safety of insect viruses, perhaps the most graphic is the coleslaw argument. When the cabbage looper caterpillar succumbs to a virus, its body dissolves and sheds onto the leaf large quantities of virus which are not killed by any of the preparative steps in the making of coleslaw. By mid-October, when mortality among the loopers is at its most grave, the average bowl of coleslaw includes about 4 billion live particles of cabbage looper nuclear polyhedrosis virus. The author of this dismal calculation, A. M. Heimpel of the USDA Insect Pathology Laboratory at Belts-

Do Oceanographers Have More Fun?

There was no tersely worded telegram from the Swedish Royal Academy of Sciences, no telephone call in the night from a breathless reporter wondering, "When, Dr. Revelle, did you first learn you had won The Prize? And how do you feed an albatross?"

You feed an albatross carefully if it is alive, as it can deliver a nasty nip. This particular specimen of *Diomedea immutabilis*, however, is dead, stuffed, and mounted in a cage to which is affixed a modest bronze plaque bearing the names of the world's 11 Laureates of the Albatross. As for the first question, Roger Revelle, the Harvard oceanographer cum population specialist, and president-elect of the AAAS, first learned the glad news when colleagues lured him up to a suite in Mexico City's Del Prado Hotel during the AAAS meeting in June. "All these guys were standing there with this damned bird," Revelle recalls, a trace of awe still in his voice. "I was really touched."

The bird, a bit scruffy about the tail feathers now, after 14 years of circulating around the globe as a kind of consolation prize for would-be Nobelists, is the chief sign that the American Miscellaneous Society—a mildly loony, invisible college of otherwise mature academicians—still lives. Last June, for the first time in 3 years, AMSOC arose cicada-like from its customary slumber just long enough to bestow the bird on Revelle. Having done so, AMSOC, probably to the general benefit of American science, scurried underground again.

AMSOC was founded in a fit of whimsy in 1952 by a small group of geoscientists at the Office of Naval Research who were seeking to "look at the lighter side of heavier problems," according to Arthur Maxwell, a founding member and now provost of Woods Hole. The society is fond of describing itself as exceedingly democratic, but harmlessly anarchic is probably closer to the truth. It has no officers or regular meetings, and any two members constitute a full quorum. Over the years the membership has grown to 50 or 100 scientists (no one seems sure of the precise number); at one point AMSOC established divisions of Etceterology, Generology, Triviology, and so on, as well as a committee to welcome visitors from other worlds. None arrived, however, or at least none made themselves known; but membership in AMSOC nevertheless acquired a certain reverse snob appeal in the early 1960's, with distinguished scientists dropping its cryptic name in their curricula vitae.

It was then that AMSOC first (and last) came to world attention—and ultimately to grief—with its suggestion that the government drill a hole clear through the sea floor to the earth's mantle. The rationale was, as Gordon Lill, another founding member, wrote at the time, that "the ocean's bottom is at least as important to us as the moon's behind." But the government took AMSOC seriously and so, eventually, did AMSOC. The society actually won a $15,000 grant from the National Science Foundation and achieved new stature as an official committee of the National Academy of Sciences. Thus was conceived the abortive and very expensive Project Mohole (since supplanted by the NSF's enormously successful deep-sea drilling project, which is still poking holes in the sea floor, but with no ambitions of puncturing the mantle).

Wracked by internal dissension, and properly chastened, AMSOC resumed its low and frivolous profile. "Mohole really did it in. It's almost as defunct as the bird," Revelle says, referring to the one now ensconced in his basement.

These days, the society exists mainly to give away the Albatross, an award devised in 1959 by Maxwell, Lill, and John Knauss of the University of Rhode Island as a mariner's substitute for the Nobel prize, which somehow always seems to evade deserving oceanographers. For this stroke of imagination they awarded themselves the first Albatross.

In spite of the award's frivolity, all but one of its recipients has been a distinguished researcher, although why the bird was visited upon Revelle at this particular time is anyone's guess. The sole exception to the rule was Sumner Pike, a Maine businessman and former member of the Atomic Energy Commission, who won the Albatross in 1968 for his "study of the oceans and other liquids after 5 p.m.," according to AMSOC archives. A consummate lobbyist for ocean research, Pike is warmly remembered by oceanography's elite for having once arranged (at the Navy's expense) to fly selected congressmen to his retreat at Lubec, Maine, for one of his famed lobster repasts.

When at last a reporter did call Revelle about his Albatross, he said he was adjusting well to his new status as Laureate.* "It hasn't changed my life-style at all," he insisted. "I'm really being quite modest about it."

Revelle will retain the bird until AMSOC decides to give it to someone else, which may be soon. His wife Ellen is said to be anxious to get "that damned dusty creature" out of the house as quickly as possible.

What all of this means is hard to say, unless it proves that oceanographers, like blondes, have more fun.—R.G.

* Other Laureates of the Albatross are Walter Munk, John Swallow, Harrison Brown, Victor Vacquier, Henry Stommel, and William von Arx. This award is not to be confused with the Albatross medal of the Swedish Royal Society of Science and Letters, whose honorees include, purely by coincidence, Roger Revelle.