Title
PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

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procedure. It is certainly unconventional, but unconventional things have been known to work on occasion. Nevertheless, we cannot recommend any procedure until rigorous study has shown it to be safe and effective.

FINAL SALVO
Because the response by "Name Omitted" [Peer Review, September/October] to Robert M. Sapolsky's "Measures of Life" [On Human Nature, March/April] purported to be written in the interests of semantic accuracy, I must point out that the reference to the "detonation" of the charge in a cartridge is incorrect. Good cartridge charges are designed to "burn" during the time the bullet travels through the barrel. A longer burn wastes energy. A shorter burn leads to excessive energy-wasting friction and drag and to potentially hazardous overpressures. In the unfortunate instances when the charge detonates, the gun is often shattered and the user is killed. I have been the remains of artillery barrels, with three-inch-thick walls, that were transformed into rubble by an accidental detonation of the charge.

The correct burning of a gun charge is so rapid that the result may be properly called explosive, but it is certainly not a detonation.

ANDREW C. VICTOR
Victor Technology
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"Please reinstate Newton's third law of dynamics, which was so astonishingly repealed without referendum by "Name Omitted" and by Robert Sapolsky. A firearm recoils in proportion to the mass of the projectile it accelerates; thus a rifle firing a bullet that weighs a third of an ounce recoils noticeably more than an identical rifle firing a blank cartridge wadding that weighs a fifth of an ounce. The difference in recoil among rifles fired in unison would be evident to both riflemen and witnesses.

CLINT WILLIAMS
Oakland, Michigan

PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE
Fay Ajzenberg-Selove's autobiography, A Matter of Choices, and Ann K. Finkbeiner's exceedingly readable review of the book "[Women Who Run with Physicists]" September/October offer a good opportunity to comment on Ajzenberg-Selove's career. I have known of her work since I was a graduate student at the California Institute of Technology in the 1960s, and I admire her enormously. Her career has illustrated many virtues, including the middle part of the Hillel quote: "But if! am only for myself, what am I?"), in her constant support of the work of other scientists—not just women. Of course, her experiences are not universal prototypes (for me, becoming a physicist-astronomer was simply a matter of following the path of least resistance), but she never said they were.

There are a few additional demographic points. Ms. Finkbeiner could have made (but she also was presumably limited to a finite number of words). Perhaps the most important of them is that the fraction of women doing anything has a strong inverse correlation with the prestige of the activity. American women M.D.'s are heavily concentrated in pediatrics, obstetrics and gynecology, family practice, and psychotherapy; the percentage of cardiac surgeons and neurosurgeons is down there in the physics range. Ninety percent or so of Russian M.D.'s are women—but not the hospital chief surgeons or directors. And the countries with large fractions of women on their university physics faculties are mostly places where physics research in the universities is not too productive or highly regarded. It is hard not to be just a little grateful that American physics, in spite of attacks from above and below, is still a fairly prestigious activity.

Ms. Finkbeiner also missed the obvious solution to the dilemma of the two-career couple: each person gets a job in a suitable department; then they persuade the two institutions to let you share and spend half the year at each place. My husband and I have been doing it for twenty-two years now.

VIRGINIA TRIMBLE
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TONGUE TITHES
Burkhard Bilger's Anecdotal Evidence column "Keeping Our Words" [September/October] appeared at an opportune moment in the efforts by professional organizations such as the Linguistic Society of America and the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas to educate their members as well as the general public about the issues surrounding languages.

In July the Administration for Native Americans (ANA) hosted a week-long review session of the Native American Languages Act proposals. There were some 160 proposals to be reviewed. That number alone clearly shows that the money ($1 million) so far allocated to funding such proposals is not enough to meet the needs of various Native American communities. In August a group of Native American educators, language-program practitioners, linguists and this year's proposal evaluators got together with a representative from ANA in Santa Fe. They discussed ways of improving the procedures for grant-proposal writing and evaluation. We will soon be ready to make some recommen-