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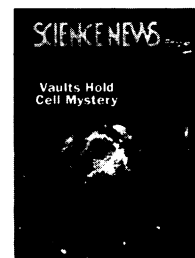
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Science Service, which publishes SCIENCE NEWS, is a nonprofit corporation founded in 1921 to increase the public understanding of science. Through its youth programs, it administers the International Science and Engineering Fair and the Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse science scholarships.

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Letters

Auctioning marital assets

Regarding "Formulas for Fairness" (SN: 5/4/96, p. 284), I discovered a workable way to divide assets fairly in a divorce, regardless of the uniqueness of each asset or its emotional or "true" market value.

The marital estate is an entity jointly owned by both spouses. It must transfer all its assets to the spouses as individuals. Any item the spouses cannot agree to split through an unvalued fair trade must be sold by private auction. The higher-bidding spouse becomes sole owner of the item and is charged for the winning bid.

After the auction, the spouse with the higher total bids owes the other spouse half of the difference—payable in real dollars. Details of fund-raising and payment are negotiable, but the amount is not.

This works for any item valued by both parties, from emotional keepsakes to gold bul-

lion. Anything that can't be divided peacefully must be auctioned off.

Alan Silverstein
Fort Collins, Colo.

Roving blobs: How hot? How cold?

Monastersky's informative article ("Oceanography's New Catch: Roving Blobs," SN: 5/4/96, p. 276) would have been even better if the specific temperatures had been identified—how warm or cold in degrees. Also, it seems that correlations with named hurricanes would be useful.

Richard A. Strong
Huber Heights, Ohio

In certain parts of the ocean, the patches are only 0.4°C warmer or cooler than the surrounding water, whereas in other regions, the anomalies reach 4.0°C. East of Puerto Rico, the temperature differences tend to be smaller. Off Newfoundland and Africa, they are typically larger, according to Hugo Bezdek of the Nation-

al Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration in Miami.

— R. Monastersky

New dimensions for home shopping

As one of the numerous ill-clad, I have a request to make of the designers at the Textile Clothing Technology Corp. ("Fit for a King," SN: 5/18/96, p. 316). Design the system so that once our bodies have been scanned into the computer, we are given the opportunity to view our garment selections on our bodies.

Garments that hang beautifully on models' figures do not necessarily translate to figures of the real world. Even when the garment is properly fitted, it will not look the same on me as in an advertisement.

Also, once our measurements have been put into the retailer's database, we should be given the opportunity to shop at home using our computers.

Wendy Sheridan
Rahway, N.J.