cover) for at least 2 to 5 years. Support equipment is based on shore, eliminating the need for a surface vessel. Spartan facilities include a shore shack, electricity, hot water heating for divers and habitat, and low and high pressure compressors on the site. An umbilicus leads underwater to *Sublimnos* to supply air, communications, and heat for support of four men in the habitat. A portable substation is placed near the experiments for diver-to-diver communications.

Scientists are invited to submit to me outlines of projects (including a summary of methods, equipment, personnel, and proposed timing).

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Serratia marcescens: A Pathogen

Laboratory manuals are still being published with directions for rubbing suspensions of *Serratia marcescens* directly on the hands of students in experiments which demonstrate, with handshaking, the dispersal of a microorganism. *Serratia marcescens* has been indicted as the infectious agent in urinary tract infections, pneumonia, empyema, lung abscess, meningitis, wound infection, sinusitis, endocarditis, and a frightening variety of other diseases.

Any instructor who plans to use this organism in his laboratory should read the papers by Gaughran (*1*) and Dodson (*2*).

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References

1. E. R. L. Gaughran, *Trans. N.Y. Acad. Sci.* **31**, 3 (1969).
2. W. H. Dodson, *Arch. Intern. Med.* **121**, 145, (1968).

Alaska: Ground-Level View

The purpose of my letter is not to contest the privilege of a marine geolologist to express his opinions on the recovery of terrestrial ecosystems ("Rape of Alaska can be rational," Wright, Letters, 5 Dec.). However, such opinions must be based upon a more ground-level view of the ecosystem rather than a view from a slow flying airplane.

A more thorough examination must be made of Wright's examples of how the land has been "raped in a rational manner." He maintains that areas dredged 50 years ago are now completely recovered, but it was not until 1928 that gold dredging commenced in the Fairbanks area (*1*). Even if the "raped" areas are 41 years old, it is hard to imagine that a spruce forest that takes 100 to 150 years to mature after a burn (*2*) could possibly achieve a stage of "complete recovery" or successful healing in that period of time. I have personally walked over the barren expanses of coarse gravel of many of the dredged areas of the interior. With the exception of a few willows and an occasional spruce, I would describe the tailings as barren piles of rock. It is not true that these rocks have even begun to recapture the completeness of the food web that was once represented before the dredging. Wright's statement that gold mining is an example of "how an area can be exploited without permanent damage" is unfactual and at least 100 years premature. In short, gold dredging is one of the most blatant examples of irresponsible exploitation in Alaska.

Wright's description of the widespread burning of interior Alaskan forests by the early miners and the assumed beneficial effects for moose overlooks the fact that fire has been a dominant ecological factor long before man's influence (*3*). Even today lightning fires account for the greatest proportion of