

11-4-1994

## NEWS AND NOTES 1994, VOL.5, NO.8

The Rockefeller University

Follow this and additional works at: [http://digitalcommons.rockefeller.edu/news\\_and\\_notes\\_1994](http://digitalcommons.rockefeller.edu/news_and_notes_1994)

---

### Recommended Citation

The Rockefeller University, "NEWS AND NOTES 1994, VOL.5, NO.8" (1994). *News and Notes 1994*. Book 26.  
[http://digitalcommons.rockefeller.edu/news\\_and\\_notes\\_1994/26](http://digitalcommons.rockefeller.edu/news_and_notes_1994/26)

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 1994 by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ RU. For more information, please contact [mcsweej@mail.rockefeller.edu](mailto:mcsweej@mail.rockefeller.edu).

# news & notes

November 4, 1994 Volume 5, Number 8

The Rockefeller University

## A sociable week

### University hosts diverse events, diverse guests



Center panel: Associate Professor Jeffrey Friedman addressed the Committee on Trust and Estate Gift Plans at the committee's fall dinner Wed., Nov. 2. His topic was "Learning to Read our Genes: A Blueprint for Molecular Medicine." At the reception before the talk, Friedman (left) relaxed with trustee Frederick Terry Jr., chairman of the committee.



Top panel: Before the breakfast meeting of the Rockefeller University Board of Trustees Tues., Nov. 1, President Torsten Wiesel (far left) chatted with Nancy Kissinger, member of the Rockefeller University Council Executive Committee. Trustee Eugene Grisanti (left in near photo) spoke with the Honorable Ronald S. Lauder, a guest at the breakfast, which featured a lecture by new RU professor Albert Hudspeth. Hudspeth also spoke as an honoree at the Dana Awards symposium held at Rockefeller later that day.



Bottom panel: Poets and scientists assembled at RU this week for a colloquium entitled "Science & Poetry," an event co-sponsored by the university and the Academy of American Poets. Poet and critic John Hollander (third from right) moderated the discussion among (from right to left) poets Tom Disch and Emily Grosholz, and Rockefeller Professors Jules Hirsch, Mitchell Feigenbaum, and Stephen Burley. Professor Nicola Khuri (not shown) introduced the panelists.



## RU alumnus to speak on HIV-1 pathogenesis

J. Mike McCune, vice president of the New Enterprise Research Division of SyStemix, Inc. in Palo Alto, California, will speak on "Pathogenic Effects of HIV-1 on Thymopoiesis In Vivo" at the Friday lecture today (Nov. 4).

McCune studies viral pathogenesis, immunology, and hematopoiesis in SCID-hu mice, an animal model he developed as a postdoctoral fellow at Stanford University School of Medicine. The SCID-hu mouse is produced by transplanting organs of the human immune system—fetal lymph nodes, thymus, and liver—into the SCID (severe combined immune deficiency) mouse, an animal that has inherited no working immune system of its own. Today McCune will describe his studies on the mechanisms by which HIV-1 suppresses generation of T cells in the human thymus of SCID-hu mice.

"Mike was able to recognize early in his career that the SCID mouse could be useful in studying the effects of the human immunodeficiency virus in human tissue," said Professor and Senior Physician Ralph Steinman, who will introduce McCune today. "He has made important contributions to our understanding of pathogenesis in HIV infection."

A graduate of the university's M.D.-Ph.D. program, McCune received a Ph.D. from Rockefeller, working in the laboratories of Professor Günter Blobel and the late Professor Henry Kunkel, and an M.D. from Cornell University Medical College in 1982. He completed his residency in internal medicine at the University of California at San Francisco in 1984, and served as an infectious disease fellow there until 1986. He was a physician in the General Medical Clinic at the University of California-San Francisco General Hospital until 1987, and since then has been a physician and clinical associate at the hospital's AIDS clinic.

2 New assistant professors

3 Covering science

4 PC enlightenment

### Health office offers free flu shots

The Employee Health Service is now offering free influenza vaccination to all adults on campus. The shots are administered in Hospital 118 every weekday afternoon between 1:00 P.M. and 4:00 P.M. and also on Friday mornings. No appointment is necessary.

This year's flu shot contains

three strains: A/Texas/36/91; A/Shandong/9/93; and B/Panama/45/90. The vaccine is made of inactivated, egg-grown virus and contains no blood products. It cannot cause influenza.

Any questions may be addressed to the health office, x8414.

See McCune, page 4

# Six new assistant professors join roster of RU faculty

Three research associates, two post-docs, and one guest investigator have been named assistant professors in Rockefeller laboratories. The new faculty members are: Raymond Birge of the Hanafusa lab, Boudewijn de Jonge of the Tomasz lab, Gilberto Fisone and Gretchen Snyder of the Greengard lab, Dimitra Karabali of the Khuri lab, and Rong Wang of the Chait lab.

President Torsten Wiesel made the appointments on the recommendation of the Standing Advisory Committee on the Appointment of Assistant Professors, a committee established last fall to advise the President on the appointment of assistant professors within laboratories. At the Faculty Senate meeting in June, 1994, the review process and criteria for naming assistant professors in laboratories were approved.

"In addition to scientific excellence, these six new faculty members have demonstrated significant independence in their research," said Wiesel. "I am glad to welcome them to the faculty."

The following assistant professors were recommended last spring:

## Raymond Birge

Birge came to Rockefeller in 1990. As an N.I.H. postdoctoral associate and postdoctoral fellow of the American Cancer Society, he has been investigating with Hanafusa the role of SH2/SH3 domains in signal transduction in normal and cancer cells. He

received his Ph.D. in 1989 in biochemistry from the University of Connecticut, Storrs; his dissertation topic was the biochemical mechanisms for the hepatotoxicity of acetaminophen. Birge remained at the University of Connecticut for an additional year, pursuing postdoctoral training in biochemical toxicology as an N.I.H. postdoctoral associate.

## Boudewijn de Jonge

de Jonge came to Rockefeller as a postdoc in 1989 after receiving his Ph.D. in microbiology from the University of Amsterdam. Since 1992, he has held a Merck postdoctoral fellowship. de Jonge's main research interest is the cell wall metabolism of bacteria; in particular the component peptidoglycan, which assists in protecting bacteria from osmotic rupture, anchors other cell wall components, and determines the shape of the cell. His current studies in the Tomasz lab focus on how bacteria modify their peptidoglycans to be resistant against the antibiotics methicillin and vancomycin.

## Rong Wang

Wang received his Ph.D. in biochemistry and cellular and molecular biology from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine in 1992. While there he began studying peptidases and their roles in protein degradation and processing. After completing his degree, Wang came as a research

associate to RU's mass spectrometry resource center. Working with Chait, he has been developing improved protein sequencing techniques and improved methods for studying enzymology. He has published several papers recently on protein ladder sequencing, including one in *Science* in 1993.

The following three assistant professors were recommended at the committee's fall meeting:

## Gilberto Fisone

Fisone, who joined the Greengard lab in 1991, obtained his Ph.D. in biochemistry from the University of Stockholm in 1990. He has held several European fellowships; among them one from the European Economic Community and a postdoctoral fellowship from the Swedish Natural Science Research Council. He taught at the Karolinska Institute in 1991. He came to the Greengard lab as a postdoctoral associate; in 1993, he became a research associate. His research aims at understanding how hormones and neurotransmitters modulate the activity of the ion pump Na,K-ATPase in the brain and other tissues.

## Dimitra Karabali

Karabali, who is a guest investigator in the Khuri lab, is currently a member of the Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton and will join Rockefeller full time next autumn. In the past two years, she has been working on algebraic

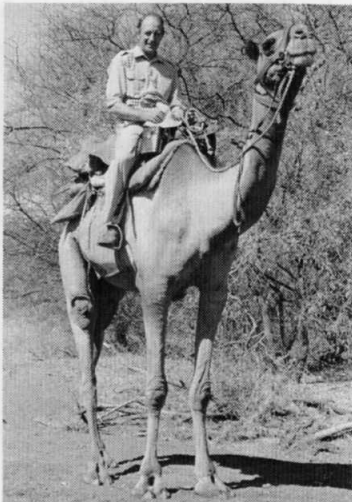
structures underlying the physics of the quantum Hall effect. She has worked on a broad range of topics in theoretical high energy physics, including fractional spin and statistics in (2+1)-dimensional field theories, aspects of dynamical symmetry breaking and technicolor models, string and conformal field theories, baryon number violating processes in the standard model, matrix models and collective field theory. Karabali obtained her doctorate in theoretical high energy physics from Yale University in 1986.

## Gretchen Snyder

Snyder came to Rockefeller in 1990 as a postdoc in the Greengard lab and has been for the past two years a research associate. She completed her doctorate in behavioral neuroscience/neuroscience in 1987 at the University of Pittsburgh, where she held a Mellon predoctoral fellowship and one from the Provost's Development Fund. After graduating, she did neuroscience research at Abbott Laboratories. In 1991-1993, she held a research grant from the American Parkinson Disease Association. She is currently mapping the signal transduction pathways implicated in the pathology of neuropsychiatric diseases, such as schizophrenia.

Nominations to be considered at the standing committee's winter meeting should be made to the president by Jan. 1.

Copyright David Keith Jones



Copyright David Keith Jones



A leader of safaris in Africa and a renowned wildlife photographer, David Keith Jones (left) will speak at Rockefeller Mon., Nov. 7. Along with his talk, entitled "Warriors and Lions," Jones will present images of African nomads and wildlife. The slide lecture will take place at noon, in Caspary Auditorium. Admission is free, and all are welcome to attend.

News&Notes is published each Friday throughout the academic year by The Rockefeller University, 1230 York Avenue, New York, NY 10021. Phone: 212-327-8967.

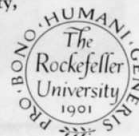
Torsten Wiesel, President  
Ingrid Reed,

Vice President for Public Affairs and  
Corporate Secretary  
Doron Weber, Director of Communications

Kay Locitzer, Editor  
Joseph Bonner, Assistant Editor  
Heather Leahy, Design  
Robert Reichert, Photography  
Media Resource Service Center, Processing

Ideas and submissions can be sent interoffice (Box 68), by electronic mail (newsno), or by fax (212-327-7876).

The Rockefeller University is an equal opportunity/affirmative action employer.





# New York Times editor airs frank view of relationship between scientists & journalists

Nicholas Wade, science editor at The New York Times, addressed the Zanvil A. Cohn Forum on Health Affairs Tues., Oct. 25. His talk, entitled "Science and the Press," provoked a lively question and answer period.

What follows is an edited transcript of his presentation.

The relationship between science and the press is 95 percent harmonious. However, if I talk about the harmony, you'll get bored. So I'll concentrate on the discord.

The first of my propositions tonight is that scientists and science journalists are in a mutual professional conspiracy, with a common interest in emphasizing, even exaggerating, scientists' achievements. My second proposition is that scientists have the best press of any professional group. They have good press because the typical science story in a daily paper is one of achievement, about the advance of knowledge, your tax dollars at work, medical heroes conquering disease. Editors like science stories because the rest of the front page is about political intrigue or natural disaster, and this is an upbeat story they can add to the mix.

Scientists also get good press because science journalists generally like science and scientists, view them as disinterested pursuers of truth, and are more intimate with them than other journalists are with their sources. Politicians and business people, in contrast, are regarded by the press as self-interested.

But, paradoxically, some scientists seem dissatisfied. Perhaps because they are not used to having their motives questioned or contradicted or their findings publicly critiqued. Some scientists believe that the more a newspaper story approximates an article in the science literature, the better it is. But readers of newspapers have no interest whatever in the things scientists tell us they would like to see. If newspaper stories became like journal articles, we would be at risk for the condition described by Oscar Wilde in which journalism is unreadable and literature is unread.

## A conspiracy to exaggerate

So, back to the conspiracy. Press coverage about science is overwhelmingly favorable—too favorable in some respects. Several forces cement this conspiracy, which is at the public's expense. Scientists want good coverage because they know grant administrators and congress people are reading the press,



Last week, Nicholas Wade told the audience at the Cohn Forum: "Scientists have the best press of any professional group."

and favorable coverage will bring more funds. Science journalists want to get on the front page, so the broader the claim for some new advance, the better the chances of getting a good display in the paper. So there's a symbiosis there. It's not necessarily harmful, but it can be if journalists are not watchful.

Some of the pitfalls of the symbiosis are apparent in medical reporting. Here's an example. (All examples of good journalism this evening will come from the *Times*; all bad examples, from other papers.) Here's a story from *Newsday*, titled "Containing Cancer." Here's the lead: "A discovery that may rank among the most important advances against cancer in recent decades—identification of a natural hormone-like factor that keeps tumor growth under control—was announced yesterday by a research team in Boston." It's not until the seventh paragraph that you get the small caveat that this miracle substance is still being tested in mice. And it's not until the story jumps to the back of the paper that you learn that this still has to go through F.D.A. procedures and that even if it works in mice, it may not work in humans. The net result is gross exaggeration, although the basic story is a piece of very good science.

## The demise of the disinterested scientist

In my view, most of the exaggerations you may complain of in the press do not originate with the journalists, but with the sources. To be sure, it's the journalists' fault if they do not assess the claims. But there are two pronounced trends in scientists' dealing with the press. One is overstatement of claims, which may result from the tightening of grant

money. The other is the commercialization of biology. There used to be a time, not so long ago, when the British government forgot to patent the discovery of monoclonal antibodies and Harvard University forbade anyone to patent anything with potential for helping medicine.

We've come a long way since then. Maybe rightly so: Financial incentives do hasten applications of new knowledge into medical advances. But it has made a difference to the standing of scientists as disinterested pursuers of truth. Many scientists are no longer disinterested but have an interest in the financial rewards of their discoveries. Science journalists have to keep in the back of their minds when they cover stories that there may be a company in the background with a stock offering in the wings. The stock offering would occur the same day the new claim is published in *Nature*. And the company would profit. This isn't necessarily wrong, but the journalists need to know about it and the public must be informed to assess the claim.

## Examples of overstatement

Here are three examples of simple overstatement. The first: Some radio astronomers recently announced that they had discovered the first new planet outside the solar system. The second: A Danish and American team drilling through the Greenland ice found that during the last interglacial period, the climate was very unstable, that every 10 years the world's climate would switch from hot to cold, which implied that we should be careful not to set off the greenhouse effect. The third: The claim by a researcher at Harvard that by taking three drugs at once, you could force an enzyme of the HIV to mutate and become so inefficient that you could inactivate the virus.

I assured my editors that these were important findings and had to go on the front page. They would have been very important findings indeed—had they been true. But each one, within a few months, was retracted.

The astronomers had forgotten a discovery by Kepler that was the true cause of the pattern of radio waves they mistakenly attributed to a new planet. The Greenland ice people forgot that turbulent ice flow across the rock below the ice cap rearranges the layers of ice—which are indeed beautifully graded above the turbulence—so that they are totally mixed up. Away went the story about the erratic climate in the last interglacial. As for the triple drug therapy, the student's results had not been checked by his superiors, and when they did so—alas, after publication—they found that there was a fourth mutation not caused by any of the three drugs, and it was that one that had inactivated the enzyme.

## Two versions of one discovery

These are all examples of overstating scientific claims. Maybe it's not a new phenomenon, but some scientists have learned how to announce their findings in two ways. One is the modest scientific paper. But in tip sheets that go out to the press, the claims are far less modest. Johns Hopkins, for example, recently announced a universal cancer screening test that would be available soon, at a predicted price of \$50. You would go to your doctor, give samples of blood, sputum, and urine, and by a clever polymerase chain reaction test, cancer cells would be cloned and found.

Now, the paper in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* didn't say any of this, but the press release did. My colleague Larry Altman put the claim in the right context: He wrote that although the test was based on good science, it had a long way to go in its development; it had to get through the F.D.A. review; he quoted experts saying that this is good science but the claim is premature; and he pointed out that a company had patents on the test. So we had a responsible story that gave readers all the information they needed to assess the claim.

That brings me to my third proposition tonight. There are two things you never want to see being made: sausages and journalism. I hope I've persuaded you that one of these processes, if the ingredients are carefully attended to, can produce something fit for human consumption.

# Mysteries of the PC unraveled in campus course McCune

To many people, personal computers are as mysterious as they are ubiquitous. If you want to know more about how they work, where can you go? Whether your work requires three-dimensional modeling of DNA structures or simple word processing, a course offered by the Electronics Shop will guide you on the way to PC enlightenment.

"Use of the Personal Computer in the Laboratory" is an eight-week class designed to help anyone who uses a computer, from the novice to the veteran. Paul Rosen, a senior research associate in the Electronics Shop, a unit of Information and Computing Services, teaches the course. "The role of the computer in the laboratories and departments of the university is increasing in importance," he said. "Computer skills are now necessary to function on a

daily basis."

In an age when computers are as common as telephones or TVs, it's hard to believe that anyone needs this class. But, Rosen says, it is very popular. "Most people attend this class to get a basic background in the use of computers," said Rosen. "Some are new to the university and need to develop a sufficient level of skill to do their job. This course is intended to get people who lack these skills up to speed."

In addition to those with little or no exposure to computers, the course also attracts more-experienced users. "Some people come here with a background in one system, such as the Macintosh, but use an I.B.M. or compatible PC in their laboratory," Rosen said. "Others learned to use their computers by rote, but now want to understand how they work."

Rosen also covers hardware and peripherals. "People get to see what the hardware really looks like," said Rosen. "We talk about how to buy a computer, upgrade an existing system, and how much it might cost." Another section of the course describes procedures to improve a computer's performance, such as disk file management, data backup, and optimization.

The course is held on Tuesdays at 9:30 A.M. and is open to everyone. Now in its second week, it will be offered again next fall. On average, Rosen estimates, participants are 15 to 20 percent students, 30 percent faculty, and the rest staff. Do they really attain PC enlightenment? Modesty forbids Rosen from commenting. But chances are they do leave with a better understanding of the black box within the beige box.

(continued from page 1)

After completing his postdoctoral fellowship at Stanford in 1988, where he studied retroviral pathogenesis with Irving Weissman, McCune founded SyStemix, Inc. with Weissman, David Baltimore, and Leroy Hood. In addition to being vice president of the New Enterprise Research Division, he is also director of the SyStemix-Sandoz Antiviral Project and the SyStemix-Sandoz HIV Gene Therapy Joint Venture. At SyStemix, Inc., McCune has served as president and C.E.O., member of the board of directors, and scientific director.

The lecture will be held in Caspary Auditorium at 3:45 P.M. and preceded by tea at 3:15 P.M. in Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Lounge. All are welcome.

## Potpourri

### Tri-Institutional Noon Recital

No World Improvisation will perform at the Tri-Institutional Noon Recital today (Nov. 4). The ensemble—Mor Thiam, West African percussion; Jin Hi Kim, changgo and acoustic and electric komungo; Adam Plack, diggeridoo and voice; and Joseph Celli, double reed instruments—will perform original compositions based on the roots of the members' cultures, including two world premiers by Kim and Plack. The concert, to be held in Caspary Auditorium at noon, is free. All are welcome.

in Caspary Auditorium. The film stars Donald Sutherland and Tina Aumont. Admission is free.

### Marathon report

*News&Notes* would like to hear from anyone who participates in the New York City Marathon Sun., Nov. 6. Contact Joseph Bonner, e-mail bonnerj, or x8998.

### Winter preparation

To prevent damage to the chilled water system, pipes will be drained as soon as the weather forecast predicts first frost. The work, which takes about five days, will probably occur between Sat., Nov. 5 and Wed., Nov. 9. While the staff in Plant Operations strives to maintain comfortable temperatures in the buildings despite temperature fluctuations, it is not feasible to reverse the process to accommodate brief periods of warmer weather. For further information, contact Brendan Bolger, x8421, or Robert Francis, x8001.

### Benefits fair

Members of The Rockefeller University community will have the opportunity to change their health insurance plans at an open enrollment benefits fair Wed., Nov. 9. Representatives from the university's health insurance companies and the Flexible Spending Account will be on hand to answer questions. The event, organized by the Personnel Office, will take place in the Tower lobby from 11:00 A.M.

to 2:00 P.M. For further information, contact Kristin Gross, x8297, or Ginny Hansen, x8299.

### RU concert

The New York Philharmonic Ensembles, players from the New York Philharmonic, will perform at The Rockefeller University Concert Wed., Nov. 16, at 8:00 P.M. in Caspary Auditorium. The players will present a variety of chamber works showcasing their talents as solo artists. For further information, contact Cathy Rogers, x8437.

### Arrivals

Visiting Assistant Professor: Gianni Celsi, Darnell lab.

Research Associate: Yael Goldberg, Hirsch lab.

Postdoctoral Associates: Ursula Fluckiger, Gotschlich-Fischetti lab; Kathleen Millen, Hatten lab; Masaaki Miyati, Breslow lab; Lidya Sanchez, Müller lab.

Postdoctoral Fellows: Lisa Austin, Carter lab; Markus Engstler, G. Cross lab; Qizhi Gong, Gaul lab; Kim Huang, Cross lab; Orna Levran and Ping Liang, Hirsch lab; Carsten Rosenow, Tuomanen lab; Mika Vesanen, Darnell lab.

Guest Investigators: Mila Jankovic, Nussenzweig lab; Robert Glassman, Hanafusa lab; Michel Rabinovitch, Steinman lab; Mario Ramirez, Tomasz lab.

### Departures

Assistant Professor: Gord Fishell, Hatten lab.

Adjunct Faculty: Natalia Luenova,

Mauzerall lab; Annabell Segarra, McEwen lab.

Research Associates: Andrea Lauber, Pfaff lab; Mary Moore, Blobel lab.

Postdoctoral Fellows: Koji Hisatake, Roeder lab; Jian-Kang Zhu, Chua lab.

Postdoctoral Associates: Lei Feng, Heintz lab; Hisham Hashish, Allfrey lab; Colin Tinsley, Gotschlich-Fischetti lab.

Guest Investigators: Denis Charlebois, Mauzerall lab; Jeff Cynx, Nottebohm lab; Guang-Pei Hou, Müller lab; Mark Ian Liddington, Steinman lab; Liliana Salvadori, Zabriskie lab; Susanna Thornqvist, Chait lab.

### Payroll check cashing

The university's payroll check cashing service is at the 79th Street and Third Avenue branch of Chase Manhattan Bank. As has been policy, only employees who present a current Rockefeller University identification card are permitted to cash payroll checks (up to \$3,500).

### Car rental discount

Enterprise Rent-A-Car, 425 East 61st Street, is offering discounts to the university community. Rentals start at \$39.99 per day for weekdays; weekend packages start at \$169.99 (Fri. through Mon.). You must be 21 or over and carry a major credit card to rent. For further information, call 838-2323, and give university discount number G5C0111.

Courtesy of the artists



No World Improvisation will perform today (Nov. 4)

### Friday film

Fellini's *Casanova* (Italy, 1977), directed by Federico Fellini, will be shown today (Nov. 4) at 8:00 P.M.