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## NEWS AND NOTES 1993, VOL.3, NO.27

The Rockefeller University

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# news & notes

April 16, 1993 Volume 3, Number 27

The Rockefeller University

## Lab equipment stolen from RU

Computers and equipment from several laboratories on campus have been stolen during the past three weeks, The Rockefeller University Security Department reported.

The Aderem, Desplan, Friedman, and Gilbert labs, as well as a conference room in the Rockefeller Research building, lost equipment totaling about \$26,000 in the period between Mar. 27 and Apr. 7. A few of the items were recovered after being abandoned in the stairwell of the Rockefeller Research Building and outside Bronx. No locks appear to have been broken during the burglaries.

"The thefts on campus appear to be related to one another," said Joseph Nekola, director of Security. "Similar thefts and attempted thefts also occurred recently at New York Hospital, which leads me to believe that this is an outside job."

Nekola is asking members of the university community to call the Security Department if they see someone they don't know or aren't sure belongs here. "Unlike the police, we don't mind false alarms," Nekola said. "There are only 30 of us in the Security Department, but there are 2,000 people on this campus who can help the investigation by being our eyes and ears. Please don't hesitate to call us at x8506."

Nekola also urges everyone to lock doors upon leaving the office or laboratory, and suggests that those who purchase valuable office equipment have it secured to their

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## 2 Children unearth Easter treats

## 3 RU researchers study psoriasis

## 4 The Scientists play ball

The Rockefeller University Archives



This is one of photos which will be exhibited next week in the Library in celebration of National Library Week.

## RU celebrates National Library Week

In celebration of National Library week, The Rockefeller University Library will host a reception and display a historical exhibit next week.

"This is the first time we've celebrated National Library Week," said Patricia Mackey, head librarian. "It's a good opportunity for the community to get to know our staff and to learn more about the Library, its history, and the services it currently offers. This Library has a unique combination of books and journals in life sciences, math, and physics, with some literature and poetry. We also have an unusually dedicated and long-serving staff."

The reception, which is open to everyone in the university community, will be held on the second

floor of Welch Hall on Fri., April 23 from noon to 3:00 P.M.

The display, which will feature photos and letters from The Rockefeller University Archives, will be exhibited in the same location throughout the week (Mon., Apr. 19 to Fri., Apr. 23). It will trace the development of the Library from its beginnings shortly after the founding of The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research to the present.

"The university's book collection began in 1903, after the Board of Directors allocated \$5,000 for Drs. Christian Herter and Simon Flexner to buy books in Europe," said Mackey. "This would be a

See *Library*, page 2

## Symposium to discuss psoriasis treatments

The Rockefeller University will host a symposium on treatment of moderate to severe psoriasis tomorrow (April 17), from 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. in Caspary Auditorium.

The symposium—co-chaired by Alice Gottlieb, associate professor in the Carter lab, and Gerald D. Weinstein, professor and chairman of the Department of Dermatology at the University of California, Irvine—will discuss guidelines for using available therapies for

psoriasis. Presentations will also address the special considerations in managing AIDS and pediatric patients.

The symposium is sponsored by the National Psoriasis Foundation and is funded by an educational grant to the foundation from the Sandoz Pharmaceuticals Corporation. For further information or reservations, call Haber & Flora, Inc., (203) 348-5888. For an article on psoriasis research, see page 3.

## Friday lecturer to describe electrical signaling in brain

Steven Siegelbaum, Columbia University professor and Howard Hughes Medical Institute associate investigator, will speak on "Neuronal Signaling through Cyclic Nucleotides: Molecular Analysis of Rapid and Trophic Actions on Ion Channel Gating" at the Friday lecture today (Apr. 16).

In his lecture, Siegelbaum will describe the very short- and very long-term effects of cyclic nucleotides on the function of ion channels. As intracellular messengers, cyclic nucleotides influence electrical signaling by regulating the flow of ions through the channels in neuron membranes. "Dr. Siegelbaum has been particularly successful in using a technique called 'patch-clamping' in combination with techniques of molecular biology to study the actions of these ubiquitous cellular messengers," said Professor David Gadsby, who is hosting the lecture.

Siegelbaum will explain, for example, how within fractions of a second, stimuli of sight and smell, many of which are critical to survival, can be processed through the activation of ion channels. He will also explain a much slower effect, requiring hours or days, on developmental regulation of ion channels.

Siegelbaum received his Ph.D. in pharmacology in 1978 from Yale University and did postdoctoral training at the University College in London and the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Paris. Shortly thereafter, Siegelbaum joined the faculty of the College of Physicians and Surgeons, Columbia University.

Siegelbaum was awarded the Irma T. Hirsch Career Scientist Award in 1985, and the Herbert J. Kayden Award of the New York Academy of Sciences in Biomedical Science in 1987. A member of the Society for Neuroscience and the Biophysical Society, Siegelbaum serves on the editorial board of the *Journal of Neurophysiology* and on the publications committee of the Society for Neurosciences.

The lecture will be held at 3:45 P.M. in Caspary Auditorium. Tea will precede it at 3:15 P.M.

## No need to egg them on

# Children hunt for Easter treats

By Jennifer Horne King

In a scene reminiscent of the fairy wood in William Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, over 60 young children, ages one through nine, flitted across the grass and through the trees of The Rockefeller University campus, hunting for Easter eggs on Easter Sunday.

Julie Crown, who helped organize the annual fund-raising event last year, together with Odete da Cruz e Silva, chair of the residences' Playroom Committee, explained that the registration fee helps pay for toys and decorations for the children. The two stuffed over 350 plastic eggs for the event.

Each egg held an assortment of goodies, including jelly beans and chocolate eggs. "Candy seems to be the universal currency among these children who come from all nations, so it's not surprising that we have such a good turnout!" said Crown, a parent of three who grew up in Ireland where Easter egg

hunts are not a custom.

Starting at 8:00 A.M. and assisted by some of the nine- and ten-year-olds, Crown, da Cruz e Silva, and other parents from Scholars Residence and Faculty House hid the eggs in the grass and bushes in front of Caspary Hall, where Easter egg hunts have taken place for as long as any of the residents can remember. "The older children know exactly where to hide the eggs," said Crown. "They have the mind for it, they know how to make the hunt challenging for the young ones." The hunt began at 10:00 A.M. In under an hour, the children—some from The Scholars Residence and Faculty House and others from The Rockefeller University Children's School—unearthed the treats.

Following the hunt, the children participated in a host of contests. Toddlers raced each other across the green, while older children rolled eggs or balanced them on spoons from one edge of the grass to the other. This year, 60 plastic



Children from Scholars Residence, Faculty House, and The Rockefeller University Children's School race across the lawn in one of the Easter activities on campus last Sunday.

troll dolls—the latest rage—were included among the prizes.

"Children growing up in New York City rarely get a chance to play outdoors in green surroundings with other children," said Crown. "If it weren't for this event on Easter Sunday, they would probably be watching T.V."

Preparations for the annual event take time, but, according to Crown, the result is well worth the

effort. "Easter may involve stuffing a lot of eggs ahead of time and waking up early to hide them, but seeing the glee on the children's faces when they discover an egg makes it all worthwhile," she said. "I also find it touching that months after the hunt, the children continue scouting for eggs whenever they see grass. They seem to be convinced that there are still countless treasures to be uncovered!"

## Profiles

### Cherry Estilo

**Position:** Assistant for research in the Konarska lab.

**Born:** Manila, Philippines, 1969.

**College:** Cornell University School of Agriculture and Life Sciences, class of '91.

**Ambition:** To become a doctor of medicine and make health care accessible to people in developing countries. "I remember observing people who couldn't afford medical care in the Philippines and feeling very helpless about it."

**Current preoccupation:** Waiting for letters of acceptance from medical schools for entrance in the fall.

**A typical day in the lab:** In the morning, finishes up work from the day before and takes care of lab errands. The rest of the time is usually spent running, reading, scanning, and plotting gels. At the moment, cloning genes. All these techniques were learned at Rockefeller.

**Greatest frustration at the bench:** Getting bubbles in a gel, because it means starting all over.

**Volunteer work:** A four-hour shift in a pediatric playroom at Sloan Kettering Cancer Center every



Michael Dumas

**Cherry Estilo, assistant for research, hopes to attend medical school in the fall.**

Saturday. "The hardest part is getting close to children and then finding out that they've passed away. You have to be very strong, emotionally. You cry a lot, but you laugh a lot, too."

**Other activities:** Rollerblading, cooking (preferably not at the same time).

**Personal panacea:** "Cooking up a storm in the kitchen for anyone who's willing to try my concoctions. It works wonders."

## RU celebrates National Library Week

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minuscule amount of money to start a collection these days. Today, a one-year subscription to our most expensive journal, *Brain Research*, costs \$9,484. A subscription to our most expensive abstract, *Chemical Abstracts*, costs \$14,700."

The Library was first housed in Founder's Hall, where the Personnel Office is currently located, and moved to the first floor of Welch Hall when that building was completed in 1929. The Library expanded to include the first floor of Welch Hall, where the faculty

dining hall was once situated, in 1974.

The Rockefeller University Library now has a collection of 190,430 volumes, including 111,370 books and 79,060 journals. It uses a computerized system to conduct book and database searches, track circulation, and assist in administrative tasks. Some of the newer services the Library offers are an on-line bulletin board and an e-mail system to send in requests and suggestions.

## Lab equipment stolen from RU

(continued from page 1)

desk or bench by cable. Information on the various cabling systems available can be obtained from the Security Department.

The police and other biomedical institutions in the area have been alerted to the situation. Rockefeller University guards have been instructed to increase their scrutiny of people carrying packages and vehicles leaving the campus.

Information, and suggestions should be directed to the Security Department at x8506, or x1111 in an emergency.

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# Battling scourge of psoriasis: researchers test new treatments

By Susan Blum

It has been called "the disease that doesn't kill you, but doesn't let you live."

The disease is psoriasis, and it afflicts about five million Americans. The most obvious symptoms of psoriasis are the red, raised, scaly patches that commonly appear on the scalp, elbows, knees, buttocks, and lower back. These scaly plaques cause painful itching and interfere with the skin's vital function as a barrier against infection. Other effects of psoriasis—less visible but no less serious—include a painful form of arthritis that can be crippling.

As if these physical effects weren't bad enough, psoriasis can also exact a heavy psychological, social, and economic toll. "People with a disfiguring disease such as psoriasis often have very poor self images. The first time they come into my office, many of my patients just break down and cry," said Associate Professor Alice Gottlieb, a member of the Rockefeller University team investigating psoriasis. She and her colleagues work primarily with patients who have severe psoriasis. Gottlieb reports that these patients' social lives are often non-existent, and their work lives are impaired or even curtailed: Unfairly—not to mention illegally—psoriasis sufferers are sometimes fired from their jobs when their symptoms flare. All in all, the costs due to loss of work and health care expenditures have been estimated in the billions of dollars.

## No pill in sight

To put an end to their troubles, Gottlieb said, people with psoriasis want "a pill that would cure their condition the way penicillin cures strep throat." Unfortunately, such a cure is still a distant hope. The only treatments currently available for moderate and severe psoriasis are toxic, insufficient, or both.

The inadequacy of current treatment methods reflects the complexity of the disease. "Psoriasis involves the abnormal growth, or hyperplasia, of a layer of skin known as the epidermis, so that the rate of growth of cells is speeded up perhaps 10 times over the normal rate. It also involves an activation of the immunological system locally—that is, where the plaques appear," said Assistant Professor James Krueger, another member of the Rockefeller team investigating psoriasis. Like Gottlieb, Krueger works in the Laboratory for Investigative Dermatology headed

by Professor D. Martin Carter.

The twin goals of Gottlieb, Krueger, and their colleagues are and interconnected. One aim is to learn more about the basic pathophysiology of the disease by exploring the causes of both the epidermal and immunological activation, and teasing out the relationships between them. The second aim is to understand how current treatments work, and to develop new therapies that might work better.

Such "rational" drug design would represent a dramatic departure from the way anti-psoriasis drugs have been discovered in the past. Because the pathophysiology of the disease has until recently remained largely unknown, most current medications or treatments to combat it are either "hand-me-downs" from other diseases, or lucky accidents. Methotrexate is a good example. The drug was originally designed to fight cancer, but when it was given to cancer patients who happened to have psoriasis, their skin condition improved at the same time as their cancer was treated. Now, the drug is used in differing dosages to treat both diseases.

Though methotrexate's effectiveness against psoriasis was not predicted when the drug was first developed, it makes sense in light of the current understanding of the disease. "Many people feel that psoriasis is one of the model diseases that needs to be studied in order to understand cancer, because psoriasis represents one of the most profound hyperplasias of epithelial cells available for study," said Krueger. Epithelial cells—one of the major cell types in the body—perform a variety of functions in many different tissues and organs, including the skin, breast, lung, colon, ovary, and cervix. Most of the cancers that kill humans are epithelial cell cancers, also known as carcinomas.

Ultimately, Krueger says, the study of the epithelial activation component of psoriasis is the study of the regulation—and deregulation—of epithelial cell growth. His interest in how cell growth is regulated dates back to his days as an M.D.-Ph.D student with Alan Goldberg in the Tamm-Chopin laboratory of virology, where studies were underway on oncogenes, the genes that can contribute to cancer. Krueger also collaborated on research with Professor Hidesaburo Hanafusa, another pioneer in the study of oncogenes.

## Studying signaling pathways

His focus on cellular regulation



In their quest to better understand and treat psoriasis, Rockefeller University Associate Professor Alice Gottlieb and Assistant Professor James Krueger study the signaling pathways involved in the regulation of cellular growth.

continues in his current collaborations with Gottlieb, in which they are studying the signaling pathways that regulate cellular growth. Of special interest to him are the tyrosine kinase pathways—pathways involving enzymes that put a highly-charged substance called phosphate on the amino acid tyrosine. Many oncogenes are involved in this signaling pathway, both as growth factors and as receptors, and Krueger and his colleagues are investigating the details of this intricate signaling matrix.

While Krueger brings his special interest in epithelial activation to the complex problem of psoriasis, Gottlieb—another Rockefeller-Cornell M.D.-Ph.D. graduate who studied with Professor Henry Kunkel—brings to it her long-standing interest in immunology. In the mid-1980s, at the beginning of her association with the Laboratory of Investigative Dermatology, Gottlieb made a startling discovery. Looking at a type of epithelial cell called keratinocytes from patients with psoriasis, she found that they produced a cell-surface molecule known as "HLA-DR," which is normally expressed only by certain immune-system cells. As Gottlieb recalls, "I realized then that psoriasis has an immune component."

This discovery, once controversial, is now widely accepted by psoriasis researchers. Among the research Gottlieb, Krueger, and their colleagues are conducting on the immunologic component of psoriasis are studies of cytokines—messenger molecules that activate immune-system cells—and the receptor molecules they latch onto.

The researchers' dual focus on epithelial and immunological activation informs their research into treatments for psoriasis, as well as its basic biology. Said Gottlieb, "The question we're asking is, 'In order to have a satisfactory treat-

ment, do we need to suppress both immunologic and epidermal activation, or is suppression of only one compartment satisfactory?'"

## Research in clinical center

They are able to pursue these questions thanks to The Rockefeller University Hospital's status as a clinical research center in which experimental treatments may be undertaken. Among the therapies being investigated are active derivatives of Vitamin D; cyclosporine, a potent immune-system suppressor; photochemotherapy using PUVA bath, a treatment in which patients are bathed in a plant-derived compound called 8-methoxypsoralen and then exposed to ultraviolet A light; and phototherapy, a treatment using ultraviolet B light. The studies are providing insight into which kinds of activation must be suppressed—and how strongly—in order to provide effective treatment.

These and other therapies will be discussed on Sat., Apr. 17, at a symposium co-chaired by Gottlieb and Dr. Gerald Weinstein, a psoriasis expert at the University of California, Irvine. The goal of the symposium, which is sponsored by the National Psoriasis Foundation, is to define guidelines for the use of available therapies in the treatment of patients with moderate-to-severe psoriasis. Gottlieb will give a talk on PUVA bath therapy, and Krueger will contribute to a written volume that will be published as a result of the symposium. Over 200 practicing dermatologists and dermatology residents will attend.

"Psoriasis is a difficult clinical problem, and it requires a lot of patient care on the emotional level, too," said Gottlieb. The aim of the symposium is to help physicians outside the realm of a clinical research hospital learn the most up-to-date treatments and approaches for this very troublesome disease.

## Batter up! Scientists start season

The Rockefeller University softball team did not need a pitch from President Clinton to start its fourth season in The Yorkville Sports Softball League last week. The players, known as The Scientists, battled bravely but lost to The New York Terps in the first of 12 games this year.

Founded by Associate Professor Jeffrey Friedman in 1990 and led by pitcher and former Rockefeller postdoc David Foster, the 12-member team of Rockefeller faculty and staff stands out from the other teams of the league, which are made up mostly of television executives, lawyers, and accountants. "Frankly, I think the other teams thought we were a bunch of no-good science nerds when we first arrived," remarked shortstop Andy Plump, a graduate fellow in the Breslow lab. "But, now, I think they're starting to take us seriously, especially since we made it to the playoffs these past two years."

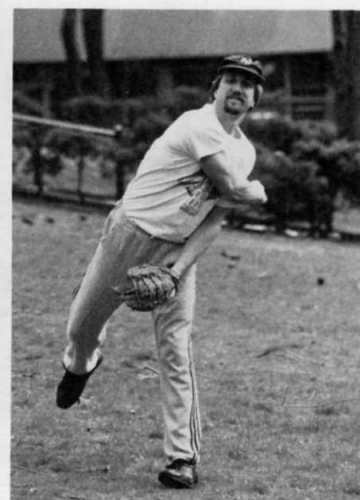
Friedman, who plays first base and continues to coordinate the team's meetings, said that The Scientists improved steadily against

the other teams in the league. While they only won three games out of 12 their first year, they won eight out of 12 last year, finishing second in the regular season and playing into the second round of the play-offs. They missed the championship by one game. "It was frustrating," said Friedman, "but nearly winning has made us all the more motivated to win this time around."

In addition to providing a competitive outlet and physical exercise, the team offers Rockefeller scientists and staff an opportunity to get to know each other better. Dennis Rivera, security guard and center fielder, admitted: "It's weird playing with a bunch of scientists, but I'm used to it now. Sometimes, when they start talking about their projects, I say, 'Hey, you can talk about your rats later, okay? Let's play ball!'" Rivera, who plays baseball regularly throughout the week, said that finding the time for The Scientists is easy. "I can always find the time to exercise," he said. "Whether it's hitting the ball in a batting cage, riding a bike, or playing with the Rockefeller team, I



Dennis Rivera (left), security guard, and Bruce Mayer, postdoc in the Baltimore lab, warm up on Tuesday before the first game of the season for the university softball team, The Scientists.



need to stay fit."

"We're very dedicated and competitive," asserted Friedman, "We trained hard during the off-season, sticking to a strict diet of beer and pizza. We're in great shape!"

During the softball season, team members, who bring their own equipment and contribute to league dues, spend one evening a week playing softball at 110th St. and First Ave. The players start

warming up, usually around 5:30 P.M., and then play a game which can last until 8:30 P.M.

"Typically we end the evening with a very serious discussion about the game in the Faculty Club," explained Plump, who decided to continue playing softball this year despite a much heavier workload. "I have my priorities straight," he said. "Softball is much more important than science!"

## Potpourri

**Tri-Institutional Noon Recital** Violinist Miranda Cuckson and pianist Akira Eguchi will play works by Mozart, Bartók, and Wieniawski at the Tri-Institutional Noon Recital today (Apr. 16). Cuckson, a third-year student at The Juilliard School, appeared as soloist in Avery Fisher Hall, Alice Tully Hall, and The Juilliard Theater at Lincoln Center. Eguchi, who graduated from The Juilliard School in 1990, was awarded the William Schuman

Prize for Outstanding Achievement and Leadership in Music. The concert, to be held in Caspary Auditorium, is free; all are welcome.

### Spraying

Weather permitting, the trees and shrubs on campus will be sprayed Sat., Apr. 17, from 6:00 A.M. to noon. The Grounds Department recommends that those on campus that day stay out of direct contact of the spray, close windows, turn off air conditioners, and keep pets inside. The rain date is Sat., Apr. 24. For more information, call James Sullivan, x8001.

### Sunday film

*Elevator to the Gallows* (*Ascenseur Pour L'Echafaud*, France, 1957), will be shown at 7:30 P.M. on Sun., Apr. 18 in Caspary Auditorium. Louis Malle's thriller, starring Jeanne Moreau and Lino Ventura, has a score that was improvised by Miles Davis and a group of European musicians.

### Take Our Daughters to Work

The Rockefeller University will participate in the Ms. Foundation for Women Take Our Daughters to Work Day on Wed., Apr. 28. Girls, from ages 9 to 15, are invited to participate in several activities:

- an orientation to the university at 9:30 A.M.;
  - a lunch and discussion with Professor Mary Beth Hatten, Personnel Director Virginia Huffman, Vice President for Public Affairs and Corporate Secretary Ingrid Reed, and Director of the Transgenic Service Laboratory Annemarie Walsh-Mullen at noon;
  - a tour of the Transgenic Mouse Facility after lunch.
- Call Eileen Holleran, x8557, to register. Further details will be posted in next week's issue of *News&Notes*.

### Baby boom

- Jessie Wallen, development associate, gave birth to a baby boy on Apr. 1. The baby, who weighed 8 pounds 3 ounces at birth, is named after her husband, John.
- Brian Guenther, graduate fellow in the Kuriyan lab, and his wife Jennifer, became the parents of a baby girl, Sara Violet, on Apr. 3. She weighed 7 pounds, 12 ounces.
- Doron Weber, manager of public affairs, and his wife, Shealagh Weber, had their second son, Samuel Winston, on Apr. 5. He weighed 9 pounds, 7 ounces.
- Anne Hermanowski-Vosatka, biomedical fellow, and Bob Vosatka announce the birth of a son, Christophe Robert Hermanowski

Vosatka, on Apr. 10. Christophe weighed 6 pounds 13 ounces.

### Books for President's House

President Torsten Wiesel is collecting books by Rockefeller University authors for display in the President's House. Donations of such books should be sent to Doron Weber, Box 68.

### Election

The American Academy of Microbiology recently announced the election of its new fellows, who include Professor David Baltimore, Professor James Darnell, Professor Robert Roeder, and Professor Norton Zinder. Professor Emeritus Igor Tamm became emeritus fellow.

### Promotions

Clay Reid of the Wiesel lab was promoted to assistant professor.

Susan Wente-Hardy of the Blobel lab was promoted to research associate.

### Discount

York Opticians, at The New York Hospital, 525 East 68th St., Room K-808, is offering a 20 percent discount on all glasses to members of the Rockefeller University community. Call L. S. Kirsch, 746-5364, for more information.



Violinist Miranda Cuckson will perform at the Tri-Institutional Noon Recital today (Apr. 16) with pianist Akira Eguchi.