

‡7 Unpublished Letters

A A Mostly-Unpublished Warning

A1 The subject of *Time*'s 1991/9/16 cover story was Lamar Alexander, the US Cabinet's Education Sec'y, who was going on about how he hopes-to-reverse-the-degeneration of US education. The response leading off those printed in the 1991/10/7 *Time* "Letters" was the bold-face-printed letter: " 'America is still looking for a gimmick to pull it out of an educational downturn.' Marion Gadberry, Oroville, WA."

A2 A glance at the letter suggested that Gadberry had written more of value than what was published. So, I instantly reached him by phone and learned that the published statement was indeed just a snippet and that its writer understandably felt his message had been virtually eviscerated. So *DIO* presents here the original letter, in full, with thanks to the writer for his trust in transmitting it to us:

To: Letters to the Editor, *Time*, Rockefeller Ctr, NYC 10017
 From: Mr. Marion Gadberry, a teacher, P.O.B. 1429, Oroville, WA 98844;
 phone: 509-476-2306

A3 The politicians and the American people are still looking for the gimmick which will pull us out of our educational downturn. They are blind to the sociological facts that no gimmick can ever overcome, namely — a 50% divorce rate that traumatizes students, 40% Latch Key children that come home to unsupervised homes, 40% of American students being raised by single-parent families that have neither enough money nor enough energy to properly supervise their children, children participating in a plethora of extra curricular activities that are "more important" than coming after school for extra academic help, taking days out of school for family reunions, hunting trips, vacations to Hawaii, orthodontist appointments, etc., 5% to 10% of the students involved in drug usage, an educational system that pushes every student through the same educational curriculum regardless of their intellectual and emotional characteristics, and all the above compounded by the insidious [side] of America's affluence.

A4 A computer in every student's lap and every educational reform will never erase the negative effects of the above-mentioned sociological facts. Let's face it, Americans are getting back exactly what they put into their families and schools — very little.

A5 I would be more blasé about *Time*'s removal of the guts of Gadberry's letter if it weren't so de-rigorously typical. US media will not discuss "radical" (literally go-to-the-root) solutions to social decay: only band-aid "progressive" solutions are ever permitted in leading mags or TV 'snews. Thus, the only thing that progresses is the decay itself. (See *DIO 1.1 ‡2 §D*.)

A6 There is a creepy resemblance between the search after cures for cancer and for the US' educational collapse: both searches are expensive, lobby-ridden, seemingly endless & fruitless. Perhaps we can learn something about the latter morass (see & *DIO 1.1 ‡1 §D4*) from a DRism on the former: the best cure for cancer is not getting it in the first place.

B Prediscovery Observations of Neptune

To: Letters, *Scientific American*, 415 Mad Ave, NYC 10017 1981/1/13
 From: DR

B1 The December *Scientific American* states (p.74) that, after Galileo's 1613 observation of Neptune (Kowal & Drake's recent astonishing find), and before Galle's 1846/9/23 Berlin Obs. optical discovery (directed by the mathematicians of Leverrier), only "One observation of Neptune . . . was already known [1795, by] Joseph Lalande, a French astronomer who catalogued some 50,000 stars. . . ." As author of the article [*AJ* 75:856 (1970)] cited in support of this, may I mention two items? [a] The 1795 observer was actually Joseph Jerome Lalande's nephew, Michel Lalande. Of the 50,000 stars in J.J.Lalande's 1801 *Histoire Celeste*, not one was observed by the titular author.¹ [b] There are in fact 7 known observations of Neptune between Galileo & Galle. A complete table of these has, I believe, never been published. Augmenting with the Galileo position:

#	Observer	Date	Place	Recoverer(s)	(Date)
1	Galileo	1613/01/28	Florence	Kowal & Drake	(1980)
2	M.Lalande	1795/05/08	Paris	Mauvais	(1847)
3	M.Lalande	1795/05/10	Paris	Walker	(1847)
4	J.Lamont	1845/10/25	Munich	Hind	(1850)
5	J.Challis	1846/08/04	Cambridge	Challis	(1846)
6	J.Challis	1846/08/12	Cambridge	Challis	(1846)
7	J.Lamont	1846/09/07	Munich	Hind	(1850)
8	J.Lamont	1846/09/11	Munich	Hind	(1850)

B2 The Challis 1846 observations were part of his famous failed secret Cambridge U. sweep, aimed by J.Adams' math,² [the sky search having been] done at the request of Astronomer Royal G.Airy. The Lalande 1795 and Lamont 1845-6 data were chance byproducts of regular star catalog work; the 50 year gap separating them corresponds to Neptune's period of most southerly declination (making it less likely to be recorded in N.Europe sweeps — there is a gap of about 3 decades in the series of 23 Uranus prediscovery³ observations, also [due to] the planet's southerly position).

B3 Given Neptune's rapid northward motion in the 1840s, it was sure soon to be captured by accident (as so many fainter asteroids were: not a single year⁴ since 1847 without a discovery). Had this happened, we might have lost one of the great tales of scientific prediction, Leverrier's discovery of the 8th planet "with the point of his pen" (in the grand [contemporary] phrase of F.Arago).⁵

¹ This amusing item was revealed by J.Delambre.

² But see ‡9 fn 19.

³ Curiously, though we have 23 prediscovery observations of Uranus and 8 of Neptune, astronomers have so far recovered zero prediscovery observations of Ceres, Pallas, Juno, & Vesta. (Possibly, an enterprising researcher can alter that situation.) Since Vesta is sometimes a barely-naked-eye object (& I've seen it so) — far brighter than Neptune ever gets — this is an extremely odd footnote to astronomical history.

⁴ My 1973 *Astronomy & Space* paper was perhaps the first to accent the 38^y drought of major solar system discoveries (planets, satellites, asteroids) from 1807 (Vesta) to 1845 (Ariel & Astraea), followed by the deluge: EVERY calendar year after 1844 has seen at least one such discovery. Equally odd: the similar Cassini-Herschel gap 1684-1781.

⁵ See ‡9 §14.