

# Books

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**Ancient Peoples of the American Southwest**—Stephen Plog. The dry regions of the U.S. Southwest contain signs of some of the largest known prehistoric settlements. The most abundant evidence suggests that people arrived roughly 10,000 years ago, as the Ice Age subsided and the climate became more temperate. Plog provides a graphic, lucid account of the Anasazi, Hohokam, and Mogollon to highlight how these ancient cultures evolved so successfully in response to their changing habitat. Thames Hudson, 1997, 224 p., color/b&w photos/illus., hardcover, \$27.50.

**Blind Watchers of the Sky: The People and Ideas That Shaped Our View of the Universe**—Rocky Kolb. Kolb provides an engrossing account of the rise of cosmology by exploring the lives of such noteworthy astronomers and astrophysicists as Tycho Brahe, Johannes Kepler, Albert Einstein, and Edwin Hubble. He enthusiastically tells the story of each of the individuals most influential in forming our current view of the universe and captures the progression of ideas neatly by intertwining each theory and philosophy with what came before it. Originally published in hardcover in 1996. Addison-Wesley, 1997, 338 p., paperback, \$14.00.

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**Making the Alphabet Dance: Recreational Wordplay**—Ross Eckler. A mathematician explains the concepts underlying virtually every common puzzle in wordplay, including acrostics, palindromes, anagrams, lipograms, word squares, and isograms. Eckler examines the impact of computers on the study of complex word problems and presents uncharted, alphabet-oriented conundrums. Originally published in hardcover in 1996. St Martin Griffin, 1997, 277 p., b&w illus., paperback, \$14.95.

**Planting Noah's Garden: Further Adventures in Backyard Ecology**—Sara Stein. Summers are always filled with movie sequels—usually of the action genre. This follow-up to *Noah's Garden* fits the bill as Stein provides a step-by-step course on how to return ecological equilibrium to any yard. Stein explains the detrimental effects of traditional gardening and lawn care techniques on indispensable bugs and animals. She then shares stories of how other people have put her ideas to use. HM, 1997, 448 p., color photo/b&w illus., hardcover, \$35.00.

**Probable Tomorrows: How Science and Technology Will Transform Our Lives in the Next Twenty Years**—Marvin Cetron and Owen Davies. Scientists will devise a way to close the ozone hole over Antarctica. Heavy industry will be flung into space. The United States will see a boom in railroad technology. A professional prognosticator and a former senior editor of *OMNI* magazine report on advances presaging these and being made in laboratories around the world. The appendix reprints the results of the most recent Adelphi study on technology, in which experts were asked their thoughts on timetables for future developments. St Martin, 1997, 298 p., hardcover, \$24.95.

**Spoiled: The Dangerous Truth About a Food Chain Gone Haywire**—Nicols Fox. Tainted hamburgers at a Jack-in-the-Box restaurant and salmonella-infested ice cream are just a sampling of the products that cause 81 million people to become ill from foodborne disease each year. In her investigation, Fox uncovers a wealth of startling information about our food supply and the pathogens harbored there. The idea of seasonal food has become passé, this journalist asserts, as she illustrates the hazards of food travel, especially from overseas. Fox is skeptical of the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a reliable gatekeeper and litters the text with its questionable policies. She also isolates the risks and causes of mad cow disease, the prevalence of *E. coli* O157:H7, and the threat of other contaminants lurking in food while offering ideas for change within the agricultural industry and precautions one should take in the home. Basic, 1997, 434 p., hardcover, \$25.00.

**The Strange Case of Mrs. Hudson's Cat: And Other Science Mysteries Solved by Sherlock Holmes**—Colin Bruce. Rarely was the great Sherlock Holmes stumped in his quest to solve a mystery, so why should puzzles of the physical world be any different? In an unorthodox, insightful, and lighthearted manner, Bruce constructs crime mysteries that can be solved only if Holmes, Dr. Watson, and Arthur Conan Doyle's other familiar characters can explain the paradoxes and principles of modern and classical physics. For instance, they must demonstrate how a harmless lottery may have catastrophic quantum effects on their landlady's poor tabby. In the Case of the Pre-Atomic Doctor, the detectives can only save a lonely widow from the chicanery of a charlatan by anticipating Einstein's discovery of the random molecular jumps of Brownian motion. Addison-Wesley, 1997, 254 p., b&w illus., hardcover, \$23.00.

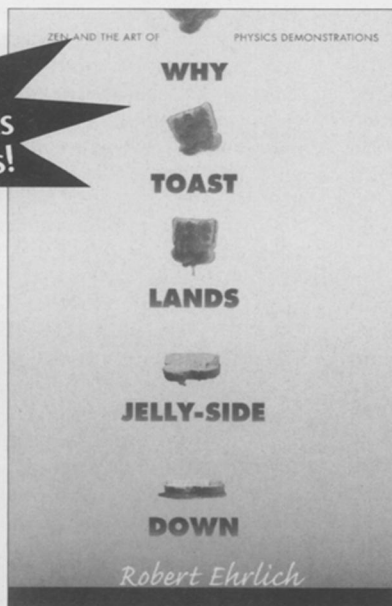
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Princeton  
University Press  
1997  
196 pages  
6" x 9 1/4"  
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Robert Ehrlich recognizes that physics is often perceived as being highly abstract, user-unfriendly, and remote from everyday life. However, he has spent much of his career disproving these stereotypes. In the latest of his provocatively titled books, he provides a collection of simple physics demonstrations and experiments. Intentionally using "low-tech" and inexpensive materials from everyday life, *Why Toast Lands Jelly-Side Down* humanizes key principles of physics.

The book begins with a practical introduction on how to design physics demonstrations. Ehrlich describes with characteristic candor: "You can fit many of them in your pocket, bring them to class without any set-up required, and best of all, you need not fear that your demo will more likely illustrate Murphy's laws rather than Newton's."

After laying out the basic principles of designing successful demonstrations, Ehrlich provides more than 100 examples. Some of the more intriguing include: Estimating the Net Force on a Moving Book; Recoil Force on a Bent Straw; and Terminal Velocity of Falling Coffee Filter.

—from Princeton University Press

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