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Letters

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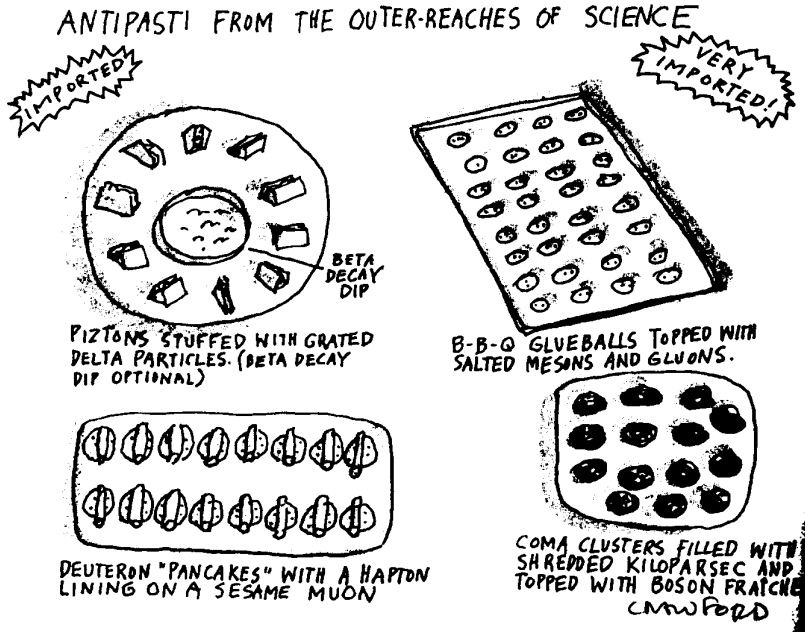
Keep Moralizing Out of Museums

Your presentation of aviation artifacts, "Treasures of the Air and Space Museum" (October/November 1990), is magnificent coverage of man's conquest of air and space. But you do a disservice to B-29 veterans by describing the *Enola Gay* as the centerpiece of a future "exhibit examining the controversial issue of strategic bombing." The effectiveness of strategic bombing has been debated since the days of Billy Mitchell. B-29s of the 20th Air Force brought Japan to its knees without a single American soldier setting foot on the Empire's homeland, but strategic bombing failed when B-17s and B-24s could not knock Germany out of the war. To use the *Enola Gay*, however, to examine the "controversial issue of strategic bombing" is simply a transparent excuse to moralize about nuclear warfare. A museum's role is to present history as it was, not as its curators would like it to be. President Truman had no moral problem with the use of nuclear warfare to save millions of American and Japanese lives, nor did the men of our military forces, poised to invade Japan at horrendous cost. And like it or not, nuclear deterrence did work through all those chilling years of cold war. The *Enola Gay* deserves to be displayed as a simple artifact of history and as a memorial and tribute to the men who flew it. Let morals and ethics be argued in seminaries and ivory towers by those who never heard a shot fired in anger.

Ben Nicks
9th Bomb Group Association
20th Air Force
Shawnee, Kansas

What's Going On Here?

I got the immediate impression that there is much more to Air Force chief of staff Larry Welch's statements on retiring the SR-71 ("The Blackbird's Wake," October/November 1990). His comments have a