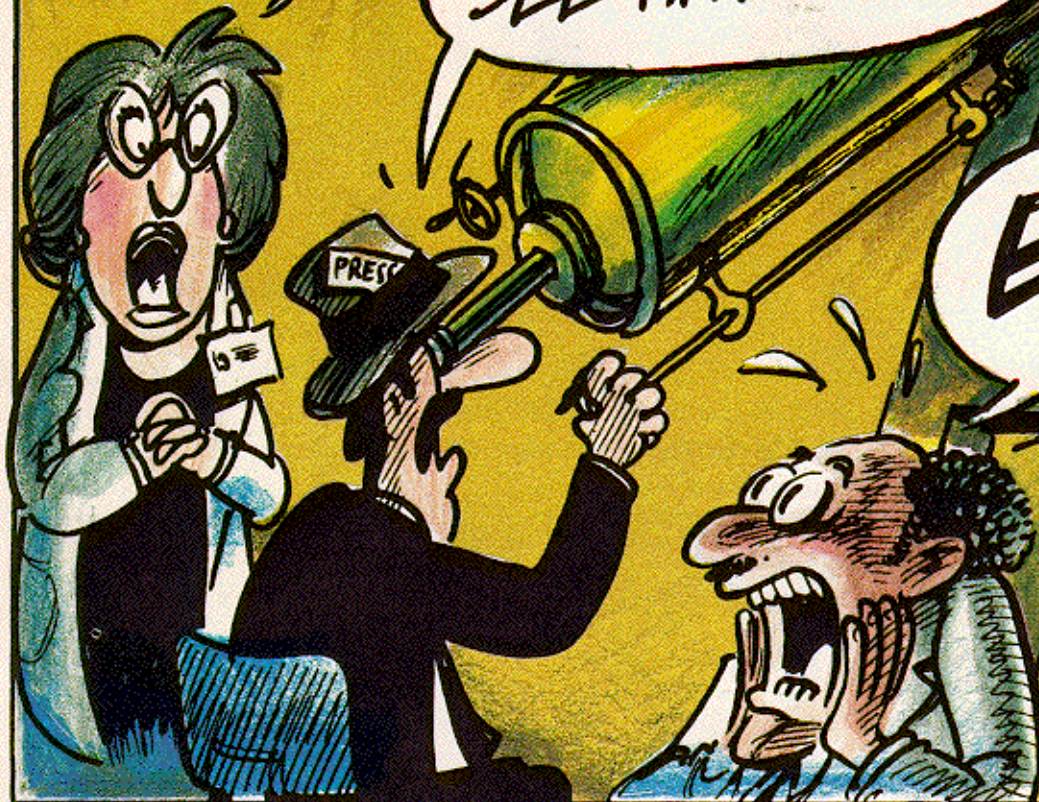


ON THE TRAIL OF THE MISSING OZONE

LOOK!
LOOK!

I'M LOOKING
BUT I DON'T
SEE ANYTHING!!

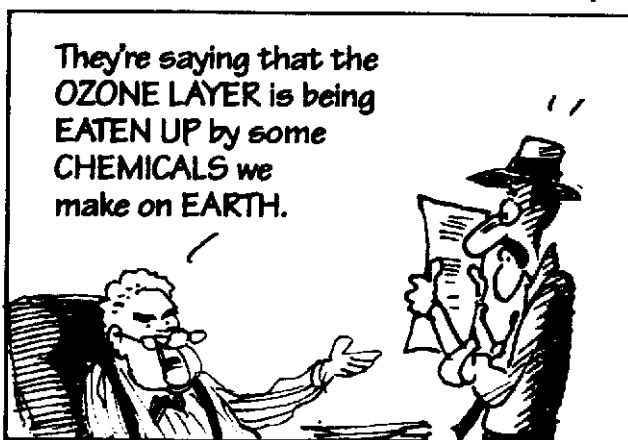
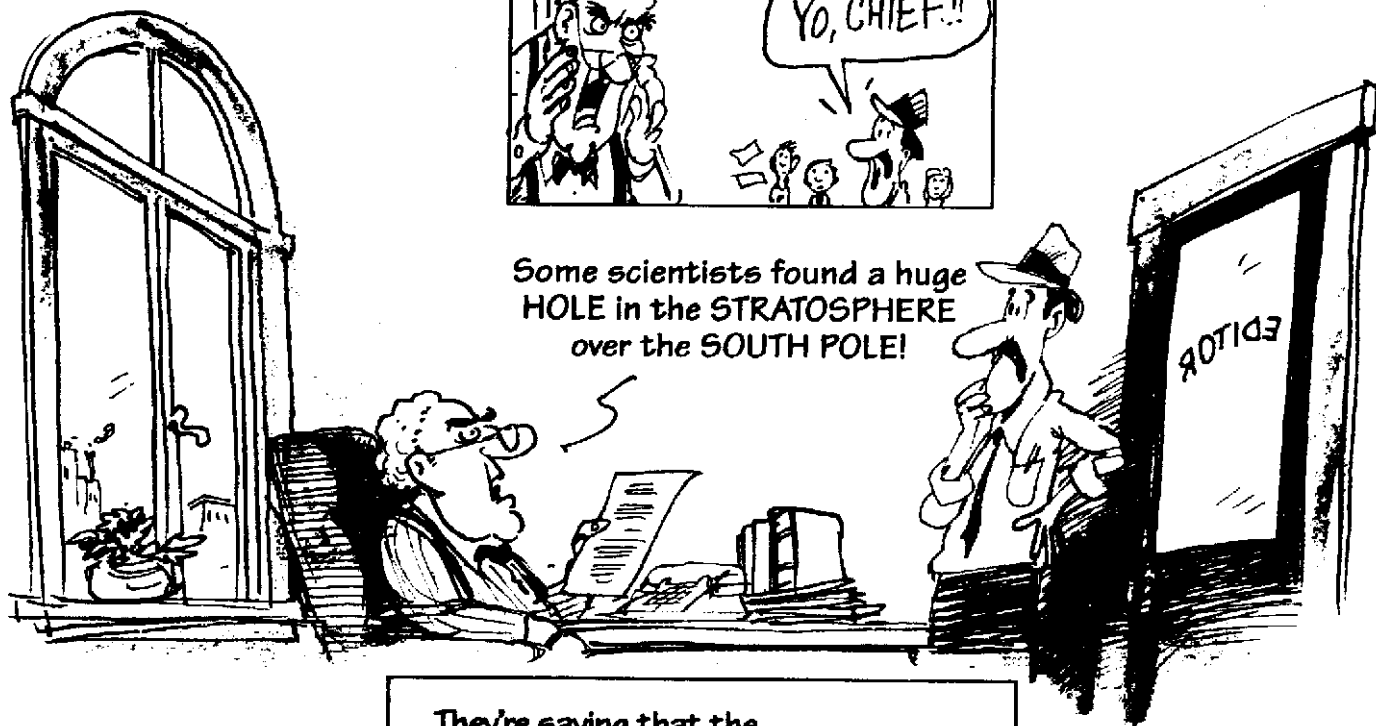
EXACTLY!



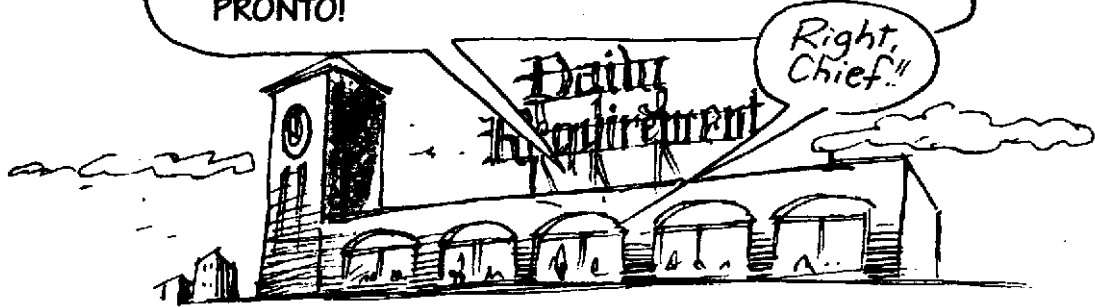
1993 Phil Frank ©



Some scientists found a huge HOLE in the STRATOSPHERE over the SOUTH POLE!



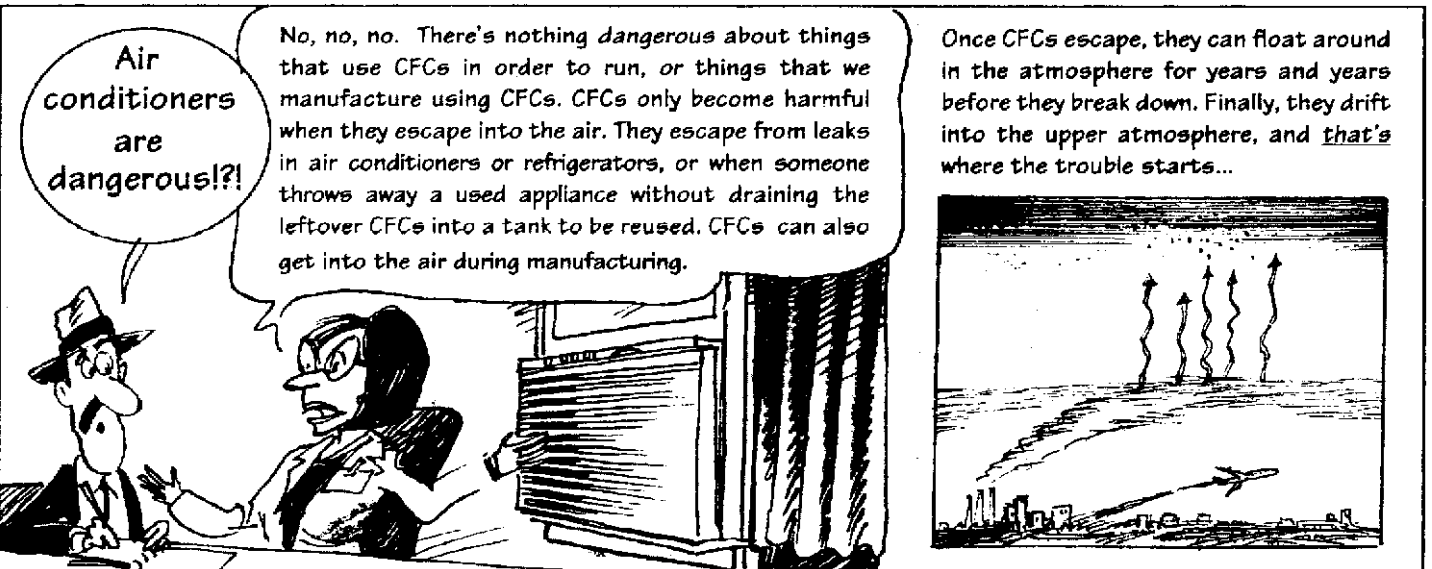
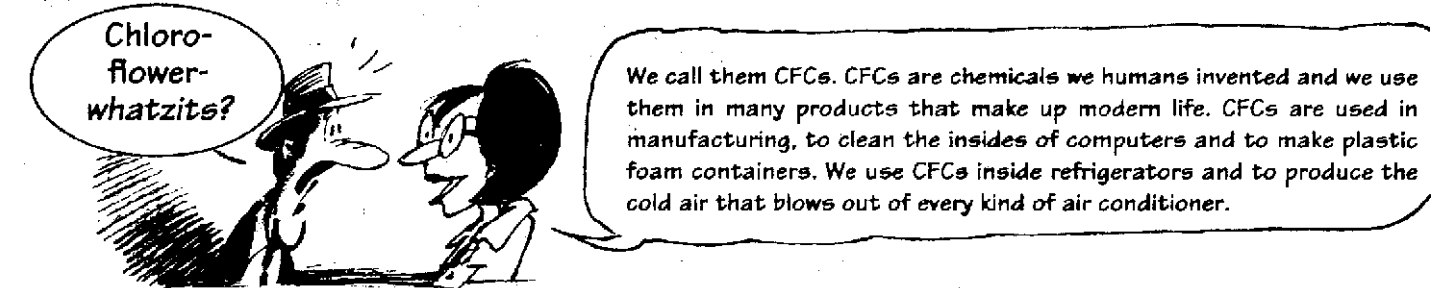
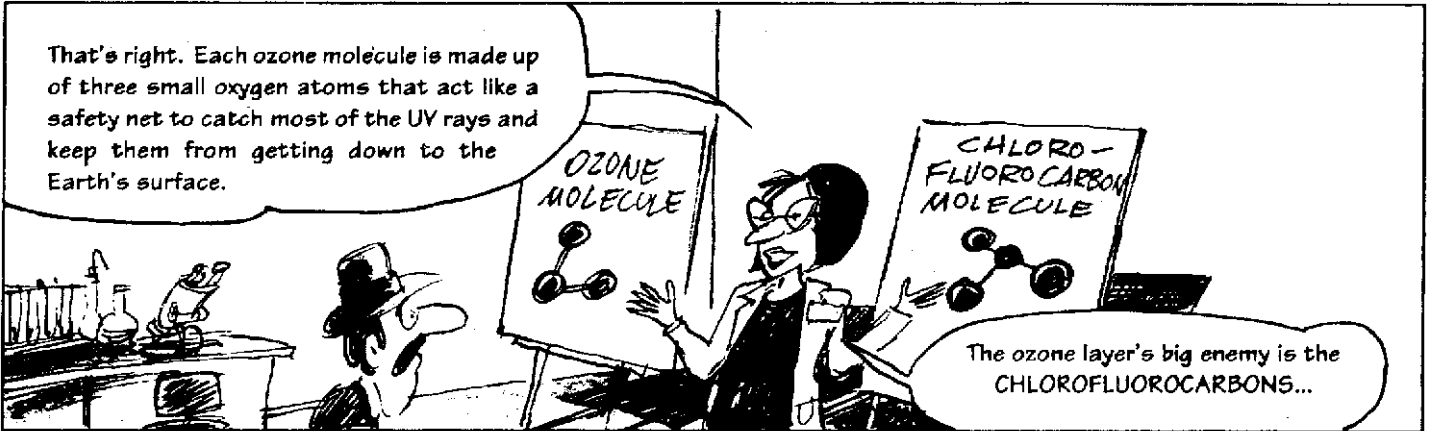
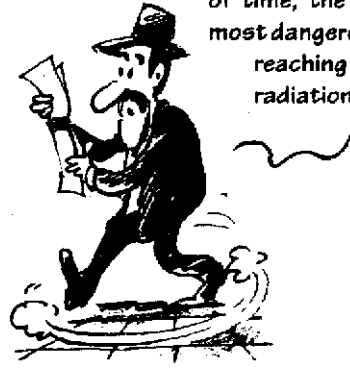
I'm telling you, Farley, this is **BIG NEWS!** This could be a **DISASTER** of **HUMONGOUS PROPORTIONS!** I want you to get to the bottom of this story **PRONTO!**



Farley meets with a scientist...



It wraps all the way around the Earth, about 10 to 30 miles straight up. From the beginning of time, the ozone has blocked the sun's most dangerous ultraviolet, or UV, rays from reaching us. And it continues to keep UV radiation from harming life on the planet.



But why should my readers care about CFCs? You can't even see them, and the hole over the South Pole is sooo far away...

Right now, there's a hole over almost all of Antarctica, and the ozone layer is thinning over areas where people live, like Australia and North America.

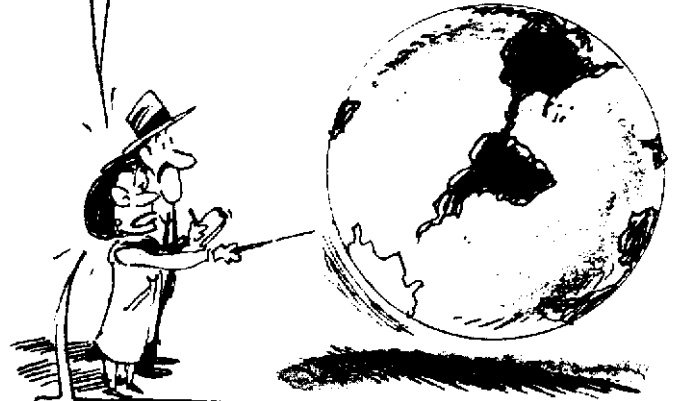


Look closely into my stratospheric visio-pecker. It will show you what's going on up there.

That's chlorine eating ozone molecules!

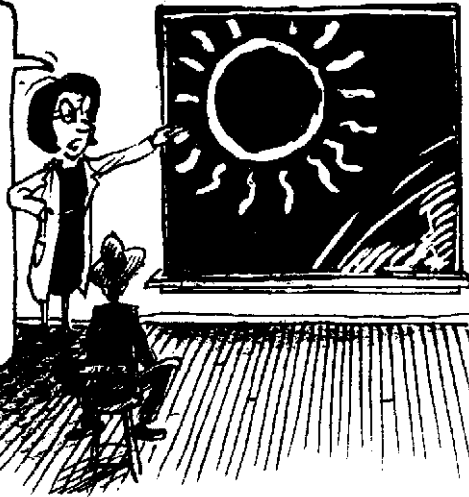


The South Pole has the worst problem because it is so cold and isolated there.



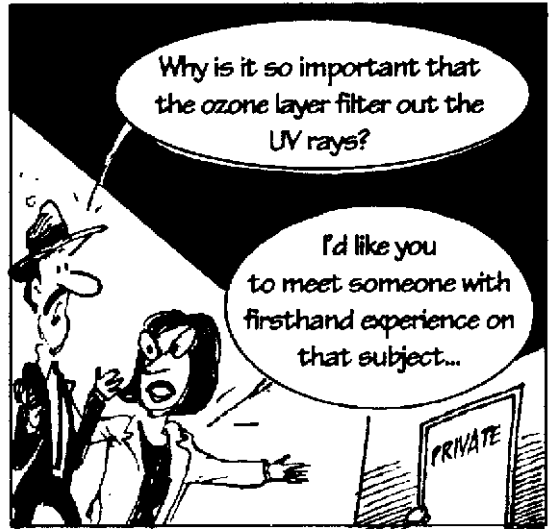
The South Pole has very long, super cold nights. During the night, tiny ice crystals trap CFC molecules and break them into smaller bits. One of these smaller pieces of CFC is ozone's worst enemy - chlorine.

When the sun rises after the freezing night, sunlight wakes up the chlorine, triggering an attack on the ozone molecules. Chlorine bites into one of ozone's oxygen atoms, and then another, and another. It's like a shark biting its way through a net, until finally the net is so frayed that it can't catch any fish. When the chlorine is finished, the ozone layer is so thin, it can't catch enough UV rays.



Why is it so important that the ozone layer filter out the UV rays?

I'd like you to meet someone with firsthand experience on that subject...



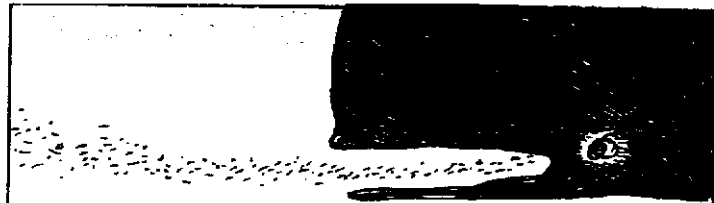
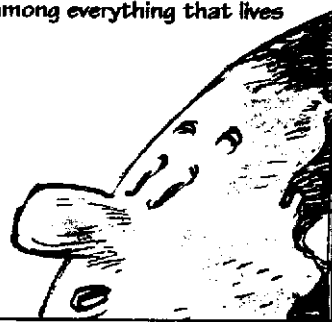
There are two kinds of ozone:

- The kind we want to save—**STRATOSPHERIC OZONE**—is the protective shield around the Earth.
- Ozone gathers in one other place—close to the planet's surface. There, it is bad for us because we breathe it. **GROUND-LEVEL OZONE**, the main ingredient in smog, is created when pollution from cars and industry mixes with sunlight. Ozone near the ground causes big health problems, like shortness of breath, lung diseases, eye irritation, and asthma.



As the ozone gets thinner, more and more harmful UV rays reach the Earth's surface...and that starts an awful chain reaction among everything that lives and breathes in the oceans or on land.

In the ocean, the smallest creatures like plankton and tiny shrimps, called krill, are among the first victims of too much UV radiation.



If all of these tiny one-celled critters are fried up by the UV rays, then each set of bigger creatures loses its food supply and they all begin to starve.

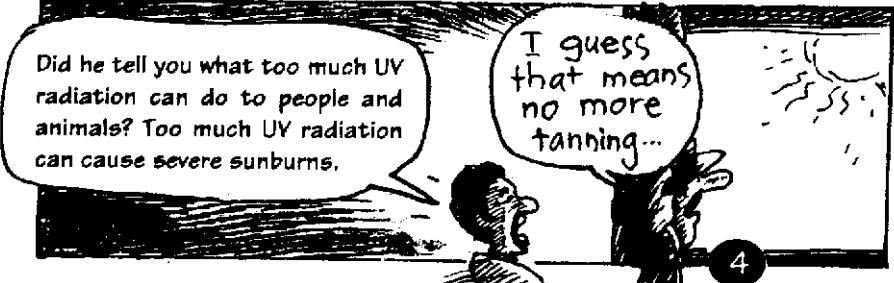
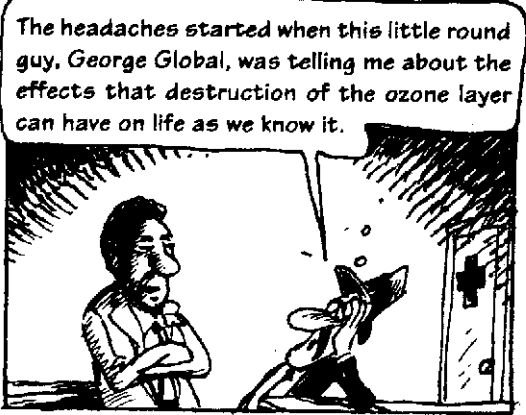
Plankton and krill are the basis of the ocean's food chain: these critters are nibbled like popcorn by bigger creatures, who are eaten by even bigger creatures. When too much of the sun gets through the ozone layer, the plankton die.



Like plankton in the ocean, plants form the base of the Earth's food chain. When some kinds of plants are exposed to too much UV radiation, they grow slower and produce less food. As the ozone layer thins, the food supply shrinks all over the Earth.

Animals can't get enough food from the plants to survive, and eventually people don't get enough food either.

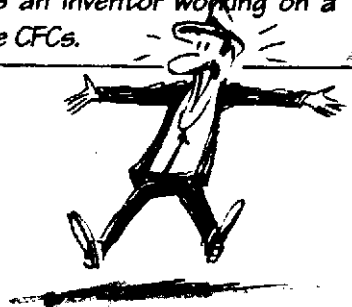
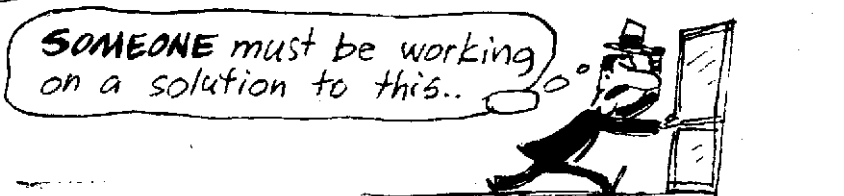
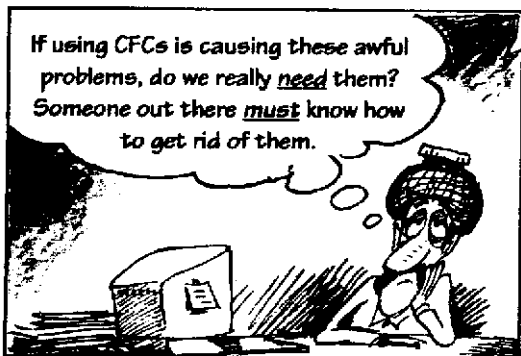
Farley goes to a doctor...



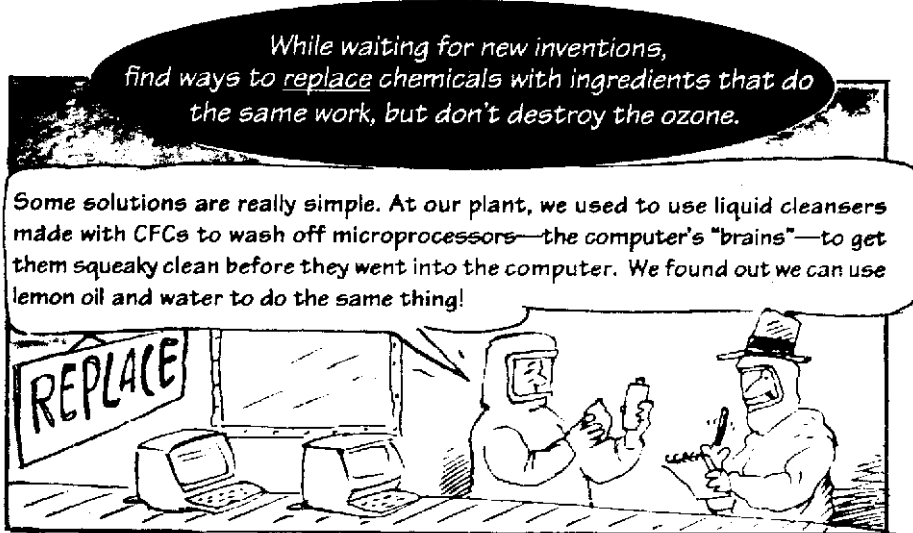
Global warming

- CFCs also play a small role in GLOBAL WARMING. Global warming occurs when too many of the wrong kinds of gases are created in the lower atmosphere. These gases, like carbon dioxide and methane, get trapped in the troposphere, less than 10 miles above the Earth's surface. They act like a heavy blanket that traps heat close to the Earth's surface and gradually raises the temperature all over the world. Some possible side effects of global warming include sea levels rising because of ice caps and glaciers melting, and farmlands turning into desert-like areas due to changing weather patterns.

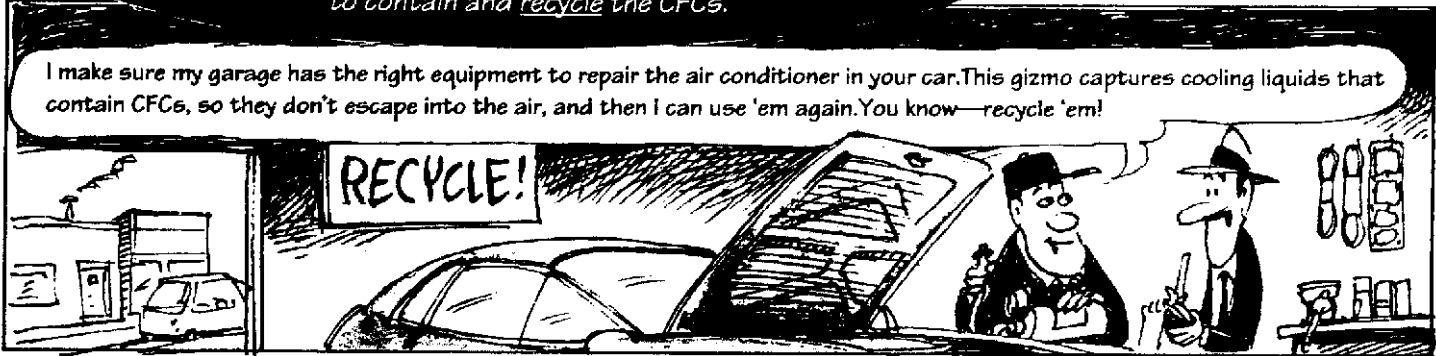
Even with a sun screen, the longer you stay out in the sun, the more you're exposed to UV rays. Extra UV rays can cause early aging, wrinkling of the skin, and even worse—skin cancer. It's been proven to cause eye damage, like cloudy vision, after years of exposure. If we could phase out the use of CFCs, it would be like curing skin cancer in millions and millions of people, erasing millions of dollars worth of food to feed people all over the world.



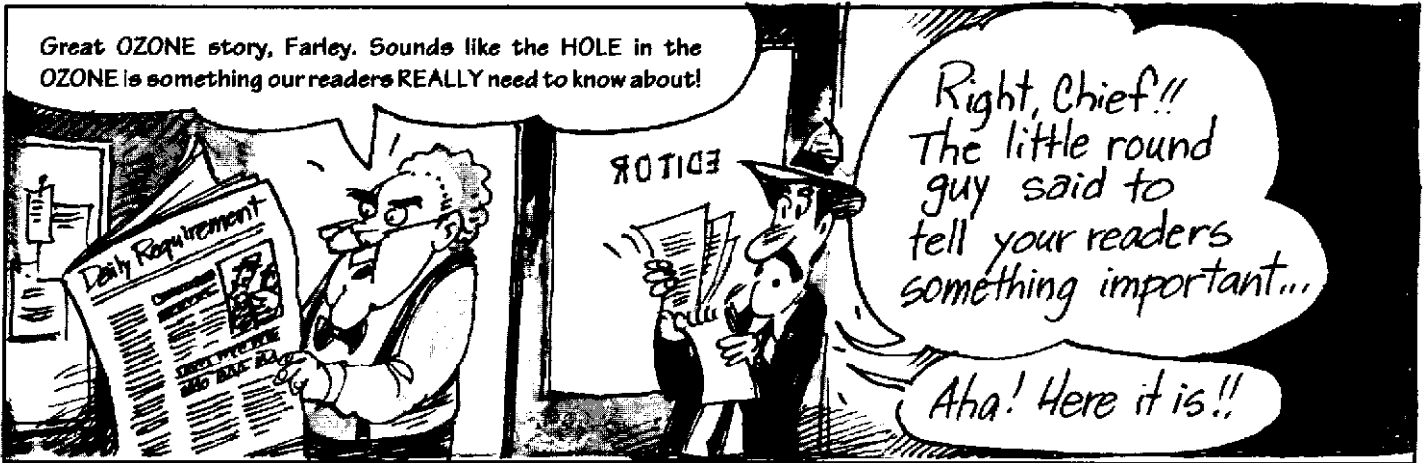
Many companies are working hard to develop new appliances that can take the place of ones that run on CFCs.



Everyday appliances in the car or home like refrigerators or air conditioners should be checked for leaks. If they need to be fixed, the mechanic should use the right equipment to contain and recycle the CFCs.



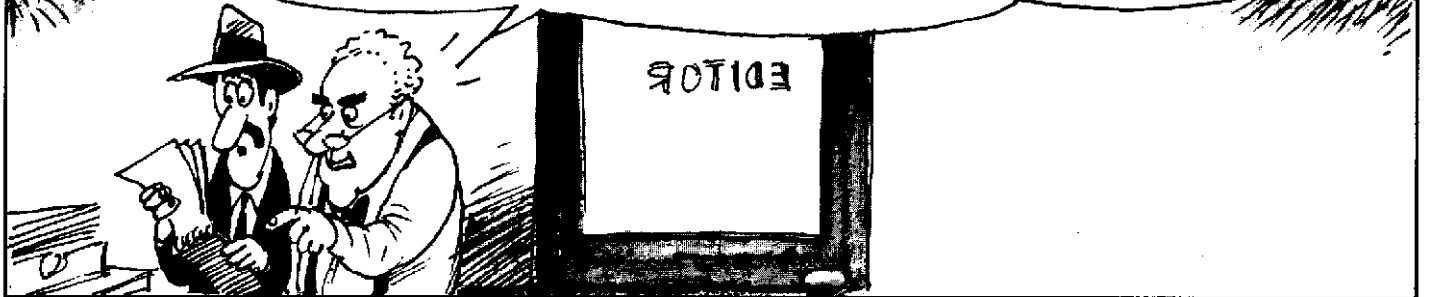
Farley returns to the newsroom...



The control and elimination of CFCs is the most important thing we can do to stop the thinning of the ozone layer.

New ozone is still being created by nature. So if we can slow down the damage by phasing out CFCs in products and manufacturing, the ozone layer could gradually come back.

By working together, people, governments, and businesses can stop making and using CFCs. In fact, many nations of the world have already agreed to stop making any new CFCs after 1995. Some countries—like the United States—have passed laws designed to keep the CFCs we're still using from getting into the atmosphere. And, eventually, CFCs will not be used at all.

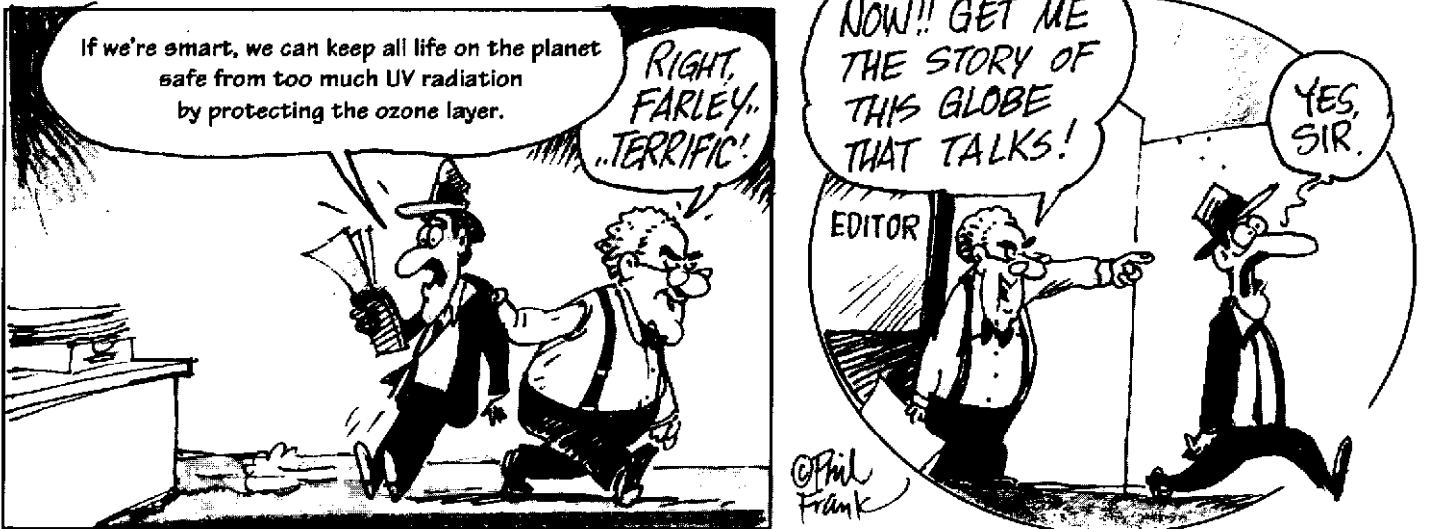


If we're smart, we can keep all life on the planet safe from too much UV radiation by protecting the ozone layer.

RIGHT, FARLEY... TERRIFIC!

NOW!! GET ME THE STORY OF THIS GLOBE THAT TALKS!

YES, SIR.



QUESTIONS ABOUT OZONE DEPLETION?

For more information about ozone depletion and the rules and regulations designed to protect the earth's ozone layer, call U.S. EPA's Ozone Hotline at (800) 296-1996 between 10 am and 4 pm Eastern time.

Also check out *Our Ozone Shield*, one of the monograph series "Reports to the Nation on Our Changing Planet" by the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and the Office for Interdisciplinary Earth Studies. To order a copy, contact OIES at P.O. Box 3000, Boulder, CO 80307-3000; phone (303) 497-1682.

INTERESTED IN OTHER ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION RESOURCES?

Contact: U.S. EPA Public Information Center
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Washington, DC 20460
(202) 260-2080

For additional information on EPA's regional environmental activities, contact the environmental education coordinator for that region:

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