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Cover: The universe abounds with explosions. Stars collapse violently and eject envelopes of glowing gas, as shown in this illustration of a nova. Neutron stars fire off bursts of X-rays. The centers of galaxies spawn enormous gaseous jets. But did the universe itself begin with a Big Bang? Proponents of this idea contend that the evidence favoring the Big Bang is stronger than ever. A few dissidents offer alternative cosmological models. (Illustrations: D. Berry/Space Telescope Science Institute)



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Capturing two Harveys on science's frontier

We like exploring the cutting edges of research here at SCIENCE NEWS. You see the results of these excursions, and — we hope — you sense our enthusiasm each week in our "Science News of the Week" stories, "Research Notes" and longer feature articles. In all three, we strive to cover key findings within the biological, physical, behavioral and space sciences — findings not just new or interesting, but findings that move the science of a particular discipline forward. When pressed to sum up SCIENCE NEWS' mission, I turn to the definition given me by Ted Sherburne, our publisher: We report on significant additions to the body of scientific knowledge.

Frankly, it's fun along the forefronts of science, intellectually and journalistically. Reporting a new discovery, theory

or synthesis in advance of your competitors excites science journalists as much as it does scientists. And sometimes the rewards extend beyond the satisfaction of a story well done.

This week, SCIENCE NEWS writers Kathy A. Fackelmann and Janet Raloff received William Harvey awards. Kathy won a first-place award in the high blood pressure category for her article "High-Pressure Hormone" (SN: 12/1/90, p.345). This piece detailed the surprising finding that the human body apparently makes ouabain — a hormone first found in plants — and that the compound may cause some cases of hypertension and perhaps play a role in heart disease as well.

Janet won a second-place award in the cholesterol category for her article, "Do You Know Your HDL?" (SN: 9/9/89, p.171),

in which she reported growing evidence that the ratio between a person's total serum cholesterol level and the amount of HDL cholesterol provides a far better indicator of heart attack risk than does total cholesterol alone.

Where, I am frequently asked, do our writers get their stories?

Answer: Mostly from scientific meetings and journals; less often from congressional and governmental hearings, tips from scientists themselves and press conferences. We receive more than 300 publications at SCIENCE NEWS, many of them peer-reviewed journals. Ordinarily, at least two writers scrutinize each of these publications, searching for significant new findings and emerging trends. Following science where the scientists themselves get information keeps us at the forefront. — Patrick Young

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