

AWIS NEWSLETTER

Mission Statement: The Association for Women in Science, Inc. (AWIS) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the achievement of equity and full participation of women in all areas of science and technology

AWIS Outreach Committee Recognizes Six Outstanding Projects at the Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair

By Jodi L. Connolly

On March 20, the AWIS Outreach Committee participated in judging at the 48th Annual Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair, held at the Balboa Park Activity Center. Nearly 800 students from San Diego and Imperial counties participated in this year's science fair. During the morning session, local teachers, scientists, and engineers served as volunteers to interview each student and award each project a 1st, 2nd, 3rd, or 4th place award. Outstanding projects were given a "Sweepstakes" designation and further reviewed by more experienced science fair judges to determine the Sweepstakes and Special Award winners. During the afternoon session, professional organizations were invited to judge the students' projects and give their own awards. Eighteen AWIS judges selected four winners from the junior division (7th and 8th graders) and two winners from the senior division (9th to 12th graders). Overall, the project quality was quite impressive, making selection of just six projects a difficult task. This year's AWIS science fair winners are:

Junior Division:

1. Alice C. Coutinho (La Jolla), 8th grade,
Category: Medicine and Health
Project Title: Angelman Syndrome
2. Irene Kelsey Easterly (Jamul), 7th grade
Category: Zoology
Project Title: Worm Your Way through Garbage
3. Katie Jo Goldin (Encinitas), 7th grade
Category: Physics
Project Title: Effect of Cross-Sectional Wing Shape on Lift
4. Emily Koch (San Diego), 7th grade
Category: Microbiology
Project Title: Garlic and Bacteria Inhibition

Senior Division:

1. Sonia Gupta (Rancho Santa Fe), 10th grade
Category: Biochemistry
Project Title: Novel Activities Generated through Original Mutagenesis Approach
2. Cindy Ko (Ramona), 11th grade
Category: Microbiology
Project Title: *A. actinomycetemcomitans* vs Non-Pathogenic *H. aphrophilus*

To congratulate the six AWIS winners, the AWIS Outreach Committee will host a reception at the end of April, where each student winner will receive a gift and a one-year membership to

AWIS. Students also will bring their project posters to give us a short tutorial on their work.

Many thanks go to the AWIS volunteers for their enthusiasm and hard work at this year's fair: Reyna Bisa, Barbra Blake, Megan Bolla, Sue-Jane Chen, Jodi Connolly, Lance Gritton, Cathy Hsu, Margery Johnstone, Kat Keil, Jinah Kim, Andy MacDougall, Cathy Manner, Annika Montag, Tina-Marie Mullen, Arni Paed, Tammy Seasholtz, Rachel Taylor, and Betsy Walcott. For more information on how to get involved with next year's Greater San Diego Science and Engineering Fair, please visit <http://www.gsdsef.org>.

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The AWIS Spring Gala

By Tobey Tam

On Saturday, March 30, AWIS held its bi-annual Spring Gala at the Scripps Research Institute's (TSRI's) Faculty Club. This fundraising event raised over \$14,000 for scholarships. The funds raised will be distributed between this and next year's scholarship winners as well as contributing to the start-up funds for the next gala. There were approximately 150 scholarship applicants of which 6 were chosen as winners. First place winners received \$1,000 and second place winners received \$500. From the community college division, first place went to Nora Gonzalez and second place went to Praveena Selvadury. From the undergraduate division, first place went to Rebecca de la Torre and second place went to Roshanak (Rosha) Ramezani. From the graduate division, first place went to Jessica Yingling and second place went to Donna Riley.

Sixty-five people attended the Casino Night themed gala. There was great jazz music, lots of interaction at the casino tables and the many raffle prizes, which were generously donated by local merchants, made everyone vie to win something by the end of the night. Many people arrived on time at 6 p.m. and stayed till the last prize was raffled away at 10:15 p.m. "The best thing about having a casino night theme is that this gives people the chance to learn how to play the game if they don't already know," said Dr. Alycen Nigro, the Scholarship Chair. "It's a relaxed, fun atmosphere and encourages people to interact and talk to each other."

The sponsors who contributed to the funds included: Pfizer/Agouron, Aurora Bioscience/Vertex Pharmaceuticals, Collateral Therapeutics, Digital Gene Technologies, Nanogen, Alexion, Canji, Gen-Probe, Management Search Inc., MSI

International, Structural Genomics, The Salk Institute, Yoh Scientific, Biospace, Celgene, Merck, Syrrx and Killu Tougu Sanborn. The program underwriter was Friedmann Communications. The TSRI Faculty Club sponsor was Dr. Joel M. Gottesfeld. The Faculty Club host was Ms. Nancy Schoenmaker. Catering was compliments of Andrew's Café. The Gala Committee included Jodi Connolly, Anna-Maria Hays, Anjali Kansagara, Nhi Le, Marcy Lo-Sing-Hoy, Alycen Nigro, Tobey Tam, Elaine Weidenhammer and Joleen White.

March 2002 AWIS Event

"Scientific Writing—A Career for You?"

By Janice Payne



"If you're a bench scientist, who meticulously makes detailed entries in a lab notebook, you may already have what it takes to be a scientific writer," suggested Yvette Liebesman, Director of Quality Systems at Favrrille, Inc. Yvette was one of four scientific writers who were able to join us for a panel discussion at our monthly AWIS event on March 12 at BD PharMingen. Other panelists included Emelyn Eldredge, PhD, scientific writer at IDEC Pharmaceuticals, Judith Garfield, freelance writer and Lynne Friedmann, APR, Friedmann Communications. Each of the panelists had a unique perspective on how to make a career of scientific writing.

Emelyn Eldredge earned her PhD in Biochemistry at the University of Edinburgh and completed two post-docs before deciding to get away from the bench. She then worked as an acquisitions editor at Academic Press where her most successful book was *Alternative Careers in Science: Leaving the Ivory Tower* by Cynthia Robbins-Roth. This book is an excellent reference and contains chapters on technical writing and science writing. In her presentation, Emelyn reviewed all the careers rolled into being a scientific writer at IDEC. In addition to actually writing, it may at times be necessary for the writer to function as a project manager, lawyer and detective. Emelyn's workday could include preparing responses to FDA questions, writing clinical study reports and creating posters for scientific meetings.

Our next panelist, Judith Garfield, earned her B.A. in Biology and Microbiology from UCSD and then spent 10 years doing laboratory research in Molecular Biology, genetics and marine microbiology. She then also decided to leave the bench and pursue a career in writing. She completed the Copyediting Certificate program at UCSD, which made the transition to writing easier. Judith enjoys scuba diving and has written two books: *The San Diego-La Jolla Underwater Park Ecological Reserve: La Jolla Shores and Canyon* and *The San Diego-La Jolla Underwater Park Ecological Reserve: La Jolla Cove*. She enjoys the lifestyle of a freelance writer and she feels it's very important to have something unique to call your own that can be used to sell yourself to clients. Judith has a variety of clients in the U.S. and abroad and her day can include medical writing, preparing journal articles and writing her weekly column in the *La Jolla Village News*.

Yvette Liebesman earned her first B.A. degree in American Government at Georgetown University. That was really the start of her writing career. She then earned another degree in Physics from Rutgers University and followed that with a M.S. degree in Earth Sciences from Scripps Institution of Oceanography. Yvette then wrote procedures for an operations manual for the City of San

Diego Wastewater Treatment plant in Point Loma. For the last several years, Yvette has been involved in creating and implementing Quality Systems to meet cGMP standards. Yvette will soon return to her alma mater, Georgetown, to enter law school this fall.

Our final panelist, Lynne Friedmann, is a public relations consultant and science writer. She earned a Bachelor's degree in Journalism with a minor in Biology from California State University at Long Beach. She started out working for the Public Relations firm of Regis McKenna and later became a public information officer at UC Irvine. She then started her own company, Friedmann Communications, and has been a consultant and freelance science writer since 1988. Her workday can include writing: articles for magazines, news releases, or reports for non-profit organizations or science-based companies. Lynne is also editor of *ScienceWriters*, the newsletter of the National Association of Science Writers. Lynne is a past AWIS Board member, the creator of the AWIS newsletter and its first editor.

The most important message from all the panelists on how to transition into a career in science writing was to network with other writers. This can best be accomplished by getting involved with professional organizations such as AMWA (American Medical Writers Association, <http://www.amwa.org/>) or NASW (National Association of Science Writers, www.nasw.org) and of course, AWIS! Many thanks to all of our panelists for a great event!

January/February AWIS Book Review: *An Unexpected Light, Travels in Afghanistan* Written By Jason Elliot Reviewed By Kathleen Scully

An Unexpected Light is the narrative of a young Englishman's two visits to Afghanistan. In 1985, at the age of nineteen, the author was first smuggled from Peshawar, Pakistan, over the mountains around Khyber Pass and across the border to the capital city of Kabul. At the time, General Massoud (until his recent death, the leader of the Northern Alliance) was in control of the city, but the country as a whole was unable to be dominated by a single authority. During this relatively short first visit, Elliot familiarized himself with the city and its devastated neighborhoods, and then ventured into the countryside around Kabul under the protection of the Mujaheddin (translated literally as 'those who struggle') who were battling the Taliban. Ten years later, after the end of the Soviet occupation, Elliot returned for a longer visit. This time, he was relatively free to travel throughout the countryside. Guided by circumstance, he wandered without an itinerary in an arc north from Kabul to Faizabad and then west to Herat. On this epic and sometimes-dangerous journey, his direction was determined by the availability of guides and transportation, and the permissibility of weather.

Throughout his journey, Elliot chronicled the magic of the people and the landscape. The title of the book refers to a quality of both the sunlight and the soul of the people – a crystalline brightness that brings distant faces and objects into luminous and surprising relief. Interwoven with his descriptions of the tribal origins of the people and the ways in which the geography of Afghanistan isolated them, is well-documented political, religious, and cultural history. While somewhat illuminating, this detailed information is presented neither chronologically nor with sufficient context for the casual reader of Asian history and, as such, often provides more distraction than education.

The Book Club decided to read this book after September 11, 2001, thinking that it might provide some explanation of what led to the events of that day. On the contrary, Elliot described the majority of Afghans as a reasonable people with a moderate

relationship to religion that kept extremism in check until the years of war and occupation by the Soviets led the Mullas to gain exceptional power. Even then, the Afghans whom the author met in his travels abided by a law of hospitality to visitors that exceeded any usual Western expectation. One story recounted a foreign aid worker's visit to a prison in which a naked, starving detainee welcomed his guest by standing up, shaking off his rug, and offering it as seating. And although the Afghan fighters he encountered were often fierce, they were also humorous. After witnessing a group of Western reporters battling one another to board a plane departing from Kabul, one was overheard making this observation, "Well, they think we are fierce, but imagine, this is just their journalists." As for the women of Afghanistan, there was obviously only minimal contact permitted and hence the author has little to say about either their plight or their nature.

This book was rated "4 out of 5 Stars" by the AWIS Book Club.

The San Diego Chapter of AWIS Welcomes New Members:

By Susi Jennings

Sonya R. Summerour-Clemmons	VitaGen Incorporated
Tina-Marie Mullen	The Scripps Research Institute
Steffney Rought	UC San Diego
Vickie Lynn Martinez	Miramar College
Nancy G. Kendall	
Louise McHeyzer-Williams	
Karin Lucas	UCSD
Tracy Vivlemore	
Shiva Malek	Aurora Biosciences Corp.
Amy Elizabeth Palmer	UCSD
Ana Kasirer-Friede	The Scripps Research Institute
Che Swyden Chereskin	Knobbe, Martens, Olson & Bear
Xiaolu Guo	CTL Immunotherapies Corp.
Janet White	Pfizer/Agouron
Stephanie Rieder	

March/April AWIS Book Review

***Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* By Andrew Newberg M.D., Eugene G. D'Aquili Ph.D., and Vince Rause.**

Reviewed By Caroline Lanigan

I was extremely interested in reading this book: the enticing title coupled with the rave reviews on the dust jacket intrigued me. Few texts on matters of faith are primarily concerned with its biology, I was caught.

The reviews and the publishers' summary on the dust jacket made the spectacular claim that the authors present a revolutionary new approach to understanding why humans require a spiritual component to their lives - after all the publishers want to sell books. Anyway, who isn't interested in revolutionary ideas?

Unfortunately, this claim is not realized.

A quick summary: Chapter One presents the only experiment discussed in the book; Chapters Two and Three discuss in broad outline the current state of understanding of human brain function and structure; Chapters Four and Five acquaint the reader with the human propensity for ritual and myth as social mechanisms to explain the human experience; Chapter Eight is a discussion, albeit a simplistic one, of the philosophy of reality and a description of mystic experience and finally, Chapter Nine completes the discussion of mysticism and introduces a concept the authors call the 'neurology of transcendence.'

The book starts out promisingly with a description of an experiment: Robert, a devout Buddhist, will inject himself with a radioactive tracer at the peak moment of his meditative experience, thus permitting a high-tech analysis of his brain activity at this profound moment. At the conclusion of his meditation, Robert will be whisked off by the authors to a SPECT camera, to have a tomographic image made of his brain activity. SPECT is an acronym for Single Photon Emission Computed Tomography. Incredibly, the tomogram reveals that yes, Robert's brain is active during meditation! The authors present a set of cryptic drawings depicting this astounding observation and then proceed to interpret this result. They have found modulation of brain activity (increases and decreases) correlated with the subject's reported mental activity. Their interpretation requires that they introduce a new vocabulary in order to clearly express their revolutionary ideas that there are parts of the brain associated with spiritual experience. They feel the need to rename well understood psychological phenomenon, for example, calling the posterior superior parietal lobe the 'orientation association area' and using an acronym, OAA, in their discussion of the function of this part of the brain. They seem to believe that the acronym OAA, and others they introduce, is easier to understand and remember than, say, PSPL.

Interestingly, or annoyingly, upon completion of Chapter Two, this new vocabulary is not used. Since learning this vocabulary is an impediment to reading established texts on this topic, the purpose of introducing it is not clear, although this penchant for inventing new terms does not end with these chapters. To summarize, they have discovered a specific region of the brain, correlated with spiritual mental activity.

The question that comes to mind is: why are the authors surprised by this finding? Their descriptions of the current understanding of the functioning of this region of the cortex support a hypothesis that spiritual experiences, like other higher mental functions, are expected to occur in the frontal lobe of the neocortex, more specifically, in the posterior superior parietal lobe. Ok, well, data is data.

This recording of Robert's brain activity is the only biological data introduced in the text. The authors seem particularly impressed by their observation of the human interpretation of mystical/spiritual events as 'real', mainly through this review of the literature. A little thought reveals that the reverse is 'true' - humans interpret their neurological experiences as real, what is profound is the fact that we can discriminate events we imagine as part of our internal world from those imposed from outside ourselves.

The remaining chapters are superficial reviews of very broad and important topics: the development, evolution and function of ritual behavior and myth in human society. To clarify some of their points, the authors engage in what could be charitably described as 'thought experiments' where they imagine primitive peoples struggling to invent explanations for life and death. Their discussions in this section reveal their naïvete: for example, the statement 'As soon as hominids began to behave like human beings' suggests that hominids are not human, when in fact hominid means human (human n 1: a human being; 2: any living or extinct member of the family Hominidae [syn: homo, man, human being] Source: WordNet ® 1.6, © 1997 Princeton University).

If the authors are correct, if we are hard-wired for mystical experience, how do we interpret the fact that few of us actually experience a profound spiritual event? The bottom line here is that few individuals have mystical experiences. Truly profound spiritual experiences are so rare, so life altering, that they do change the world - Moses, Siddhartha, Jesus, and Muhammad were all men who walked among us but experienced a spiritual awareness beyond anything the rest of us have known or can know. The experience is so rare that some institutions, like the Catholic Church, recognize the few individuals who report them, by

installing them as models for the faithful; to remember and learn vicariously from their experience and inspire their own spiritual quest. So, on a positive note, one contribution of the authors' analysis is the assertion that mystical experience is natural, that it is a function of normal biological processes in the brain, that such experiences are not the product of anomalous brain activity, albeit that such experience is uncommon.

There is no discussion of the use of mind altering states in the religious experience - an odd omission as clearly drugs, trance, and induction of frenzied and/or severely deprived states are a significant part of the quest for spiritual significance. Also the attraction of such states for human beings, to the extent that drug addiction, criminal behaviors, and other self-destructive lifestyles are chosen by some people to make living bearable, seems related to the quest for mystical experience - at least to me.

The spiritual quest is initiated in a novice by questions like 'Did it really happen?' and accompanied by the need for physical proof of persons and events, like the existence of Buddha, the miracles of Christ, the inspirational source of Muhammad's writing. Maturity of faith moves beyond this need for physical proof and proceeds along the path where faith is what it is - the recognition of the role of spiritual knowledge in guiding one along a meaningful path, the path ultimately leading to death, and providing confidence that one's life and death have meaning.

The authors reveal a naïve and immature view of spirituality. On the one hand they claim that physical knowledge of God is unattainable, yet they embark on obtaining physical proof of God. They are embroiled in obtaining proof of a biological need for ritual behavior, yet they seem to have a superficial view of the evolution of such behavior. Although this is an interesting and potentially important quest, from which perspective is this question fruitfully answered? Does assigning an increase or decrease in activity of relatively nonspecific regions of the brain help us understand, from an evolutionary perspective, the human need for spirituality?

This book is not an adequate review of the topics addressed by the authors. To those who wish a cogent, profound, and informative presentation of spiritually-related topics I would recommend reading Karen Armstrong, Joseph Campbell, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi, Carl Jung, or Kathleen Norris. For a fresh review of the mechanics of mind read Steven Pinker; in fact a close reading of Charles Darwin's works will provoke contemplation of the meaning of the divine, as an emergent property of the natural world.

In conclusion, the book does not deliver on its promise of biological evidence for the experience of God. The book was rated 2 out of 5 stars by the AWIS Book Club.

AWIS Members On the Move.....

Marcelle Vogel, Chair of the AWIS Events Committee, and her husband Randy, are the proud parents of Alexi Elizabeth Vogel, born March 28. The Vogel family will be moving to Arizona in June.

Yvette Liebesman, member of the AWIS Events Committee, is headed for Georgetown University to attend law school this fall. She'll be relocating to Washington, DC in June...Good luck to Yvette!!!

AWIS Events Committee News

By Jan Payne and Barbara Armstrong

In June, Janice Payne and Michelle Krakowski will co-chair the AWIS Events Committee when Marcelle Vogel steps down from committee chair to move to Arizona.

The Events Committee is organizing the following two events:

Alternative and Complementary Medicine

May 7, 2002 6-8pm Ligand Pharmaceuticals

An informal discussion with:

Diana Fatayerji, Ph.D., Doctorate in Clinical Biochemistry and Osteoporosis, Masters in Human Nutrition

Justine Greene, M.D. Board Certification in Family Practice, Masters in Oriental Medicine

Erin Raskin, Clinical Supervisor, Pacific College of Oriental Medicine, Practitioner of Oriental Medicine

RSVP by May 3 to flchou@scripps.edu

Overcoming your fear of Public Speaking

speaker Jenni Prisk, President of Prisk Communication.

(www.prisk.com)

June 18, 2002 6-8pm Location: To be determined.

The AWIS Mentoring Happy Hour

By Tobey Tam

On April 18, at the Scripps Research Institute's (TSRI's) Faculty Club, the newly created AWIS Mentoring Committee held its second event in the form of a Happy Hour. The first mentoring event, "speed mentoring," was held in February. This second event was designed to follow the first and be a more relaxed and social evening.

One hundred people attended who had backgrounds in academia, bioinformatics, biotech, business development, environmental science, law, marketing, scientific writing, and regulatory affairs. The event included an open bar, good food, and an icebreaker game with prizes for the winners.

"The most unfortunate thing about this event was that I had to turn away about 25 extra people who wanted to attend," said Tobey Tam, the organizer of the event. "I set the deadline 2 weeks prior to the event in order to have time to compile all the registration information, make the detailed nametags and create the icebreaker game. Plus the location had a maximum room capacity size. Whenever the next mentoring event is scheduled, and if it is held at a different location, I encourage people to sign up right away to avoid this problem."

From the emailed surveys collected after the event, one response to the icebreaker game which divided people by interest was, "Hugely great idea, helped concentrate the different areas of people into a locale. Better than trying to run around and find them." Another attendee wrote, "By having the Happy Hour Mentoring event, it enabled everyone to interact with a variety of people. And the nametags [color coded by the scientific interest] helped me quickly identify people by category. There were many new faces at this second event," said Jodi Connolly, a member of the Mentoring Committee. "And the number of people wanting to attend also increased. So there definitely seems to be a need for mentoring within AWIS."

The AWIS Membership Committee also was on hand to welcome many potential new members. If you are interested in becoming involved with the planning, scheduling, or compiling of information for the Mentoring Committee or for more information about joining AWIS, please contact Anjali Kansagara (anjali@zety.com).

AWIS San Diego Open House in July By Anjali Kansagara

Mark your calendars now for the July Open House event. Currently, in its early planning stages, the event will take place on Thursday, July 25, 2002. Discussions are underway to determine guest speakers and the event's main attraction, most likely a workshop on "How to Negotiate". However, it is certain that various active committees and the respective chairwomen will be present to share their committee's goals as well as to recruit more participants.

Come out and meet your fellow AWIS members, have a few drinks, network, and help us recruit more women into the organization. If you know of someone interested in meeting a scintillating group of women (and some men), tell them about the Open House in July and tell them to visit <http://awis.npaci.edu/> now!

If you would like to contribute your time and energy to organizing the Open House and meet some wonderful women along the way, please visit the AWIS-SD web page for meeting announcement (http://awis.npaci.edu/shtml/events_meet.shtml) or contact Anjali Kansagara at anjali@zety.com or Susi Jennings at sdawis@san.rr.com. They look forward to meeting you!

Job Posting Beckman Coulter

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Sr. Research Scientist
Req # 008

Must be proficient with biochemical methods to purify and characterize proteins and be proficient with molecular biology techniques. Excellent tissue culture skills and Flow Cytometry experience required. Competencies:

Focus on key objectives when faced with limited time and resources; self motivated; identify and resolve technical issues; effectively communicate work status to managers and co-workers. Ability to thrive in a team-oriented environment. Must be flexible and able to respond to changing and dynamic project priorities. Educational requirements: BSc plus 8 years experience or MSc with 5 years experience. Immunology background a plus.

Entry-level Research Scientist
(2 positions available)
Req # 011

Will be responsible for assisting in the evaluation and implementation of new technologies; performing laboratory research in immunology; analyzing and reporting results to supervisor and team members. Will maintain well-organized laboratory notebooks in compliance with relevant procedures.

Req # 012
Will perform basic molecular biology techniques including cloning, DNA preparation, transformation, banking and sequencing; express, purify and characterize proteins using basic microbiology techniques and biochemical methods. Will maintain well-organized laboratory notebooks in compliance with relevant procedures.

Educational Requirements for both positions: BSc in biology/chemistry with 1-2 years relevance experience. Cell culture experience preferred and experience in immunology research highly desired.

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The AWIS e-mail list will keep you up-to-date (between newsletters) with news of job opportunities, AWIS news and events. To subscribe, please send e-mail to sdawis@san.rr.com. Include your full name, address, and phone number.

Moving? Address Change?

Please notify us of your new address so you won't miss our mailings! E-mail **Susan Jennings** at: sdawis@san.rr.com, phone the AWIS voicemail: (619) 687-5580, or mail changes to AWIS - San Diego, PO Box 178096, 92177-8096.

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About the AWIS Newsletter

The AWIS Newsletter is published bimonthly and provides AWIS members and supporters with information on chapter activities, career development, and issues related to women in science. The newsletter is free to AWIS members. Subscription rate for non-members is \$20 a year.

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Send news items, comments, and subscription requests to Barbara Armstrong via e-mail: baawis@nethere.com; or AWIS, PO Box 178096, San Diego, CA 92177-8096. If you would like your article included in the next issue, the deadline for inclusion is June 14, 2002.

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Posting Jobs in the AWIS newsletter: Contact Elaine Weidenhammer at eweiden@hotmail.com, or AWIS voicemail: 619-687-5580, or AWIS PO Box: 178096, San Diego, CA 92177-8096 for the details. Deadline for inclusion in the next AWIS newsletter is June 14, 2002. If submitting by snail mail, include the words ATTN: Elaine Weidenhammer on the bottom left corner of the envelope.