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Editorial and Business Offices:
1719 N St. N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
(202-785-2255)

Advertising Representative:
Lewis Edge & Associates, Inc.
366 Wall St., Princeton, N.J. 08540
(609-683-7900)

Subscription Department:
P.O. Box 1925, Marion, Ohio 43305
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Cover: A new mathematical model suggests that large-amplitude, long-wavelength ocean waves may be responsible for the formation of orderly fields of sand ridges on seabeds near coasts throughout the world. Here, waves and sand interact along Australia's Gold Coast to create a complex pattern of offshore sandbars. (Photo: Barbara Boczar-Karakiewicz)
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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921. It 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 Programs 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

From strange dwarf to gamma rays

Reading "Quark matters: Birth of a strange dwarf" (SN: 5/13/95, p.295) caused me to think of the following scenario: Suppose a quark nugget falls on a neutron star. It will quickly fall to the center and cause the star to become a strange dwarf. This will cause an explosive expansion to a size several hundred times larger. We may be able to detect the gamma rays emitted.

Could such an effect help clarify the mysterious gamma-ray bursters?

Sanford Aranoff
Hoover, Ala.

EMF reassurances premature

The American Physical Society's statement that "the public has overreacted to reports linking electromagnetic fields to cancer" flies in the face of epidemiology and good public health practice ("Physicists offer reassur-

ances on EMF," SN: 5/20/95, p.308). While the data are far from conclusive, the strength and consistency of study results from both home and workplace exposures warrant concern and further investigation.

Epidemiologists are trying to understand and explain the patterns of cancer incidence, particularly the incidence of leukemia and brain cancer. In 9 of 11 epidemiological studies of children, those with leukemia lived closer to "high-exposure" power lines more often than those without leukemia. In three of the four most recent and sophisticated occupational epidemiology studies, workers showed elevated leukemia and brain cancer rates. While these studies are not definitive, none of the alternative explanations that have been investigated have been as consistent.

Historically, scientists have failed to identify many serious hazards until the death toll was distressingly high (smoking, asbestos). Rather than wait for enough human deaths

to warrant action, good public health practice dictates prevention of exposure until the potential hazard is understood.

Whether exposure to magnetic fields is ultimately confirmed as a cause of cancer is beside the point.

Daniel Wartenberg
Associate Professor
Environmental and Occupational
Health Sciences Institute
Piscataway, N.J.

CORRECTIONS

Regarding "Bisexual Bugs" (SN: 9/1/95, p.13), the male fruit flies with a mutated fruitless gene actually directed traditional courtship rituals toward both male and female flies. Their sterile behavior stems from the fact that they try to mate only with other male flies.

The credit for the graph in "What Risk Hormones?" (SN: 8/5/95, p.94) should read Graham A. Colditz et al./NEJM.