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Cover: Twisting a crumpled sheet of mylar or paper generates clicking and popping sounds, as seen in a recording of the intensity of sound pulses emitted by the sheet. These experiments, together with computer simulations, provide new insights into crumpling phenomena, whether in paper sheets, car wrecks, or biological membranes. (Graph: Kramer *et al.*/University of Chicago)
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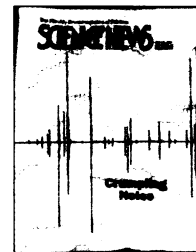
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Letters

More factors affecting empathy?

I believe that William Ickes is on the right track in his empathy studies, but why aren't environment and age of subject covered ("Catching Mind Readers in the Act," SN: 3/23/96, p. 190)?

The eldest child of each sex is taught more by the parents and generally has more exposure to opportunity and responsibility—a basic difference from younger siblings.

At differing ages, each individual has differing sets of primary interests, which may compete with efforts toward empathic understanding.

Richard Carlson
Seattle, Wash.

Folate follies

I find "Folate supplements needed but allergenic" (SN: 3/30/96, p. 198) deeply disturbing.

First of all, injection is an inappropriate route for the administration of vitamins: Properly, they should be ingested. This allows concentrations to build to a peak and slowly subside, whereas injection amounts to a sudden insult and could conceivably result in death.

Second, why administer folate to the entire population merely because some women have been so brainwashed by the Food and Drug Administration that they do not routinely take multiple vitamins?

Third, the minuscule recommended daily allowance of folate is so wrongheaded as to be ridiculous.

Finally, one allergic reaction to a wrongly

administered vitamin does not make it allergenic; it merely makes the victim's physician an inadvertent poisoner.

Edward G. Robles Jr.
Franklin, N.C.

Breast surgery: Not a last resort

Virginia Ernster's comment that "We only care about cancer if it invades and becomes clinically significant or life-threatening" ("One diagnosis, too many mastectomies," SN: 3/30/96, p. 196) is an insult to women who have detected ductal carcinoma in situ at a very early stage and have taken appropriate steps to remove the cancer from their bodies. The diagnosis of any cancer, even very early stage cancer, is devastating, but not to treat it aggressively is unthinkable.

I do not agree that a mastectomy should be a last resort; it should be offered as an equal option for treatment.

Marcia R. Oder
Export, Pa.

CORRECTION

The surface area of the leaf portions pictured in "Mapping out a leaf's mountains and valleys" (SN: 5/25/96, p. 325) is 1 centimeter square.