigious magazine could publish such a desecration of art.

Carl A. Benz
Silver Spring, Md.

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

MARCH 16, 1991

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