

## Disabled Scientists Featured in Newsweek, Atlantic

Two physically disabled scientists who are members of the AAAS Project on the Handicapped in Science Resource Group were featured in national magazines last month.

Bruce P. Hillam, a professor of mathematics and computer science at the California State Polytechnic University (Pomona), who uses a wheelchair, authored the "My Turn" column in the 1 November issue of *Newsweek*. Calling for a "civil-rights bill for the physically limited," Hillam reviewed his own education and career history and the attitudinal as well as physical barriers he encountered on his way to a Ph.D. in mathematics. "The real shock came when I got a job," says Hillam. "I was put off welfare and forced to assume all my expenses, including the full cost of a live-in medical attendant-housekeeper. My income had tripled but my standard of living remained the same. The welfare laws do not adequately provide for any period of transition . . . it was all cold turkey." Among the needs of disabled persons cited by Hillam are accessible public transportation, a welfare system that encourages self-sufficiency and that can help the disabled person make the transition from recipient to worker, housing "with doors large enough for a person in a wheelchair to get into the bathroom," and jobs.

An article on biologist/seashell expert Geerat Vermeij, who is blind, appears in the November issue of *Atlantic* magazine. Writer Kenneth Brower describes the working days of Vermeij on the reef and in the laboratory of a small biology station in the Palau Archipelago where the scientist collects and classifies marine life.

Vermeij recounts some of the problems of his educational career in his native Holland and in New Jersey and discusses at length with the author his ability to identify by touch, and sometimes smell, the many shells he studies. Vermeij, an associate professor at the University of Maryland and a recognized authority in his field, is credited with the discovery and study of certain differences between Atlantic and Pacific shells, and the geological/biological reasons for these differences. Though his specialty is mollusks, says author Brower, Vermeij "is one of those scientists who want to be free—as Newton was, and as Newton put it—to pick up 'a

smoother pebble or prettier shell than ordinary. . . .'"

The Resource Group of the AAAS Project on the Handicapped in Science consists of some 500 disabled scientists who function in several ways to assist in the formulation of public policy that affects the handicapped. Recently, over 100 members of the group responded to a request by Rep. Olin Teague for input to a panel on research programs for the handicapped. The panel, authorized by the House Committee on Science and Technology, of which Teague is

chairman, is evaluating federal research and development applications in such projects.

Over 150 members of the AAAS Resource Group are currently involved in the White House conference on Handicapped Individuals and many are acting as consultants to local school systems to ensure quality science education and to encourage wider career options for disabled students. Disabled students interested in joining the Group are encouraged to contact Martha Redden at AAAS headquarters, (202) 467-4497.

### Barrier-Free Meetings Guide Published

Last year's successful effort to eliminate barriers to disabled attendees at the AAAS annual meeting has resulted in publication of a new AAAS book, *Barrier-Free Meetings: A Guide for Professional Associations*. The guide provides a step-by-step outline of procedures for making a meeting accessible to the disabled and includes examples of forms, publicity pieces, resource lists, and drawings that illustrate accessibility modifications for meeting facilities. Information about the publication is available from Martha Redden or Wayne Schwandt, AAAS Project on the Handicapped in Science, 1776 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Washington, D.C. 20036.



For the 1977 annual meeting, scheduled for Denver, 20–25 February, the Denver Advisory Committee is assisting with arrangements to again eliminate barriers to disabled attendees. In addition to hotel rooms which can accommodate wheelchairs and accessible meeting areas, the following resources will be available: A Resource Center staffed with volunteers to offer assistance on request; shuttle service between meeting hotels in buses or vans equipped with lifts for wheelchairs; transportation service to and from airport, train, and bus stations; interpreters (sign language and oral) at all public lectures, and for other sessions on request; repair service for wheelchairs; round-the-clock telephone service responding to emergency needs; and special tour and sight-seeing information for disabled persons.

Persons needing special hotel accommodations, interpreting services, or other assistance are urged to contact the Project on the Handicapped in Science at the above address.

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