Double Entendre de Matière

(or for those who really speak French–**Double Sens Substantiel**)

All Quiet on the Materials Front

You needn't look to Kansas any longer to find the silent majority, those conservative patriots who refrained from noisy rhetoric but, to the consternation of the pollsters, let their votes speak for them on election day. We have met the silent majority and they are us. (Only a minority of us would say "they are we.") Scientists, perhaps the quietest organ of the body politic, have Kansasized the research laboratory.

Material Witness

Next time your materials research is challenged as an irrelevant sandbox waste of taxpayers' money by a budget slashing member of Congress, take advantage of the likelihood that the member has a background in the law. Remind her or him that material, as in "material witness," in and of itself means *relevant*. Materials convey solidity, concreteness, and substance. Our metal is being severely tested in these austere times. We must steel ourselves against the dislocations of funding cuts.

Undisciplined Materials

Much is made of the idea that materials research is not a discipline but a field comprising many disciplines while subscribing to none. It is therefore no coincidence that creativity abounds in our field. We have license to question and break all the rules—the quintessence of a lack of discipline.

I Can See Clearly Now

Apparently there is another similarity between science and the law. The optimal way to see things through to the most reliable conclusion is not to see at all. Justice is blind and only double blind control studies adequately validate our drugs and other visionary products. These precautions protect us all from the foibles of blind ambition.

Picture originally worth ~~1,000 words~~.

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Unpopular Popular Prose

It's difficult enough to translate noncontroversial science into lay language for the general populace. Popularizing topics such as the true meaning of risk from nuclear power, from high-voltage power lines, from industrial effluents, or from genetically engineered vegetables produces decidedly unpopular prose.

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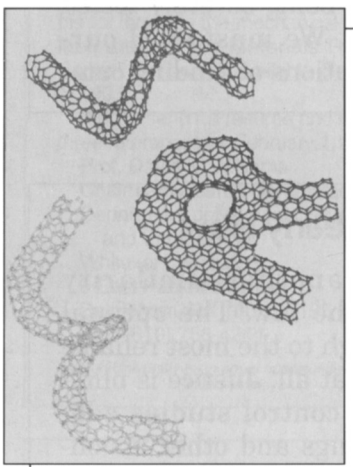
The Medflies of Management

States like Hawaii and California go to great lengths to keep out pests that, if allowed in, would overrun valuable, but more docile, species. Now think about what happens when an exciting entrepreneurial idea is spawned inside the protected boundaries of a research division in a large organization. Carelessly opening the laboratory door exposes the concept to the bureaucracy of wheel-spinning committees, short-, medium-, and long-range planning (including the mandatory 5-year business plan), reorganizations, and quarterly reports. There is no analog to the agricultural inspector who can slap a quarantine on such predatory pests fast enough to save an endangered idea.

Newton's Inadvertent Curse

When you hear about those tried and true methods that must continue to be used because "it's the way it has always been done," be assured that's not the kind of inertial guidance Newton intended his first law to provide.



Coverage

You have reached the back of the *MRS Bulletin*. If you got here by starting at the front cover, digesting each page in order, then you've had ample opportunity to see that the *Bulletin* thinks materials research is no joking matter. The *Bulletin* certainly cannot be accused of twisting its content merely to be cute or of an unseemly attempt at self-aggrandizement. POSTERMINARIES is the only department where we have uncontested license to misbehave.

The *Bulletin*'s upstanding (i.e., stodgily pious) approach to coverage of our field begins with the issue's cover. Cover art is germane to and representative of the content to follow. This is not a trivial accomplishment. The art of coverage is not unlike that of triage. Of all the candidates available, only one per month will survive to see its competition consigned to oblivion. The winner must satisfy a plethora of sometimes mutually exclusive criteria in addition to bearing some relevance to the technical theme. It fails miserably if it does not induce every reader to at least open to the table of contents. Indeed, it should capture the imagination at first glance and lure unsuspecting readers into the monochrome text before they regain their senses. The *Bulletin* and its cover must not merely reflect the present state-of-the-art, but must inspire us with a window on the future.

This month's cover is certainly germane if not riveting. Nevertheless, POSTERMINARIES could not resist rescuing one of the rejects from ignominy.* To be sure, it does not depict anything actually yet seen under the electron microscope, as would be required by the *coverage veritè* approach. But it clearly presages the day when, through a miracle of carbon control, our Society's initials will appear in that microscope in a totally tubular way.

*The ingenious MRS fullerene candidate cover design pictured here was provided by Mitsuho Yoshida, a graduate student in the laboratory of prof. Eiji Ōsawa, Toyohashi University of Technology.

E.N. KAUFMANN

EDITOR'S NOTE: POSTERMINARIES must be reprimanded for not looking beyond (or before) itself in this issue to see that, although the MRS Bulletin *is upstanding and principled, it willingly abandons stodginess when creativity serves. But that is the course of another cover. . . ELF*

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