

Even without going into the question of whether the Schlumberger Corporation's fears are indeed justified, it is unthinkable that a scientist's basic rights should be so easily surrendered to the whims of blackmailers. I am afraid this incident may set a dangerous precedent in undermining the integrity of the research as well as the publication process, and therefore I urge scientists everywhere to take note and let the Schlumberger Corporation know that they disapprove of its behavior in this matter.

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3/81

More on lifetime

To provide a finite lifetime to the correspondence (R. B. Firestone, December, page 72; F. B. Boynton, September, page 98) sparked by my note (June, page 78) on the W/H^2 parameter, and to reply to the phone calls and letters I've received:

► The range of ratios of human mass (W) to height (H) for maximum longevity is

$19 < W/H^2 < 24$ (women) and
 $20 < W/H^2 < 25$ (men) in kg/m^2
—note misprint in PHYSICS TODAY which alarmed some people.

► Note that a plot of longevity versus W/H^2 is fairly flat—the curve is not critical.

► To change W/H^2 rapidly was early remarked upon by 50% of our children, who grew about 6" (0.15 m) in a year. Familiarly, we refer to this as the Procrustean solution, in honor of a gentleman who recognized its efficacy in changing W/H^2 on travelers, some 3000 years ago.

► Since I've been asked many times: My opinion about effort of exercise, low fat intake and so forth on health is that they are quite unproven either way by any rigorous (that is, controlled or matched) experimental criterion, and promise to stay unproven for a while, but it is prudent to consider them. Hence the British statement of "sweating and getting out of breath a little every day" is to be recommended (I personally find both all too easy to do). To support R. B. Firestone's comment, the longest-living cells in culture have indeed frequently been derived from embryonic tissue. Against his comment that "unborn children have longer life expectancies than most physicists" is the statistic that 70% of us die (probably less for women) *in utero* between conception and birth, possibly as a result of an error-correcting process. Finally, do physicists really want to maximize longevity? Consider the fol-

lowing quotation:
*It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make man better be;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere:
A lily of a day
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night;
It was the plant and flower of light.
In small proportions we just beauties see;
And in short measures life may perfect be.*
—Ben Jonson: To the Immortal Memory of Sir H. Morison

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Students from abroad

The Guest Comment in August (page 9) made interesting reading, bringing to sharp focus the handicaps experienced by young scientists returning home (if they do). I am happy to know of the efforts of the Committee on International Scientific Affairs set up by POPA and the AAAS to remedy the situation. William McGowan's suggestion to establish meaningful courses at the American universities, which will benefit not only those students coming from the developing countries but also from the different parts of the US, richly deserves immediate action.

Speaking from a personal angle, nearly 25 years ago when my Professor at the Sorbonne (Paris) asked me whether I would move on to the then rapidly developing field of ion emission microscopy or I would stick with the more prosaic area of x-ray diffraction, I did not hesitate to opt for the latter. I have had no regrets since then, for I could easily adapt myself to local conditions regarding availability of equipment, funds and needs. Such a choice as I had is often lacking in the highly sophisticated laboratories of the Western world. McGowan's proposal is bound to benefit the scientific community at large in the long run and also possibly once again establish that "small is beautiful."

At this point, please permit me also to emphasize that science policy of many a developing nation needs reorientation to enable a harmonious synthesis of what is best in the two seemingly different cultures of the East and the West as well as between the cultures of the educated and the rural folk who may be illiterate, but who have rich traditions.

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THE AUTHOR COMMENTS: As reported in the January issue (page 82), the APS-sponsored workshop "The Focus of Physics on Science and Technology for

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