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## New prize to honor scientist-poet Lewis Thomas

Seeking to honor that rare individual in whom the two cultures of science and art are combined, The Rockefeller University will present the renowned physician, biologist, and essayist Lewis Thomas with the first Lewis Thomas Prize on Tuesday, May 18. The award ceremony,



A prize will honor Rockefeller University Adjunct Professor and Visiting Physician Lewis Thomas.

which will be accompanied by music from Thomas's daughter, Eliza, and readings from his work by his daughter, Abigail, will be held at 5:30 P.M. in Caspary Auditorium. President Torsten Wiesel will present the \$10,000 prize and read a citation honoring Thomas.

According to the citation, the Lewis Thomas Prize recognizes "the scientist whose voice and vision can tell us of science's aesthetic and philosophical dimensions, who gives us not merely new information but cause for reflection, even revelation, as in a poem or painting." In a distinguished career spanning well over half a century and embracing roles as diverse as biologist, poet, doctor, administrator, researcher, and essayist, Thomas has embodied this unique fusion between science and art. His widely acclaimed works include such classics as *The Lives of a Cell*, *The Medusa and the Snail*, *The Youngest Science*, and *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony*. Hailed by *Time* magazine as "quite possibly the best

essayist on science now working anywhere in the world," Thomas has explored the larger meaning of science, elegantly conveying its beauty and mystery to millions of people the world over.

Born in 1913 in New York City, Thomas received a B.S. from Princeton University in 1933 and an M.D. from Harvard Medical School in 1937. He has held appointments at five schools of medicine, including the University of Minnesota Medical School, the Tulane University School of Medicine, and the Johns Hopkins University Medical School. Thomas has served as dean of the Yale University School of Medicine, chairman of the Department of Pathology at Yale-New Haven Medical Center, dean of the New York University School of Medicine, and chairman of the Departments of Medicine and Pathology at New York University-Bellevue Medical Center. From 1973 to 1980 Thomas was president

See *Prize*, page 3

## RU selects 'smart, self-motivated' students for incoming class

At least 12 highly qualified students—11 in biology and one in physics—will make up the incoming class of Rockefeller University Ph.D. candidates, according to Associate Professor Marjorie Russel, dean of admissions. One prospective student is still undecided.

"We had a large pool of outstanding applicants this year," said Russel. "The class size is smaller than our norm of about 20 because we were exceptionally rigorous in

selecting incoming students. We looked for smart, committed, and self-motivated individuals. I am confident that each member of this class is going to be successful here and make a real contribution to their field."

The admissions committee—which included Assistant Professor Arturo Alvarez-Buylla, Professor Charles Gilbert, Professor Hidesaburo Hanafusa, Assistant Professor Svetlana Mojsov, Assistant Professor Thomas Sakmar, and Associate Professor Elaine Tuomanen—began to review applications for the program in mid-January. They read the last of the applications and decided who would receive an offer from the university last month.

Of the 327 applicants to Rockefeller this year, 27 received offers. Usually, about 50 percent of those accepted into the program attend. This year, the yield will be similar—44 or 48 percent, depending on whether the last candidate joins the class.

A survey conducted by the Deans' Office showed that most

candidates who chose to pursue graduate study elsewhere this year did so to work with faculty at other top-ranked institutions. Other reasons cited included anxiety about living in New York, the unstructured nature of Rockefeller's program, and the quality of student housing.

Russel believes that those who will attend the university were especially drawn to Rockefeller's emphasis on research, strong faculty, and flexible program.

This year's class is made up of students from around the world, including Switzerland, Bulgaria, Canada, the People's Republic of China, Taiwan, and Yugoslavia. The three American students in the class are from New York, New Jersey, and Maryland. The class includes four women.

Although the program does not officially start until September, the new Rockefeller graduate fellows are eager to begin their studies. According to Russel, one has already shown up in his lab with a detailed proposal for a project he wants to pursue.

## RU biophysicist to lecture on protein structure

Stephen Burley, Rockefeller University associate professor and Howard Hughes Medical Institute assistant investigator, will speak on "X-ray Crystallographic Studies of Eukaryotic Transcription Factors: A Saddle, a Crocodile, and a Butterfly," at the Friday lecture today (May 14).

Using x-ray crystallography and other biophysical methods, Burley and his colleagues are investigating—at the atomic level—the conformations of eukaryotic transcription factors and the process by which these proteins recognize and bind to DNA to control such fundamental processes as gene transcription.

"We seek to understand how these proteins recognize and bind to specific DNA targets," explained Burley. "We hope that some day, a systematic characterization of these molecular interactions will open up avenues for directed therapeutic intervention for diseases like cancer, which involves abnormal transcriptional control."

Burley obtained a B.S. in physics from the University of Western Ontario in 1980, a D. Phil. in molecular biophysics from the University of Oxford in 1983, and an M.D. from Harvard Medical School, through the Harvard-MIT

See *RU biophysicist*, page 2



Associate Professor Stephen Burley will speak at the Friday lecture today (May 14).

2 Construction transforms GSR

2 Race challenges RU runners

3 An interview with Lewis Thomas



## Construction transforms GSR

Construction crews have demolished walls, gutted rooms, and erected gypsum board, beginning a swift transformation of the first floor of Graduate Students Residence (GSR). The work will result in new facilities for The Rockefeller University Children's School, as well as a new aerobics room, gym, and bicycle storage area.

"While the construction is inconvenient, the end result will be worthwhile," said George Candler, director of Planning and Construction. "In addition to making possible the Children's School's expansion to include younger children, the new design will have several advantages. The gym will not be part of a corridor through the building. The aerobics room will be used exclusively for exercise. And the bicycle storage area will be more secure and space-efficient."

The construction has been planned in several phases to minimize disruption. Phase one, which began April 26 and which is drawing to a close this week, focuses on the north end of GSR, which will house the gym, aerobics room, and bicycle storage area. So far, construction is proceeding on schedule.

The exercise equipment will be moved into the north end of the gym, shutting the gym from Mon.,

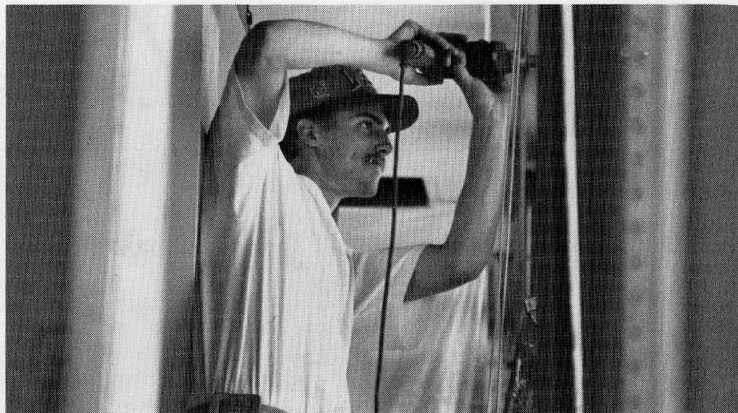
May 17 to Wed., May 19. Final set up of the area, which will include moving the door to the south, will continue over the next few weeks.

Phase two, which will begin next week and continue through the end of July, will prepare the south end of GSR to house The Children's School's programs for nursery-school-age children, currently located on the first floor of Sophie Fricke Hall. The construction will provide the children with larger classrooms and an extra multipurpose room. Classes for children two years and nine months to six years old are scheduled to move into their new location in time for the beginning of school on Tues., Sept. 7.

All bicycles will be moved to another location on the ground floor of GSR on Mon., May 17 to make way for the second phase of construction. Those wishing to move their bicycles out of the building before this should do so no later than Sun., May 16.

Phase three, which will begin Sept. 7 and run into December, will renovate the first floor of Sophie Fricke Hall to provide facilities for The Children's School's new toddler center for children ages six months to two years, nine months.

In addition, a new student center will be built on the second floor of



Construction crews are swiftly changing the appearance of the first floor of Graduate Students Residence.

Sophie Fricke, providing a kitchen, eating area, television room, and party room for the graduate fellows on campus. Two windows opening onto the plaza will be converted to french doors to increase activity on the raised terrace.

Eleni Barzouka-Soto, assistant director of Planning and Construction, managed the project planning, ensuring that the needs of the many groups involved were incorporated into a coherent design and negotiating a schedule to minimize downtime for the facilities. Vance Park, assistant director in the same office, is overseeing construction activities. The contractor is Riskin Contracting, Inc. The architect is Nate McBride of McBride Architects.

## RU biophysicist to give lecture

(continued from page 1)

Joint Program in Health Sciences and Technology, in 1987. Burley was a research resident in internal medicine and protein crystallography at Brigham and Women's Hospital and the Department of Chemistry at Harvard University from 1987 to 1990. Shortly thereafter, Burley joined the faculty of The Rockefeller University, where he now heads a lab.

A member of the American Crystallographic Association and the Biophysical Society, Burley was a Rhodes Scholar, and a recipient of several fellowships, including the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada Research Fellowship (1984-86), the W.R. Grace Foundation Research Fellowship (1986-87), and the Medical Foundation Inc. Research Fellowship (1988-90).

The lecture will be held at 3:45 P.M. in Caspary Auditorium.

## Race through Central Park challenges RU runners

A new contingent of Rockefeller University runners is limbering up for this year's three-and-a-half mile Chemical Bank Corporate Challenge races, to be held at 7:00 P.M., Wed., Jun. 16 and Thurs., Jul. 8 in Central Park.

"Each year, we have new participants," said Robin Maloney, associate controller and assistant treasurer, who has helped to organize a

university team for four years. "It's almost always a mix of runners, some more competitive than others."

For the past four years, the Rockefeller team has reached the finals. Last year, the co-ed team took third overall in the first race. "We do very well at these races and are competitive in the Overall Division as well as the Non-Profit

Division," said Maloney. "But I don't want people to think that this team is made up exclusively of speed-demons. Many of the participants walk part or all of the three-and-a-half miles. Our aim is to have a good time."

As team captain, Maloney makes up male, female, and co-ed teams according to speed. Runners keep track of their own time and report it back to Maloney after finishing. "It's not easy to keep track of all of our team members in the crowd," said Maloney, "especially when we have groups of as many as 45 runners."

Linda Thrasybule, production trainee at the Journals Office, registered as a first-time Corporate Challenge participant for the July race. "I've never worked in a place with this kind of team participation before," she said. "I'm looking forward to meeting and running with other people from the university."

The deadline for entering the Jun. 16 race is Fri., May 21. To participate, runners must fill out a registration form and submit a \$12 entrance fee. For more information, contact Maloney, x7736.



There was a good turn out from The Rockefeller University for the Chemical Bank Corporate Challenge races last year. Registration for this year's races is now open.

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# Lewis Thomas speaks about RU, science, writing, and life

The Rockefeller University awarded Lewis Thomas an honorary degree in 1989. Following is an interview that News&Notes conducted with him at that time.

**News and Notes (N&N):** Your association with The Rockefeller University began in 1942. What role has the university played in your career?

**Lewis Thomas:** I think it was almost entirely formative. The almost five years I spent doing research at the Rockefeller had a great deal to do with all my subsequent scientific interests. I'd say if I was trained anywhere, I was trained at the Rockefeller. It was there I became interested, and then obsessed, with some of the problems of infectious disease, particularly in virology and immunology.

In 1941, when the war arrived, I had been commissioned in the U.S. Navy. At that time, The Rockefeller Institute was the location for the Naval Medical Research Unit No. 2. I was called into active duty there in the spring of 1942 as a neurologist and assigned to Tom Rivers's laboratory. The month after I arrived everybody vanished, signing up for armed forces units elsewhere. So I was entirely in charge of the laboratory and all its viruses. I had a very good war!

In 1944, the whole unit was picked up and carried off to Guam, where we had a research unit. I was sent to Okinawa at the time of the invasion. At the end of the war, I came back to the Rockefeller, to the Rivers lab, before going off to John Hopkins Hospital.

**N&N:** Didn't you land on Okinawa carrying an unusual parcel?

**Thomas:** I think I'm the only person ever to invade a Pacific Island carrying a box of 50 mice bedded down on Navy toilet paper. I brought them all the way from Guam, and they survived very nicely. We used them to isolate viruses from the blood of Okinawan horses and establish that the horses were a main source of the Japanese B encephalitis virus on the island. We also obtained the virus from the brain tissues of several natives and army personnel who had died of the disease. It was a very difficult problem.

**N&N:** You have held many administrative positions over the years. These days many scientists find it

## Some selected musings

*It is illusion to think that there is anything fragile about the life of the earth; surely this is the toughest membrane imaginable in the universe, opaque to probability, impermeable to death. We are the delicate part, transient and vulnerable as cilia. (The Lives of a Cell: Notes of a Biology Watcher, Penguin Books.)*

*I was a college sophomore and had decided that Wallace Steven and I possessed a comprehensive understanding of everything needed for life. (Late Night Thoughts, Penguin Books.)*

*Much of what is happening in both cancer and brain research is the outcome of basic research that had neither of these problems in mind when the work was started, even when the definitive aspects of the work were well under way. (The Fragile Species, Penguin Books.)*

*We must rely on our scientists to help us find the way through the near distance, for the longer stretch of the future we are dependent on the poets. (The Medusa and the Snail, Bantam Books.)*

difficult to balance administrative demands with the scientific research they wish to pursue.

**Thomas:** Biomedical research was a small enterprise when I was growing up. It was commonplace that scientists running laboratories worked in very small groups, three or four people. Everyone I remember at the Rockefeller who was running a group was also doing bench research themselves.

Today, budgets are enormous, the numbers of people involved are formidable. This means that it's very difficult to have your own personal project. And particularly worrisome is the fact that there is so much apprehension about whether the grants will come in this year or the year after. The competition for grants is very intense. My main worry is that some of the fun is going out of bio-

medical science.

My notion of a solution to the problem is a very simple one: I'd like to see a great deal more money put into biomedical research—even at the risk of wasting some of it—in order to capitalize on the opportunities that have come into view in just the last few years.

What the country needs, for at least the next two decades, is a tremendous expansion of scientific effort, particularly in basic science. The time has not yet come for a wholesale approach to look for applications.

So far, a source of surprise and encouragement is the amount of very interesting, engrossing science resulting from the closer relationship between industry and university science. It's become clear, particularly to industry scientists, that we really are going to get solid applications in the biological sci-

ences—but only by continuing basic science.

**N&N:** In addition to your career as a research scientist, you've been a very successful science writer. How do you view the relationship between your writing and lab work?

**Thomas:** Writing science for a general audience started more or less by accident, and I've always viewed it as something entirely separate from what I did in the laboratory. In retrospect, I suppose they were somehow connected. I felt constrained by the hideous prose used in writing up whatever I was doing in the laboratory. The prose most of us feel obliged to use in publishing scientific papers is an altogether unique method of communication. Perfectly awful!

At the annual meeting of the Association of American Physicians some years back, the then-editor of *The New England Journal of Medicine* gave a speech about science writing, and had some particularly egregious examples of tortured, bad prose to read to the audience. I wasn't there, but I learned that some of the quotes were lifted from my own scientific papers!

**N&N:** What role do you see for Rockefeller in the next century?

**Thomas:** I'd say it will continue to succeed in performing the role set before it long ago. It's one of our national treasures for basic biomedical science.

**N&N:** At last count, you have received honorary degrees from twenty-five institutions. Does this degree from Rockefeller have any special significance for you?

**Thomas:** It's the nicest one.

## New prize honors Lewis Thomas as scientist and poet

(continued from page 1)

of Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center and from 1980 to 1983 he served as chancellor. Later he was appointed university professor at the State University of New York, Stony Brook. He was scholar-in-residence at Cornell University Medical College from 1988 to 1992. Thomas is a past member of the Harvard Board of Overseers and of the Board of Trustees of The Rockefeller University, where he is currently an adjunct professor and visiting physician.

Thomas has published over 200 scientific papers on virology, immunology, experimental pathology, and infectious disease. He has received over 20 honorary degrees in science, law, letters, and music. He is a member or fellow of the National Academy of Sciences, the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the American Philosophical Society.

Thomas received the National Book Award for *The Lives of a Cell* and the American Book Award and the Christopher Award for *The*

*Medusa and the Snail*. His personal medical memoir, *The Youngest Science*, has been followed by *Late Night Thoughts on Listening to Mahler's Ninth Symphony*, *Et Cetera, Et Cetera: Notes of a Word-Watcher*, and *The Fragile Species*.

The Lewis Thomas Prize was established by The Rockefeller University Board of Trustees and funded by individuals, foundations, and corporations. It will be awarded in the spring on an annual or biennial basis. Nominees will be put forward by a selection committee of six members with a known interest in science and the arts.

## Potpourri

### Tri-Institutional Noon Recital

Pianist Sonia Rubinsky, a soloist with Brazil's Orchestra of the Teatro Municipal of Rio de Janeiro and other symphonies, will play works by C.P.E. Bach, Mozart, Elliott Carter, and Chopin at the Tri-Institutional Noon Recital today (May 14). The concert, to be held in Caspary Auditorium at noon, is free. All are welcome.

### Azalea Festival

Staff of The New York Botanical Garden will give a guided tour of the campus today (May 14) for the university community. It will begin at 1:00 P.M. on the steps of the Hospital. On Sat., May 15 and Sun., May 16, the campus will be open to the public from 1:00 to 4:00 P.M. Both days, Chris Bowler, postdoc in the Chua lab, will give a talk, "How to Make Blue Roses, Stay-Ripe Tomatoes, and Glow-in-the-Dark Daisies," at 1:15 P.M. in Caspary Auditorium; tours of the grounds will begin at 2:00 and 3:00 P.M. at the Hospital.

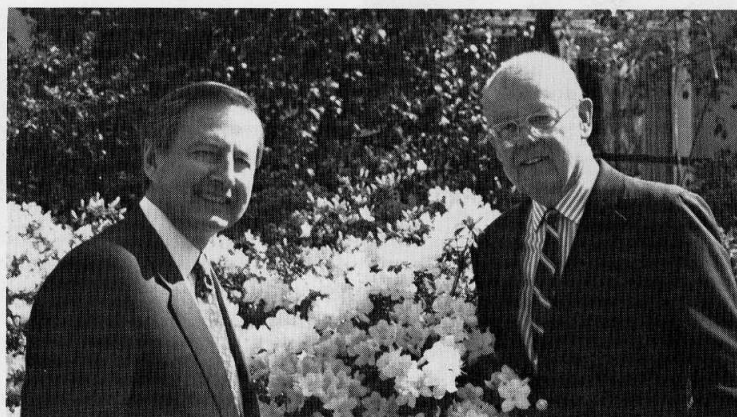
### Sunday film

A *Midsummer Night's Sex Comedy* (1982), directed by Woody Allen, will be shown in Caspary Auditorium at 7:30 P.M. on Sun., May 16. Allen stars in his film, exploring the relationship between love and magic in the 20th century. Admission is free. All are welcome.

### Bike-a-thons

The Personnel Office is helping to organize university teams for two fund-raising bike-a-thons: the United Cerebral Palsy's 20th Anniversary Bike-A-Thon and the American Diabetes Association's Tour de Cure.

The United Cerebral Palsy event, to be held in Central Park in Manhattan, Prospect Park in



Trustee Eugene P. Grisanti (left), chairman, president, and chief executive officer of International Flavors and Fragrances, Inc., and Professor Emeritus Edward H. Ahrens appreciate the azaleas which will be featured in the university's Azalea Festival this weekend. Grisanti is also a member of the board of trustees of The New York Botanical Garden; Ahrens is a former member.

Brooklyn, and Midland Beach Park on Staten Island, will take place Sun., May 16 (rain date, Sun., May 23). Riders choose one of the 35-mile courses and ride as much of it as they want.

Riders in the American Diabetes Association event can participate at Riverhead, Long Island (May 16), White Plains, New York (May 23), East Meadow, Long Island (Jun. 6), or Brooklyn and Queens (Jun. 13). Participants select the length of their course—25, 50, or 100 km., which will begin, rain or shine, at 9:00 A.M., 8:30 A.M., and 8:00 A.M., respectively. Participants must obtain at least \$50 in pledges from sponsors; those who raise more than \$100 will receive gifts.

To register for either bike-a-thon, call the Personnel Office, x8300.

### Benefits seminar

The Personnel Office will host a seminar about retirement savings and taxes on Wed., May 19. Martin Volpe, TIAA-CREF representative, will address topics such as the theory of salary reduction, how to save on taxes and save for retirement, and investment choices under the TIAA-CREF tax-deferred annuity plan. The seminar, which is free and open to all employees, will be held from 2:00 to 3:00 P.M. in Nurses Residence 110B. For more information, contact Darryl Williams, x8300.

### Science Outreach Program

The Science Outreach Program is hosting a reception and presentation "The Science Outreach Program: Past, Present, and Future," on Wed., May 19, in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Hall. The reception will begin at 5:00 P.M., the presentation, at 5:30 P.M. Everyone currently involved or who

would like to become involved in the program is invited.

### Computer offer

Apple Computer has announced a promotional package for its educational customers: a DUO 210 PowerBook with four megabytes (MB) of random access memory, an 80 MB hard disk, a floppy disk drive adapter, and a floppy disk drive for \$1,499. The DUO 210 weighs only 4.2 pounds and can be used with the Macintosh Docking Station

with external monitor and other peripheral devices. Immediate delivery is available. Ordering information is as follows: B1304LL/A Macintosh PowerBook Duo 210 Bundle, \$1,499, includes Macintosh PowerBook Duo 210 4MB Hard Disk 80, Macintosh PowerBook Duo Floppy Adapter, and Macintosh HDI-20 External 1.4MB Floppy Disk Drive.

### Philosophical Society panels

Two Rockefeller participants took part in a celebration of the 250th anniversary of the American Philosophical Society, Apr. 28 to May 1. Trustee, Adjunct Professor, and Visiting Physician Alexander Bearn, vice president of the society, presided over a symposium on the biological sciences. Rockefeller University Council member William T. Golden, vice president and chairman of the board of trustees of the American Museum of Natural History, presided over a symposium on the humanities.

### Correction

Due to a printer error in which a photo was printed in reverse, a caption in last week's issue of *News&Notes* misidentified Professor and Senior Physician Ralph Steinman as Associate Professor John Zabriskie, and vice versa.

## Kendall Emerson, Jr. dies

Kendall Emerson, Jr., clinical professor of medicine emeritus at Harvard University and former investigator at The Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, died of cancer last month at age 86.

As a young physician interested in biochemistry, Emerson joined Rockefeller's faculty in 1939. Under the direction of Donald Van Slyke, Emerson studied the biochemistry of the kidney condition nephrosis. Later, under Charles Hoaglund, Emerson and other scientists, including Vincent Dole, Henry Kunkel, Robert Shank, and Helena Gilder, studied the biochemistry of infectious hepatitis, a disease that re-emerged with the outbreak of World War II. The research team developed methods of measuring liver damage and observed the extent and rate of liver repair in hepatitis patients from the Navy Medical Department.

As the likelihood of U.S.

involvement in WWII increased, Emerson obtained a commission in the Navy along with other Rockefeller scientists, including Dole, Maclyn McCarty, and Lewis Thomas, who formed a Naval Research Unit. As part of the unit, which conducted research in New York and the South Pacific, Emerson studied atypical pneumonia, acute kidney failure following traumatic shock, and the therapeutic uses of amino acids for severe burns.

In 1946, Emerson left Rockefeller to join the faculty of Harvard University Medical School and the medical department of Peter Bent Brigham Hospital, where he studied the pituitary and adrenal glands, and lactogenic hormone, and served as consultant in endocrinology. Prior to retiring in 1973, he served as visiting physician, then as chief of medicine at the Boston Lying-in Hospital.



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