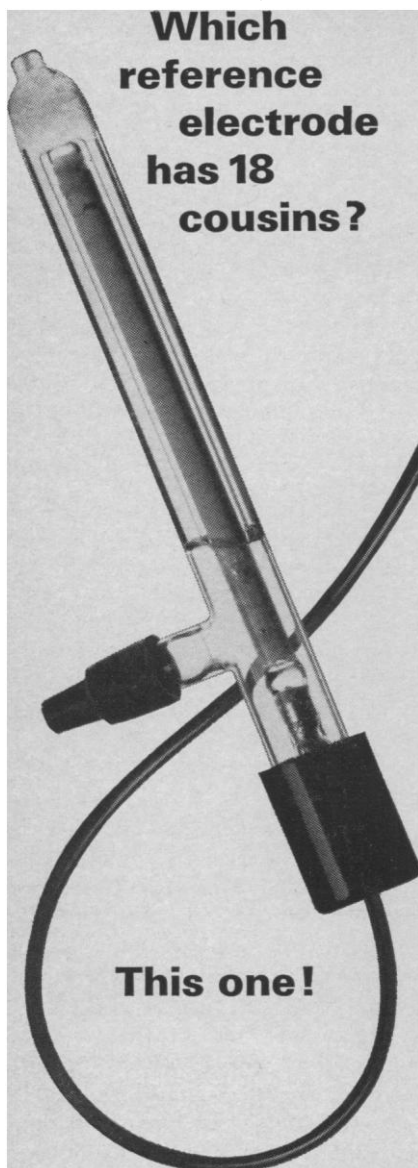




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nigh prohibitive. Moreover, deciphering illegible signatures adds to the agony. In order to alleviate some of the inconvenience and to add a touch of courtesy, I propose the following format:

Dear _____

I would very much appreciate a
copy of your article entitled _____

_____ which appeared in _____

Thank you for this courtesy.

Yours sincerely,

Cut and use stub for address

Department of Biochemistry
University of Atlantis
Shangrila, Alaska, USA

The requester is expected to print his name legibly on the return address stub in addition to signing his name above the stub. The stub can be cut off and pasted on an envelope containing a reprint. The stub should be kept small for ease in cutting and pasting; the postal card is therefore printed vertically. For the sake of stamp collectors, the stub should be at the opposite end from the stamp.

This idea is not new. D. Hammer of the Max-Planck-Institut für Immunbiologie (and probably others also) has been using a similar but more elaborate card, from which the stub can be readily detached along perforations. I advocate a wider use of his thoughtful format.

ARTHUR A. HIRATA
*Biochemical Research Department,
Abbott Laboratories,
North Chicago, Illinois*

Windshield-Washing Hazard?

I have recently returned from a vacation in western United States during which I traveled several thousand miles by car. Two or three times each day, depending upon how frequently I stopped at gas stations, my windshield was carefully washed of the hundreds or thousands of splattered remains of the-Lord-knows-how-many

different insect species. In most cases the attendant had some sort of container of water into which he plunged a cloth or one of those rough-surfaced bug-removal sponges, sometimes immersing his arm to the elbow in the dirty, debris-laden water. . . . Having viewed this procedure for the past several summers, I have begun to wonder whether some of those splattered winged creatures have carried viruses, bacteria, or other microorganisms which are, or could be, pathogenic to man. One might argue that the high speeds of the car, and sunlight beating on the windshield, would inactivate any virus, etc., that happened to arrive there via its unfortunate vector. But a pathogen might well be resistant to such desiccation and heat, and moreover one might drive into a station immediately after obliterating its vector so that these physical effects would not have had time to come into play. Moreover, continual use of the same water, car after car, could easily lead to some sort of concentration of agents.

I submit that if any such danger does exist, it exists on a very large scale. How many millions of bug-encrusted windshields are washed daily, especially in the summer vacation months? Think of what must be scores of thousands of people washing windshields, hundreds (thousands?) of times daily—people who, I suggest, have many lesions on their hands and arms as a result of their activities around machinery. Are these people exposing themselves to infectious diseases through their occupation? . . . Do we know enough to dismiss this concern out of hand?

JOHN I. PAYNE
*Department of Bacteriology,
University of Alberta, Edmonton*

Narrow Escape

Having almost succumbed to the siren song of mathematics, I appreciate Donald R. Weidman's letter, "Emotional perils of mathematics" (3 Sept., p. 1048). I wonder how many of the people who now proselytize for mathematics in search of the next Gauss give thought to those they catch but do not need?

E. R. RANG
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Honeywell, Inc., St. Paul, Minnesota*