

# SCIENCE NEWS®

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## Letters

### No blanket answer on EMFs

The biological effects of electric and magnetic fields remain questionable ("EMFs—doubts linger over possible links," SN: 7/31/99, p. 12). Has anyone specifically checked the electric bed-blanket?

*A.C. English  
Delray Beach, Fla.*

Several research teams have investigated risks that might stem from spending long periods under electric blankets. We covered some of this research back in the late 1980s (SN: 2/14/87, p. 108) and reported that manufacturers were reengineering blanket wiring to reduce a sleeper's exposures to electric and magnetic fields (SN: 8/21/93, p. 126). To date, however, data appear equivocal on whether any health risks exist.

—J. Raloff

### Grant some glory

I'm troubled by an omission in the otherwise excellent article "Old glory, new glory" (SN: 6/26/99, p. 408). It is my understanding that significant initial funding for the proj-

ect was provided by Ralph Lauren. Many scholarly or scientific endeavors require outside support. There are all manner of motives for providing such support, but recognition is a powerful one. Where credit is due, as it certainly is to Ralph Lauren here, it should be given.

*Tom Fenton  
New York, N.Y.*

Polo Ralph Lauren Corp. contributed \$10 million to the project through the Save America's Treasures program, a partnership between the White House Millennium Council and the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The Pew Charitable Trusts pledged \$5 million, and Congress appropriated \$3 million. Additional funds came from the John S. and James L. Knight foundation.

—C. Wu

### Artificial explanation

"Nocturnal spider favors artificial lights" (SN: 6/26/99, p. 407) is extremely interesting, and Astrid Heiling is to be congratulated on her imaginative work. However, artificial electrical lighting is over a century old. Adding on the gaslight era pushes the era of

artificial lighting to perhaps 2 centuries. That would represent at least 150 generations of spiders. Is it any wonder that natural selection has caused an adaption orienting spiders to build their orbs in artificial light? The hypothesis of the adaption being based on moonlight reflected on water seems quite weak relative to an adaptive response to human presence.

*John H. Brown  
Georgia Southern University  
Statesboro, Ga.*

### "Don't you dare"

Regarding the Neandertal spear point found in the neck of a wild ass ("Neandertal hunters get to the point," SN: 7/3/99, p. 4), it cannot be known that this was from an attack on the animal. It could have been an already dead animal into which a Neandertal might have jabbed his spear to proclaim ownership. Or, he might have been trying to remove the head. Nonetheless, an interesting find.

*Dennis D. Gaunt  
University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa*

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**Cover:** How would the United States fare if the Dust Bowl conditions of the 1930s returned? Scientists are now exploring how society can adapt to both natural climate shifts and changes associated with global warming. **Page 136** (Archive/America)

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