planetary bodies that has so far totally ignored this pressing problem. When they get it straightened out, they can tackle the next obvious gap in heavenly nomenclature: the source of all life can do better than to be called "the sun."

Academy Honors Abelson

Philip Hauge Abelson, former editor of *Science* and now deputy editor for engineering and applied science, has been named recipient of the 1992 Public Welfare Medal, the National Academy of Science's highest honor.

Abelson

Abelson, a physicist and geochemist, won the National Medal of Science in 1985, and is one of the few scientists to be simultaneously a member of the NAS and the Institute of Medicine. He was cited for building up the magazine during his editorship, which extended from 1962 until his retirement in 1985. Said NAS president Frank Press: "He has helped weave the scientific disciplines back together again."

New Lease for Landsat

The White House has finally stepped in to end more than 2 years of dithering over which government agency should pay for the next edition of the Landsat Earth scanning satellite. Under pressure to rescue what had become an orphan program, the White House Space Council acted on 25 November, promising that the President will include funding for a new satellite, Landsat 7, in the next budget. And, according to congressional aides involved in the negotiations, the program will get a new bureaucratic home. In the future, budget and administrative authority will be split between the Defense Department and the National Aeronautics and Space Administration. NASA will oversee civilian use of the data.

Until now, the Landsat program has been funded through the Department of Commerce and managed by a private corporation. But while Commerce paid the bills, the most enthusiastic data users were university scientists and Pentagon researchers. This meant that those responsible for Landsat's budget were not its strongest advocates, and the program suffered as a result. Now, according to Representative George Brown (D–CA), an ardent Landsat fan, the "cloud of uncertainty" that has stigmatized the program for many years may be lifting.

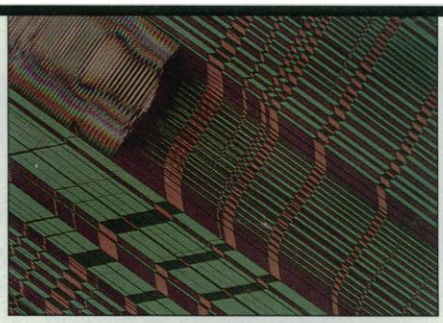
Radioactive Waste Plan Stalled

No public policy is proving tougher to carry out than the government's plan for safe storage of radioactive waste—as the Department of Energy's recent encounter with the courts has shown once again. The department was getting ready to bury about 8000 drums of long-lived military waste when U.S. District Court Judge John Garrett Penn stopped everything on 26 November. DOE officials were stunned. They were planning to bury the waste in salt deposits near Carlsbad, New Mexico, at a site called the Waste Isolation Pilot Project (WIPP).

A footnote in judge Penn's decision suggests why he ruled against DOE. He had taken into account the following history: In preparation for putting deposits in WIPP, DOE had "temporarily" withdrawn the land from public use—for R&D studies. Then, in a subtle move earlier this year, it had modified this temporary plan to include the "experimental" burial of 1% of the total volume of waste to be interred at WIPP. But the state of New Mexico, among others, objected on two grounds. First, it argued, the land had been withdrawn illegally; and second, the state claimed DOE was in reality planning a permanent move, because it had no way of knowing that it could ever retrieve the waste after burial.

This is where the judge's footnote comes in. He noted that experts agreed it might be difficult to retrieve waste from the fluid salt beds after 18 months. And he added: "WIPP has very recently experienced roof collapses." On 20 October, "70 tons of rock fell in a proposed test room," an event which DOE anticipated by only a few weeks. So a skeptical Judge Penn ordered an immediate halt of all DOE work at the site pending litigation of the issues. A spokesman says DOE is debating whether to seek a rehearing using new information or to appeal the decision.

Micro winners.



The "world's greatest photomicrographer"—that's how the Polaroid Corp. describes Michael Davidson, a researcher at the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory at Florida State University, who took this color picture revealing the structure of a lanthanum aluminate wafer. It won him the grand prize in the company's annual photomicrography competition for the second time in 4 years. In the contest's life-sciences category, zoologist Julie Brock of the University of Hawaii won first prize for her electron micrograph (right) of the brood chambers of a colony of marine invertebrates called *Thalamoporella stapifera*. Each group of three holes houses an animal; the lima-bean shapes contain developing larvae.

Musical Chairs

The cast is changing at PCAST—the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology—following the resignations of Bernadine Healy (now director of the National Institutes of Health) and Walter Massey (now director of the National Science Foundation). Thomas J. Murrin, former deputy commerce secretary, has assumed one of the vacant seats. And last month, Mary L. Good of Allied Signal resigned as chairman of the National Science Board to join PCAST.

The one (relatively) new face in the current round of musical chairs belongs to James J. Duderstadt, president of the University of Michigan, who is taking over Good's unexpired term at the National Science Board. Duderstadt, a nuclear engineer, has been on the board since 1985. His term as chairman will end next May, when he can run for a normal 2-year term.

Feminizing Medicine

Women may not be flocking into science, but they seem to like medicine: This year, they constituted 41% of medical school applicants—the highest percentage yet, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges. That's 13,700, compared with 11,785 last year. And almost 40% of students admitted this fall are women. On another front, Asian Americans contributed to the hefty 14% increase in medical school applications this year. Asian applications jumped by 26%, to 5487, reports the AAMC.