

12-1977

NEWS AND NOTES 1977, VOL.9, NO.3

The Rockefeller University

Follow this and additional works at: http://digitalcommons.rockefeller.edu/news_and_notes_1977

Recommended Citation

The Rockefeller University, "NEWS AND NOTES 1977, VOL.9, NO.3" (1977). *News and Notes 1977*. Book 7.
http://digitalcommons.rockefeller.edu/news_and_notes_1977/7

This Book is brought to you for free and open access by the The Rockefeller University News and Notes at Digital Commons @ RU. It has been accepted for inclusion in News and Notes 1977 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ RU. For more information, please contact mcsweej@mail.rockefeller.edu.



National Medal for Uhlenbeck and Goudsmit

Professor George E. Uhlenbeck and Samuel A. Goudsmit were among 15 recipients of the National Medal of Science, the government's highest award for achievement in science, mathematics, and engineering, presented at the White House on November 22 by President Carter, who cited their "major discovery of the electron spin as a source of a new quantum number." Dr. Goudsmit was formerly a visiting professor at Rockefeller.

The National Medal of Science was established by Congress in 1959. Previous University scientists who have received the award were President Seitz (1973), Detlev W. Bronk (1968), Fritz Lipmann (1966), Peyton Rous and Donald D. Van Slyke (1965), and Theodosius Dobzhansky and Neal E. Miller (1964).

USE BOX NUMBERS

The new University phone directory now includes a separate section listing mail box numbers. Everyone on campus is urged to use these numbers in addition to names on interoffice mail, a step which will help speed up distribution in the Mail Room.

Your Decision Will Affect Your Benefits

In mid-November, everyone on campus received information relating to the University's new TIAA-CREF retirement pension plan. As explained in the distributed literature, this revised plan will be mandatory for all faculty and staff hired after January 1. Those currently enrolled in the old plan—faculty and nonfaculty—have the option of remaining in it or of switching to the new plan.

The advantages of one arrangement over the other can be determined *only* on an individual basis, depending on length of service, salary level, retirement needs, and other variables. Your decision will affect your current take-

home pay and your future retirement income.

Therefore, the Personnel staff, which is administering the program for all members of the campus community, urges that everyone come to the Personnel Office at his or her earliest convenience anytime during the nine to five working day.

As President Seitz stated, the new plan was adopted by the board of trustees to help the University cope with the continuously rising contributions it must make to social security while retaining for its employees the most advantageous retirement benefits possible.

George Miller to Give Christmas Lectures

Each year several hundred New York City high school students flock to Caspary Hall for the Alfred E. Mirsky Christmas Lectures to find out what's new and important in some major area of current research. This year the subject is the Verbal Machinery of Thinking: the Scientific Exploration of Speech, Language, Thought, and Meaning. Leading the exploration will be Professor George A. Miller, head of the University's laboratory of experimental psychology. In his four lectures,

two each on the afternoons of December 27 and December 28, he will consider Speech Signals and Language Codes, the Dictionary in Your Head, Does Language Control Our Thoughts, and Sentences as Puzzles.

For Dr. Miller, language is "the most conspicuous and perhaps the most important difference between man and other animals." As he observed in his book, *Language and Perception*, "Language is complicated. An instrument

continued on page 3

Sonya Mirsky Appointed Librarian

President Seitz has announced the appointment of Sonya Wohl Mirsky as librarian of The Rockefeller University. She succeeds C. Robin Le Seuer, who has been named librarian of the Francis A. Countway Library of Medicine of Harvard University. Mr. Le Seuer has been with the University since 1972.

In accepting her new post, Mrs. Mirsky will take primary responsibility for a facility of nearly 180,000 volumes,



housed on six floors of Welch Hall, in the Math/Physics Library in the Tower, and in the Alfred E. Cohn Memorial Library in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall. The Library has a staff of 17 people working in acquisitions, cataloging, the reading rooms, periodicals, and photocopying. It is one of the few existing libraries—and probably the only university-based library—that is open 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. It has been Mrs. Mirsky's beloved second home for all of her working life.

In 1949, the business manager of what was then The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research called Columbia University in search of a librarian with a science background. Sonya Wohl was the only student who qualified. A year away from her M.S. in library science, which she completed while working at Rockefeller, she had a B.S. from City College, where she had concentrated on the sciences. In high school she had been one of the first Westinghouse Science Talent Search winners. She began as assistant librarian and became associate librarian in 1961.

The scope of her work grew as the Library grew. Between 1957 and 1959, she was in charge of a monumental re-

cataloging project that resulted in the first systematized classification of the Library's entire collection—then about 30,000 volumes. Around the same time, she took over reference services, which at Rockefeller is no ordinary job. "By the time a scientist comes to us with a problem, he or she has already dug deep in the literature. None of the questions we get is routine. They're always hard and meaty. That's when I really feel like a librarian, and I'm not happy until I find the answer." As a matter of course, she reads scientific journals daily, devours bibliographies, has taken graduate courses, confers regularly with the laboratories, and forgets nothing. Many a questioner has been startled to get an off-the-top-of-her-head answer in which she quotes a paper's title, author, journal, volume, date, and page number.

Mrs. Mirsky is directly responsible for 90 percent of the Library's acquisitions, as well as having a significant say in its fiscal management. Twenty-five years ago, she set up an arrangement with the Strand Book Store whereby they hold all the science and medical books they receive for her to look at before anyone else. From these she makes a selection—usually about 60 volumes a week—which she buys at a 50 percent discount. More than half the Library's books are acquired this way, many of them as much as two months ahead of publication date. "We have all the latest science books. But," she adds, "we also have a copy of Hooke's *Micrographia* dating from 1665."

In her view, much credit for the Library's achievements belongs to Alfred E. Mirsky, who served as librarian from 1965 to 1972 while also pursuing a distinguished career in biochemical and physiological research. The two were married in 1967. Until his death in 1974, their vacations were spent traveling through Europe, the Middle East, and Asia in response to a shared passion for art history and archeology. Among his many other achievements, Dr. Mirsky was the founder of the Christmas Lectures for high school students, now named in his honor. Mrs. Mirsky currently handles arrangements for this exceptional program, which each year fills Caspary Auditorium with enthusiastic young scientists-in-the-making.

As she assumes her new duties, Mrs. Mirsky's main concern is the Library's pressing need for more space, for which the 1973 expansion and renovation provided only temporary respite. She is working hard on plans that she hopes will be financially feasible without curtailing necessary growth in size and

PERSONALS

Born, October 20, to **Louise Ferraro**, bookkeeping clerk, and her husband, Joseph, twin boys, Daniel Anthony and Nicholas Thomas, their seventh and eighth children. The Ferraros have three other boys and three girls. Mrs. Ferraro's mother is **Emily Getting**, a helper in the laboratory of Professor Henry G. Kunkel.

Dr. Judith R. Tennant, associate executive editor of the *Journal of Cell Biology*, was married on September 24 to Franklin M. Haines, Jr., an attorney.

Lancefield Club

In honor of the long and distinguished career of Professor Rebecca C. Lancefield, the members of the Streptococcal Club voted on October 9 at their annual meeting to change the name to the Lancefield Club.

Dr. Lancefield, whose career at The Rockefeller began in 1918, is coleader of the University's laboratory of bacteriology and immunology. Her lifelong work with streptococci has been directed entirely toward an understanding of the antigenic composition and immunology of these pathogenic microorganisms, whose serological classification is based on these studies.

The Streptococcal Club was an outgrowth of the Commission on Streptococcal and Staphylococcal Diseases of the Armed Forces Epidemiological Board. When the commission was dissolved in 1972, its members continued as an informal discussion group (as distinguished from the continuing international forum) to exchange ideas and review developments in the field of streptococcal biology and medicine.

service. Of the Library's service to its users she says, "We do well, but we should do better. Wherever I can, I would like to introduce additional techniques that will make it possible for our staff to spend less time with files and more time with people." Despite her impatience with "files," the fact remains that the Rockefeller Library has a cataloging backlog time of never more than 36 hours, as opposed to anywhere from 6 to 18 months in other libraries. Mrs. Mirsky's philosophy is simple: "You can't work in an exceptional place with exceptional people without providing exceptional service."



With characteristic Rockefeller style and form, Phyllis Moses shows how it's done in the Spaghetti Javelin, one of the many thrilling events in the Fifth Annual Student Olympics, held on October 15. Rick Mortensen, left, Arthur Pomerantz, and Keith Mostov watch in awe and admiration.

CHRISTMAS LECTURES

continued from page 1

adaptable to an unforeseeable variety of social, personal, and intellectual demands has to be complicated—the more complicated the better.” A pioneer in studies on how human beings perceive and remember spoken and written messages and the rules they develop and use to produce and interpret meaningful sentences, Dr. Miller has drawn heavily in his investigations on engineering, mathematical, and computer techniques, as well as anthropology, linguistics, neurophysiology, and optics. His work on the subjective lexicon —“the dictionary in your head”—is aimed at a deeper understanding of the complex interactions between language and thought. In recent years, he has studied the development of language in children, as described in his latest book, *Spontaneous Apprentices: Children and Language*, released last month.

Dr. Miller will begin his lecture with a look at the difference between speech (a mechanical function) and language (a conceptual construct). He will go on to survey briefly the vast body of knowledge about words and their meanings and to re-examine some of the accepted ideas about how words are learned and how language influences thought. He will explain semantic “decomposition,” a technique used to arrive at basic lexical concepts. In the final lecture, he and his coexplorers will have some fun with metaphors. We use similes and

International Exchange Program Announced

The Rockefeller University and the International Institute of Cellular and Molecular Pathology (ICP) in Brussels have established a new Collaborative Program in the Biomedical Sciences. Its purpose is to encourage young Rockefeller investigators to spend a period of up to two years at ICP and to create comparable opportunities for ICP researchers to join laboratories on this campus. (The official language at ICP is English.)

The Belgian institute was established in 1975 by members of the Louvain Medical School as an independent research facility dedicated to “applying the discoveries and techniques of modern biology to medicine and therapeutics.” It is under the direction of Christian de Duve, who at Rockefeller holds the post of Andrew W. Mellon professor and head of the laboratory of biochemical cytology. Dr. de Duve describes the creation of ICP as “very much the outcome of an effort to embody on European soil the aims and principles that have inspired our own institution.”

There have been close ties between the two research centers since the inception of ICP. Three other ICP founders besides Dr. de Duve have worked at various times at The Rockefeller; 10 staff members have been University postdocs, including Mariette Robbi, currently a research associate in Dr. de Duve's lab; and another staff member, Thierry Boon, is a 1970 Rockefeller graduate. President Seitz serves on the ICP's international scientific council.

In addition to regular fellowships, the RU-ICP Committee is eager to encourage other reciprocal visiting arrangements, workshops, and symposia, and would welcome suggestions from members of the University's faculty for candidates and programs. The committee members are: Dr. de Duve, President Seitz, Professors James G. Hirsch, Henry G. Kunkel, Miklós Müller, and Norton Zinder, and Vice President Rodney W. Nichols.

metaphors all the time without stopping to consider the wealth of information, association, and experience we draw upon—the leaps we make and the gaps we fill—when we say, “John is a lion!”

The Alfred E. Mirsky Christmas Lectures, now in their 18th year, are named in honor of the series founder, who died in 1974.

BRIEFS

Professors **Shu Man Fu**, Immunology, and **Ralph M. Steinman**, Cellular Physiology and Immunology, were among 11 Leukemia Society of America, Inc., Scholars who spoke at a Symposium on Progress in Leukemia Pathophysiology and Treatment, sponsored by the Leukemia Society, the University of Alabama in Birmingham, and the Southern Research Institute, held in Birmingham on October 28. Dr. Fu spoke on Studies of Human B Lymphocytes and Dr. Steinman on Proliferate Activity of Mouse Lymphoblasts In Vitro.

Professors **James J. Daly**, **Donald G. Lindmark**, and **Miklós Müller**, Biochemical Cytology, presented papers at a Symposium on Trichomoniasis, held in Bratislava, Czechoslovakia, September 6–8. Dr. Müller also gave two invited papers on the biochemistry of *Trichomonas vaginalis* and on the mode of action of antitrichomonas drugs at a Symposium on Genitourinary Trichomoniasis, organized by the Institute A. Fournier in Paris, July 7–9.

Professor **Alexander Tomasz**, Microbiology, and Dr. Müller were invited participants in the 10th International Congress of Chemotherapy, held in Zürich, Switzerland, September 18–23. Dr. Tomasz spoke on the new results on the mode of action of penicillin at symposia on penicillin action and also chaired other sessions; and Dr. Müller spoke on the action of antiparasitic nitroimidazoles at a symposium on the chemotherapy of parasitic infections.

Professor **Jules Hirsch**, Human Behavior and Metabolism, spoke on Perspectives on Obesity at the Second International Congress on Obesity, held October 23–26 in Washington, D.C. He also chaired a panel on Priorities for Basic Research at a meeting on Obesity and the American Public, held at the Fogarty International Center, October 20–22.

President Seitz was the main speaker at the dedication of a new building at the Desert Research Institute in Reno, Nevada, on October 15. He spoke on the need for a rational balance between productivity and environmental concern.

Thirty-six Rockefeller scientists reported on their work at the Seventh Annual Meeting of the Society for Neuroscience, held November 6–10 in Anaheim, California. Professor **Neal E. Miller** served as chairman of the Public Information Committee.



WILLOW TREE LOST

The exquisite willow tree that framed the north entrance to Bronk Lab was knocked over by heavy winds and rain on October 15. It was planted in 1958.



These trees, while extremely decorative, tend to have delicate root systems, according to Head Gardener John Considine. The roots of the one that fell were found to be completely rotted.

RU, NIH Hold Conference on Strep Diseases

Scientists and clinicians from the United States, Latin America, Switzerland, England, Cuba, Poland, Egypt, Czechoslovakia, Denmark, and Trinidad, including 10 from the University, met during the week of November 7 in Trinidad for a conference on Streptococcal Diseases and the Immune Response. The meeting was under the joint auspices of The Rockefeller University, the National Institutes of Health, the Medical Association of Trinidad-Tobago, and the Trinidad-Tobago Ministry of Health. Rockefeller Vice President Maclyn McCarty and Professor John B. Zabriskie served as conference chairmen.

Streptococcal infection, which can cause severe heart and kidney disease, is under relatively good control through antibiotics among middle-class populations in industrialized Western countries. But among the poor and in the underdeveloped nations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America, where it is the leading cause of heart disease, the problem is of "enormous proportions," according to Dr. Zabriskie, who has done field work with nephritis and rheumatic fever in the Caribbean for a number of years. (See *news and notes*, April 1975).

The conference in Trinidad, at the gateway to Latin America where strep infection is the number one disease of children, offered a significant opportunity for an exchange between laboratory researchers and physicians whose vast clinical experience has been gained in the front lines of the battle.

Among the subjects discussed were Poststreptococcal Sequelae, the Strepto-

coccus and Its Products, Cellular Interactions, Immunogenetics, Mediators, Tissue Injury, Mechanisms of Renal Injury, Glomerulonephritis, Rheumatic Fever, and Streptococcal Disease: World Status.

University participants, in addition to Doctors McCarty and Zabriskie, were Doctors Zanvil Cohn, Howard M. Fillit, Vincent A. Fischetti, Henry G. Kunkel, Stanley E. Read, Ivo J. van de Rijn, Herman Villarreal, Jr., and Robert J. Winchester; and also Adjunct Professor Richard M. Krause, who left the University in 1975 to become director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Adjunct Associate Professor Thomas J. Kindt, now with the Laboratory of Immunogenetics of NIAID.

ERRARE HUMANUM EST

The previously undefeated Rockefeller University Chess Club lost—by one game—its return match with the United Nations Chess Club on November 2.

INSIDE NUMBER

The University's Field Research Center at Millbrook, New York, now has a Centrex extension on the University's phone system. This makes it possible to reach the center by dialing 1865 instead of making a long-distance call.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Professor **Miklós Müller**, Biochemical Cytology, has been named the first recipient of the Seymour H. Hutner Prize of the Society of Protozoologists, awarded at the Fifth International Congress of Protozoology, held in New York in June.

Consultant **Fritz F. Fuchs**, Uris Professor and chairman of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Cornell University Medical College, has been made Knight of Dannebrog by H. M. Queen Margrethe of Denmark in recognition of his accomplishments in medical science and his work to further relations between Denmark and the United States in his field.

Cotzias Memorial Service

Friends and associates of George C. Cotzias are invited to a service in his memory on Wednesday, December 14, at 4:30 P.M. in Hoffmann Auditorium, Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Dr. Cotzias, who died on June 13, was an eminent neurologist best known for the development of L-dopa as a treatment for Parkinson's disease. He held appointments at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and Cornell University Medical College, and was an adjunct professor and visiting physician at Rockefeller. He was a member of the physiology and metabolism laboratory of Professor Vincent P. Dole from 1948 to 1953. Dr. Dole will be one of the speakers at the service.



Professor E. G. D. Cohen, right, chairman of the Faculty and Students Club, toasts Leonhard Wachsmuth at a party honoring his 20 years as Club manager. In October, the Club's board passed a resolution in thanks to Mr. Wachsmuth who has been, since its inception, "the heart and soul of the Club."