2-14-1992

NEWS AND NOTES 1992, VOL.2, NO.21

The Rockefeller University

news & notes

February 14, 1992 Volume 2, Number 21 *The Rockefeller University*

Robert Reichert

Last weekend, workers from Morse Diesel began removing the temporary walls in the Plaza building tunnel. According to Rockefeller University's construction manager, Joseph Sanches, work to install vinal-tile flooring, a suspended ceiling, and permanent walls will continue until May. When renovations are complete, a doorway will connect the tunnel to the new lab building.

Olympics stir thrill of competition

By Mika Ono

Millions—including some who rarely turn on their television—are following the Olympic games with fascination, imagining how it must feel to compete against the world's finest athletes.

Andy Hoepelman, postdoc in the Tuomanen lab, does not have to imagine the thrill of Olympic competition. A member of the Dutch water polo team in 1976, Hoepelman remembers his experience in the Montreal games vividly.

"I've competed in four world championships and three European championships," he said, "but the Olympics are really something special. The atmosphere is completely different from any other sports competition."

According to Hoepelman, the games offer so many distractions that first-time Olympic competitors rarely produce their best results. The athletes face signs that they are part of a special experience at every turn. The Olympic village is packed with 10,000 athletes and coaches, competing in many different sports and representing many different countries. Security is tight ("almost like jail," Hoepelman noted). There is also a plethora of recreational activities for the athletes, including bars, restaurants, massage parlors, shops, concerts, and discos.

"Olympic mania is everywhere," Hoepelman added. "The people in the town where the event is held wait years for the event. When it arrives they want to be part of it."

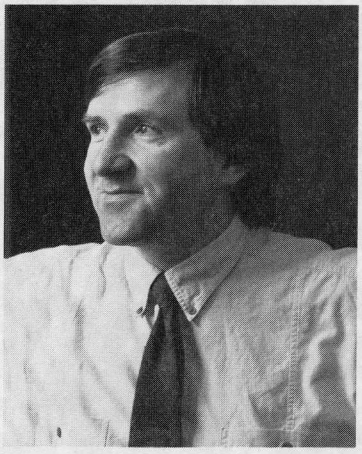
In 1976, the Dutch water polo team played a grueling ten-game schedule in a three-week period, leaving its members—most of whom had never before competed in the Olympic games—with little time to enjoy the amenities of the event.

Hoepelman remembers the tension building to an intense level as the team emerged from the preliminary rounds of competition as a medal contender. "After we beat the Soviet Union, the favorite to win the gold medal, the expectations for our team soared," he recalled.

After the victory against the Soviets, the Dutch team faced the Hungarians. The Dutch players lost by one goal, leaving them in a position to place second, third, or fourth. The final game pitted the Dutch against the Italians.

"The tension was enormous," Hoepelman recalled. "The game

See ***Postdoc****, page 2*



Robert Reichert

Andy Hoepelman, postdoc in the Tuomanen lab, competed for an Olympic medal.

Personnel sponsors RU's first Health Benefits Day

The Personnel Office will sponsor Rockefeller University's first Health Benefits Day Tues., March 3, to educate the community about health benefits the university offers.

"Health Benefits Day is an excellent opportunity for employees to ask questions about the different health insurance plans," said Ginny Hansen, a staff member in the Personnel Office. "Representatives from all the university's health insurance carriers will be there."

Health insurance carriers represented will be:

- Prudential Insurance Company of America;
- Empire Blue Cross;
- HIP of Greater New York;
- Oxford;
- *US*Healthcare.

In addition, the Employee Assistance Program, which provides free short-term counseling, information, and referral services to employees and their dependents, will participate. Members of Rockefeller's Employee Health Office and Personnel Office will also be on hand to answer questions.

Health Benefits Day will take place in Nurses Residence 110B, from 10 A.M. to 2 P.M.

Employees can change their health insurance or enroll in a new plan during the period called Open Enrollment, this year from March 2 to 20. All changes will be effective April 1.

For further information, call Hansen, x8299.

New withholding affects paychecks

Within the next month, many Rockefeller employees will receive their first paychecks affected by the lower tax-withholding rates announced by President George Bush in this year's State of the Union message.

Single individuals earning up to $53,200, and married individuals earning up to $90,200, will have less money deducted from their paychecks for Federal taxes. The lower withholding is not a tax cut. *While the new rate can lead to larger paychecks, it may also result in the payment of additional taxes or the receipt of a lower refund for 1992 tax returns.*

Employees who wish to maintain withholding at the present level should return a new W-4 form to the Payroll Office with the following amount entered on line 6:

- Single employees, paid bi-weekly: $7
- Single employees, paid monthly: $14
- Married employees, paid bi-weekly: $13
- Married employees, paid monthly: $29.

Forms must be returned today (Feb. 14) to avoid any reduction in withholding. However, new W-4 forms can be filed with the Payroll Office at any time during the year.

For further information or assistance in completing the form, contact Deborah Sousa, x8345.

Phone line changes on hold as AT&T tailors software

The Rockefeller University Telecommunications Service has placed a freeze on all moves, changes, and additions of telephone lines and sets throughout the campus until May 1, 1992, when the new digital telecommunications system will be up and running.

The freeze was imposed Fri., Feb. 7, as the last step of the station-review process that ended the same day. During the last three weeks, station-review survey teams of specialists from Telecommunications and AT&T interviewed campus telephone users, collecting information for the new system's database.

According to Randy Sheets, on-site project manager for AT&T, the information collected was used to tailor the database's software to the university's needs. The freeze will ensure that the operating system can be engineered and programmed in time to test it with the new equipment prior to cutting over to the new system in late April.

Portia Goodman, manager of Telecommunications and the university's project manager for the new system, added: "It would be extremely expensive to make changes at this point. Moreover, because of time constraints, AT&T may not be able to incorporate further changes into the initial version of the software." Goodman said that she would review special requests for changes on a case-by-case basis, but she cannot guarantee that they will be approved.

Letters to the editor:

Proper disposal of needles

I would like to underline the need for proper disposal of all syringes and needles in the residential buildings.

Last week several needles were found in the bin in the compactor chute in Faculty House. Material thrown down the chute is collected in a plastic bag, which is handled by custodial workers! Not only is this practice dangerous to maintenance staff, it also creates a health hazard for residents. Residents and their visitors are urged to dispose of all needles and syringes in puncture-proof containers.

Sincerely,
Dorine Colin
Property Manager,
Phipps Houses Services, Inc.

Van rules reconsidered

Last week's article on the Rockefeller vans struck a chord with me. These machines are wonderful assets, and hats off to the Vanguard for their selfless efforts. However, I wonder whether others feel as I do that the current system could be improved. Two big problems:

- The vans are rarely available on less than eight weeks' notice. This situation makes the van useless for people without cars (especially students) who may have a need to travel on short notice (one to two weeks), for example, to a local event or due to a family emergency. Couldn't at least one of the vans have a short-term waiting list?
- Although lining up in the wee hours of the morning for the van is amusing and requires the least effort on the part of the Vanguard, I think that perhaps the Rockefeller community could come up with a better way of distributing van time. One shouldn't have to worry about losing one's place in line at 3 A.M. because of the need to go to the bathroom or perhaps sleep (God forbid!). I think an open dialogue about alternatives (e.g., a lottery list) could improve the situation.

If these issues are currently being addressed, then I don't want to be a sorehead. Otherwise, I hope that if others feels as I do, we can discuss our concerns with the powers that be and improve the situation.

Sincerely,
Ethan A. Benardete
Fifth-year M.D.-Ph.D. Student

Corners

Robert Reichert

The dappled branches of Rockefeller University's sycamore trees tower over the York Avenue fence.

Postdoc recalls thrill of Olympics

Continued from page 1

was delayed so it could be broadcast on Dutch television. While we were a stronger team, the Italians were much more experienced." When the critical game came to a close, the teams had tied. The Dutch team was awarded the bronze medal; the Italian team, the silver.

After his participation in the Olympics, Hoepelman withdrew from the national team to concentrate on his studies. Now an active international water polo referee, as well as an infectious disease physician in the Netherlands, Hoepelman sees his career as an athlete in a positive light.

"The single most important quality for athletes is perseverance, the ability to keep going in the face of setbacks," he said. "In team sports, it is also important to realize that you are only as strong as the weakest member of the team. You have to do your best to support the weakest player. That has been a very formative lesson in my life."

Like many other members of the Rockefeller community, Hoepelman is watching the television coverage of the winter Olympics in Albertville, France. He finds it interesting to compare the attitude toward the games here to that in his home country.

"I am amazed at how positive Americans are about their teams," he said. "They view any good effort as encouraging. In the Netherlands, if athletes do not place first, second, or third, they are criticized. I think this is one reason why Americans do so well in the Olympics. It is very important in sports not to be afraid to fail."

News&Notes is published each Friday throughout the academic year by The Rockefeller University, 1230 York Avenue, New York, NY 10021. Phone: 212-570-8967.

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Technology Transfer links dissimilar worlds of science, business

By Doron Weber

While the American economy is mired in recession, one of its few bright spots has been the strong growth of biotechnology companies. To a large extent, these companies depend on new discoveries in biological sciences made in university laboratories. Such scientific findings need to gain patent protection in order to justify the large investments of time and money needed to bring them successfully to market. This transfer of technology from university to industry has created impressive new opportunities. It has also brought two vastly dissimilar enterprises, academic scientific research and commercial business, into closer-than-usual contact.

Jerry A. Weisbach, Rockefeller's director of Technology Transfer and adjunct professor, embodies the link between these two worlds. Weisbach, who has a Ph.D. in chemistry from Harvard, spent 27 years working in industry, first at Smith, Kline & French and then at Warner Lambert, where he was president of the Pharmaceutical Research Division. Weisbach's role at The Rockefeller University is to act as a liaison between scientists and the companies or venture capitalists that might be interested in developing their research for commercial use. Along with the General Counsel's Office, Weisbach has helped transfer several new technologies discovered here into successful commercial enterprises.

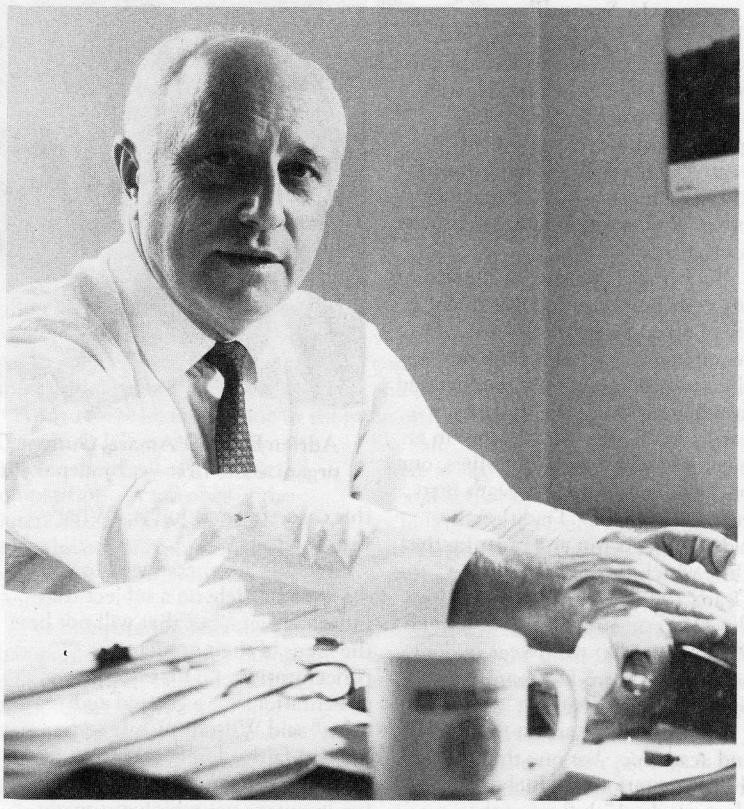
Although Weisbach says New York is still a relative "backwater" of the biotechnology industry — Cambridge, Berkeley, and San Diego are more prominent centers—Rockefeller's small program has done surprisingly well because of the "super-high-quality science" performed here. "The fundamental basis of any university technology transfer program is the creativity of the faculty and students," says Weisbach, adding that Rockefeller is "second to none." But he notes: "To be successful, this creativity must be coupled with an awareness of the program and a willingness to cooperate in various stages of the patenting and licensing effort."

Patenting is the foundation of any technology transfer program because no company will invest its resources unless it is assured a preferred position that only a legal patent can provide. How does one determine what to patent? Weisbach says: "The most important types of patent rights are claims to new products, to compositions containing the products, and to methods of making and using the products. In the biotechnology fields, these translate into, among others, claims such as genes, plasmids, and other vectors; novel products produced by microorganisms; biologically active molecules and methods for their isolation and purification; pharmaceutical compositions and drug delivery systems; vaccines; probes; methods of performing diagnostic tests; kits containing the components for performing the tests; monoclonal antibodies; and antigens and carriers for the antigens."

All potential inventors should maintain proper notebooks and records of activity relating to their inventions, according to Weisbach, as it might be necessary to establish the exact date on which an invention was conceived and first introduced into practice. If possible, books should be bound and should contain a day-to-day record of the research; each page should be dated, signed, and witnessed. While these procedures are routine in industry, they are far less common in university laboratories; this sometimes creates problems in establishing priority for claims over competitors.

Weisbach suggests that scientists who believe they are working on a discovery with commercial potential should call him at x7918 or come to see him in his fourth-floor office in Nurses Residence. (Teresa Solomon, staff attorney in the General Counsel's Office, herself a patent attorney, can also be contacted at x7598). And they should drop in on him sooner rather than later. Any public disclosure—through written publication, oral presentation to a public group, or a variety of other non-confidential methods—before a patent application is prepared and filed may jeopardize the invention's patent protection. On the other hand, the United States is one of the few countries in the world where publication does not automatically eliminate the chance for patent rights. Scientists have one year after the publication date to file a U.S. patent, whereas in other countries a patent is precluded by public disclosure and must have "absolute novelty."

Nevertheless, if there is an invention, it is imperative to coordinate public disclosure of any kind with the Technology Transfer office. "Just come in and talk if you think you might have an interesting invention," Weisbach says. With his scientific training and experience in industry, Weisbach can usually make a fairly quick and accurate assessment. He often knows if someone else is already working on a similar invention, if there is a market, and who the potential licensees for the invention might be.



Robert Reichert

Jerry A. Weisbach, director of Technology Transfer and adjunct professor, embodies the link between academic science and business.

Weisbach cautions that some inventions may be significant scientifically, but may not bring a large financial return. On the other hand, he may be able to see commercial possibilites in places that academic scientists cannot. Without seeking in any way to alter the course of their research, he may help some investigators become more alert to the commercial value of work they are already doing. He also may be able to bring it more readily to the attention of those in industry.

If Weisbach believes an invention has real potential, he will likely give an invention-disclosure form to the inventor. This form, also available from Solomon, records the basic information needed to start the patenting process, such as the names of the inventors, and a description of the invention and its potential commercial utility.

A more informal meeting—with Weisbach, the university attorney, and possibly outside experts—will then be called. A patent attorney will help determine if the invention meets the criteria of being "new, useful, and non-obvious." If it does, and there appears to be commercial potential, a patent will be filed. Weisbach will seek out suitable licensees for the invention—such as a large or small company—or other outlets such as a venture capitalist.

Universities now share part of the royalties they receive with the inventor. In the Rockefeller University formula, inventors receive 50 percent of the first $100,000 of royalty income, and 10 percent thereafter. From its share, the university covers the cost of patenting and overhead, as well as the cost associated with any inventions that do not eventually yield income. Inventors may obtain support from the licensee for further work in their university laboratory.

It normally takes a number of years before an invention produces any net return on sales, though licensing fees and advance royalties may be available immediately. More research and development are usually needed, and clearance through various regulatory authorities may be protracted. However, according to Weisbach, once inventions are fully launched, and additional discoveries are licensed and commercialized, "the pyramid structure of royalty payments can produce substantial returns to both the university and the inventors." The parties involved may also benefit from enhanced public recognition.

What's your interest? First-year students answer in journal club

by Susan Blum

It's not exactly your typical "mixer," but then The Rockefeller University is not exactly your typical graduate school. That's why first-year students at Rockefeller get to know each other by meeting every other Wednesday evening to discuss journal articles.

"Given the diversity of student interests here, and the fact that there are virtually no shared requirements except for the thesis, the journal club may be the first and last chance for all the students in a particular class to get together in an organized way," said Julie Miwa, one of the organizers of this year's first-year journal club. Traditionally, older students run and organize the club, which is sponsored by the Deans' Office. In addition to Miwa, this year's organizers include David Wilson, another third-year student, and Adrian Ferre-D'Amare, a second-year student.

The gatherings are far from dry and academic. For one thing, the presentations—which take place on the 17th floor of the Tower building—are preceded by cocktails and a dinner ordered from one of Yorkville's various ethnic restaurants—Italian cuisine one time, say, and Yugoslavian specialties the next. Then, too, the presentations themselves, while rigorous, are also a kind of intellectual variation on that old mixer theme, "What's your sign?" But in this case, the question is, "What's your interest?"

Robert Reichert

Adrian Ferre-D'Amare, Gunnar Dietz, and Julie Miwa *(left to right)*, organize the first-year journal club.

Students are encouraged to discuss an article on a subject that intrigues them, but that will not be the focus of their academic concentration. "This encourages presentations for a general audience," said Wilson. While some subjects fairly closely orbit the student's main scientific interest (an incipient neurobiologist might, for example, discuss an article on embryonic development), many take a much wider trajectory.

Wilson, for instance, works on transcription factors in the Desplan lab, but his talk two years ago discussed a paper, written by a Freudian folklorist, on the unconscious connections between sex and death. And this year, Gunnar Dietz, whose work in the Pfaff lab investigates the pre-proenkephalin promoter, discussed a paper on how to detect a liar.

"I've always had a layman's interest in psychology," Dietz said. Having read numerous books in the field, he was particularly interested in a psycho-political drama that occurred in his native Germany a few years ago. A politician named Barschel, who was the head of state of Schleswig-Holstein, made accusations about a rival, at first believed, that were ultimately disclosed to be lies. Unmasked, Barschel committed suicide.

"It was the political scandal of the eighties," Dietz said. Memories of the affair piqued his interest in the article on lying he found in *The American Psychologist*, and made him eager to present it to the journal club. Coincidentally, Dietz gave his presentation the week the American public heard testimony by two witnesses, only one of whom could be telling the truth—Clarence Thomas and Anita Hill. "People were really interested in what the article had to say about lying," Dietz reported.

Because the students are not experts in the subject of the article they present, they invite a specialist to be on hand to clarify points and help field questions. Generally, the expert is a Rockefeller postdoc or faculty member, but support sometimes comes from a neighboring institution. Dietz, for instance, asked John Polan, a psychiatrist from the Payne Whitney Clinic, to serve as his expert.

The journal article under discussion may be one that came in last week's mail, or a classical paper published decades ago. The point is for the students to strengthen their skills in critical reading, verbal presentation, and discussion leading. Each year, the student who is voted the best presenter is rewarded ("or punished," quipped Ferre-D'Amare) by being asked to present a second article at the club's final session. Last year, Ferre-D'Amare was the winner. This year, said Wilson, the vote promises to be especially close. "The quality of the presentations has been extremely high. This year's incoming class seems exceptionally talented."

Potpourri

Rockefollies casting call
The 1992 Rockefollies is scheduled for Thurs., April 2. Everyone at Rockefeller who wants to perform, show off unique talents, or just have some fun is invited to participate. Volunteers to help produce the show are also needed. All interested individuals should contact David Heath, at x8441, Box 262, or e-mail *samber*.

Art show submissions
Lenox Hill Artists Forum is requesting submissions for the Medical Complex Spring Show. Members of the Tri-Institutional community, or their families, should submit photos or slides of their art to the Cornell Medical Library as soon as possible. For further information, call Helen-Ann Brown or Charles Stepan at 472-9772.

Free Literature Searching
The use of CD PLUS—a new bibliographic search program with the speed of an online program but the ease of a system designed for a microcomputer—will be offered free of charge on the second floor of the library, 9:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M., for a ten-day demonstration period beginning Feb 14. The program searches for material in the National Library of Medicine published between January 1966 and January 1992. Users will be able to do their own searches and results can be printed or downloaded to users' floppy disks. For more information, contact Patricia Flowers, x8907.

Philip Levine Lecture
Bert Vogelstein, professor of oncology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine, will speak at the Philip Levine Memorial Lecture in Caspary Auditorium, Tues., Feb. 18, at 3:45 P.M. (tea at 3:15 P.M.). Vogelstein will speak on "Genetic Alterations Underlying Colorectal Tumorigenesis."

Parenting support group
The Employee Assistance Program Consortium (EAPC) is offering a free parenting education and support group for mothers and fathers, including single parents. Topics will include discipline, communication, parents' needs, resources for daycare, support groups, etc. The group will meet on 10 consecutive lunch hours, starting in March. If interested, or for more information, call 746-5890.

Tri-Institutional Noon Recital
English pianist Graham Scott, winner of the 1991 Young Concert Artists International Auditions, will perform today (Feb. 14) at the Tri-Institutional Noon Recital in Caspary Auditorium. Scott will play Beethoven, Chopin, Rachmaninoff, and Scriabin.

Clarification
To clarify a point in last week's *News&Notes*: recyclable plastic—which does not include labware—should be deposited in one of the bins in the 64th St. parking lot, not with the paper and glass collected at recycling stations around campus.

Christian Steiner

Pianist Graham Scott