

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 142, No. 24, December 12, 1992

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SCIENCE NEWS (ISSN 0036-8423) is published weekly on Saturday, except the last week in December, for \$39.50 for 1 year or \$68.00 for 2 years (foreign postage \$6.00 additional per year) by Science Service, Inc., 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036. Second-class postage paid at Washington, DC, and additional mailing office. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to SCIENCE NEWS, P.O. Box 1925, Marion, OH 43305. Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required — old and new addresses, including zip codes, must be provided.

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Editorial and Business Offices:
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036
(202-785-2255)
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Subscription Department:
P.O. Box 1925, Marion, OH 43305
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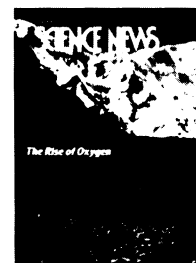
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Cover: The Himalayas stand as evidence of a collision between two continents that continues today. According to a new theory, collisions even more massive in scale earlier in Earth's history may have triggered the accumulation of oxygen in the atmosphere. (Photo: Peter Zeitler/Lehigh University)



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Science Service, a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921, gratefully accepts tax-deductible contributions and bequests to assist its efforts to increase the public understanding of science, with special emphasis on young people. More recently, it has included in its mission increasing scientific literacy among members of underrepresented groups. Through its Youth Program it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair, the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships, and publishes and distributes the *Directory of Student Science Training Programs for Precollege Students*.

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Letters

Implants and self-esteem

Concerning the article "Implants block X-ray view of the breast" (SN: 10/17/92, p.262), Dr. Handel "maintains that the benefits of implant surgery can still outweigh the risks, especially for young women who have self-esteem problems caused by a flat chest."

Since when has major surgery been a viable prescription for low self-esteem? Self-esteem problems in young women are rooted in causes much deeper than the size of their breasts. Breast implant surgery has proven to be a risky practice, shown to cause long-range health hazards and complications in otherwise healthy people. This cosmetic surgery is simply treating a symptom of the problem — and in a very troubling way. It is not a cure.

What if young men turn out to be the next target of plastic surgeons? Let us hope penile implants, with the same cosmetic "benefits" and health hazards as breast implants, will not

become the cure for low self-esteem in our young men.

D. Elliott Smith
Spencer, Iowa

Fast track to Nobels?

It's significant that this year's Nobel Prize in Physics ("Electron chemistry, detector physics," SN: 10/24/92, p.279) was once again awarded not for basic research, but rather for sensor technology. This is most appropriate. None can deny that Charpak's multiwire particle detector has facilitated significant basic research.

I'm reminded of the advice of a favorite professor in graduate school: "You want to win a Nobel Prize? Invent a better way to measure something." He neglected to add, "Then be prepared to wait 25 years."

H. Paul Shuch
Professor of Electronics
Pennsylvania College of Technology
Williamsport, Pa.



The case of the missing arrows

In "Gravity's lens: Hubble gets sharpest image" (SN: 10/17/92, p.260), the caption for the highest resolution picture says: "Arrows show mirror images of a background galaxy. . . ." Try as I did, I could not find those arrows.

A. J. da Silva
Clear Lake City, Texas

You don't need to see your eye doctor. The arrows were inadvertently omitted. Here's the photo, this time with the arrows in place. — R. Cowen

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