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## BACK IN THE CLASSROOM

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A year ago you printed "View from my classroom - in a rural school"; you may be interested in an update.

Maybe this is typical, too. These days I view the classroom only from the outside for we are ON STRIKE. Now in the second week both sides seem firmly entrenched and I can only wonder what will happen.

It is an expensive educational experience.

We have learned some physics. Posterboard signs droop in the rain, blacktop and sidewalks reflect enough to cause sunburn and percentages can be calculated to support any point of view.

Unlike 95% of the teachers, the football coaches are not supporting the strike and continue to have practice "for the good of the students."

Our main hope is that the parents and uptown quarterbacks will apply pressure for a compromise when the team can't compete officially unless school is truly in session.

Lora Wilhite, *Carlville Junior-Senior High School, Carlville, Illinois 62626*

*Ed. note:* According to a report in the *New York Times*, September 10, 1980, the strike has been settled.

*Ed. note:* In a later letter Ms. Wilhite wrote

"Our school strike was settled after two weeks. We 'won' some policy considerations and a small cash increment; in only five years the increment will amortize the eight days docking awarded."

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## VISUAL ACUITY REVISITED

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It occurred to me that some readers might be concerned about my rough estimate of  $f = 30$  mm for the focal length of the human eye<sup>1</sup> since the light rays of Fig. 1, Ref. 1 should cross at some point behind the cornea, resulting in a better estimate of  $f = 20$  mm.<sup>2</sup> If we tighten up on our estimate of the focal length, we need to be more precise in our estimate of the minimal length of a dis-

cernible retinal image. Carefully taking the linear dimension of the letter in Fig. 2, Ref. 1 as the distance between the centers of the extreme cones, we find an image  $6\mu\text{m}$  in length ( $2/3$  smaller than the rough estimate of  $9\mu\text{m}$  in Ref. 1). This factor of  $2/3$  cancels the factor of  $20/30 = 2/3$  introduced by the improved focal length (see the diffraction equation), leaving the conclusion of Ref. 1 essentially the same: the limit of visual acuity is approximately  $20/10$ .

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### References

1. M. J. Ruiz, "The physics of visual acuity," *Phys. Teach.* 18, 457 (1980).
2. T. N. Cornsweat, *Visual Perception* (Academic Press, New York, 1970) p. 40.

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## FROM A FAITHFUL READER

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I offer a "correction" to your editorial "Coming of age" of *The Physics Teacher* (in the Sept. 1980 issue). You stated that "our membership includes at least three-fourths of those who consider high school physics teaching [as] their prime profession." While I am delighted with this statistic, the uninitiated reader might assume that *The Physics Teacher* is not of value to college-level instructors.

For myself, I have found *The Physics Teacher* to be an excellent and useful journal. For example, while reading the September issue I found ideas from several articles and notes to be worthy of being written down for future investigation or reference. These ideas came from seven authors. In addition, I read almost every article and note with more than cursory interest.

Although the September issue did present a few more items of real interest than usual, I have been pleased with every issue since the journal began. I continued to read it even during the period when I was a full-time researcher. Each year *The Physics*

*Teacher* seems to improve a little besides!

I only wonder what fraction of college teachers (who teach introductory courses to students only slightly more selected than high school physics teachers encounter) read *The Physics Teacher*. I can't imagine their not benefiting enormously from your journal as I have.

My sincere thanks to all who have served on the editorial board of *The Physics Teacher* during the last eighteen years.

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## CAVEAT TIMOR

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Hugh F. Henry is his review of *Radiation, Benefits/Dangers* [*Phys. Teach.* 18, 236 (1980)] objects to inaccuracies that can cause the reader to have unnecessary fears. I am not familiar with statistics regarding Czechoslovakian uranium miners, but there has been a significant increase in lung cancer among American uranium miners. A study by Schurgin and Hollocher (Brandeis University, 1975) found that from 1950-1967 lung cancer killed 62 uranium miners of a sample of 3000. These numbers are sure to increase because it can take from 15-25 years for radiation-induced cancers to develop.

We are all aware of the destruction of the cities and inhabitants of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by low yield fission weapons. The much more destructive fusion weapons can devastate large populations. There is no exaggeration here.

Professor Henry also states that "informed scientific opinion... supports nuclear energy and other uses of the 'atom'." The two groups cited, the Health Physics Society and the American Nuclear Society, have an interest in the continued and expanded use of nuclear materials. Many well informed physicists represented by groups such as the Union of Concerned Scientists urge an immediate moratorium on the

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