

Silver Fleecing

Old-timers will remember Wisconsin Senator William Proxmire and his Golden Fleece awards to what he deemed to be silly-sounding research paid for by the government.

Now, researchers on aging have their own annual "Silver Fleece" award, designed to poke fun at what they say are examples of "antiaging quackery." Prizes for the absent winners—bottles of "snake oil"—were announced last month by biodemographer S. Jay Olshansky of the University of Illinois, Chicago, at a longevity seminar for journalists in Chicago.

Olshansky's three-judge



Unclaimed prizes.

panel, which also included renowned researcher on aging Leonard Hayflick of the University of California, San Francisco, and Bruce Carnes of the University of Chicago, awarded one Silver Fleece to Clustered Water. According to the product's Web site, clustered water—the opposite of the body's "bound

water"—helps the human body counteract "the cellular malfunctions that many ... researchers believe are responsible for degenerative health." Levels of clustered water in the body are said to decrease with age, but a 120-ml bottle (\$39.95) can be mixed with regular water for a refreshing 15 liters of elixir.

The judges also bestowed an organizational Silver Fleece on the American Academy of Anti-Aging Medicine (A4M) in Chicago, which holds annual conferences and trains doctors in "antiaging medicine" (*Science*, 8 February, p. 1032). "More than any other organization in the world, [A4M] is responsible for leading the lay public and some in the medical and scientific community to the mistaken belief that technologies already exist that stop or reverse human aging," Olshansky says.

A4M defended itself in a 12 February statement, charging that "Mr. Olshansky is [a]

Metaphor of the Week

"It is a truism that the blastocyst has the potential to be a human being. Yet at that stage of development it is simply a clump of cells. ... An analogy might be what one sees when walking into a Home Depot. There are the parts and potential for at least 30 homes. But if there is a fire at Home Depot, the headline isn't 30 homes burn down. It's Home Depot burns down."

—Dartmouth neuroscientist Michael Gazzaniga at a meeting of the president's bioethics panel last month in Washington, D.C.

paid political front of the gerontological establishment. ... Antiaging medicine is the fastest growing medical specialty throughout the world."

NAE Elects New Members

The National Academy of Engineering last month elected 74 new members and seven foreign associates, bringing total U.S. membership to 1857 and foreign associates to 158. Read all about it at www.nae.edu.

Mushroom Mecca

fungi: It has 6000 species of mushrooms alone—a biodiversity as rich as Germany's in a country a fraction of the size. Every autumn, entire restaurant menus are given over to fungal fare. The country boasts some 700 amateur mushrooming groups and a coterie of eminent fungi experts.

So it's no surprise that Switzerland soon will be a Mecca for mushroom lovers with the construction of Mycorama, an international center for mycology research and public education. Situated in the heart of the canton of Neuchâtel, known for its mushroom-growing industry, the center has long been a dream of mycology researchers at the University of Neuchâtel.

The center's form will follow function, with two

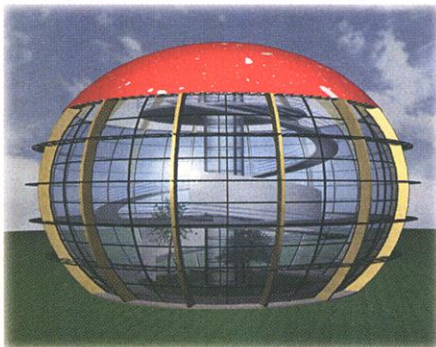
mushroom-shaped glass spheres joined by a rectangular lab building. One sphere will feature mushroom exhibits displaying fungi in all their forms familiar to man, including molds, mildews, and yeasts, and will contain an underground fungi farm. The farm will be a "living museum" that people can walk through, says Beatrice Senn-Irlet, a mycologist at the Swiss Federal Institute for Forest, Snow, and Landscape Research in Birmensdorf, who is currently engaged in mapping Switzerland's mushrooms. There will also be a mushroom-tasting restaurant.

"It's a complete panorama" that doesn't exist anywhere else in the world, says Daniel Job, head of the mycology department at the University of Neuchâtel and a member of the center's scientific advisory board. Job and his group are cultivating 28 species of edible mushrooms that will be part of Mycorama.

The center has already raised \$2.7 million from community groups and needs nearly \$1 million more to start construction.



Edible Swiss Boletus.



Sphere, part of a planned research and museum complex to celebrate the mushroom.