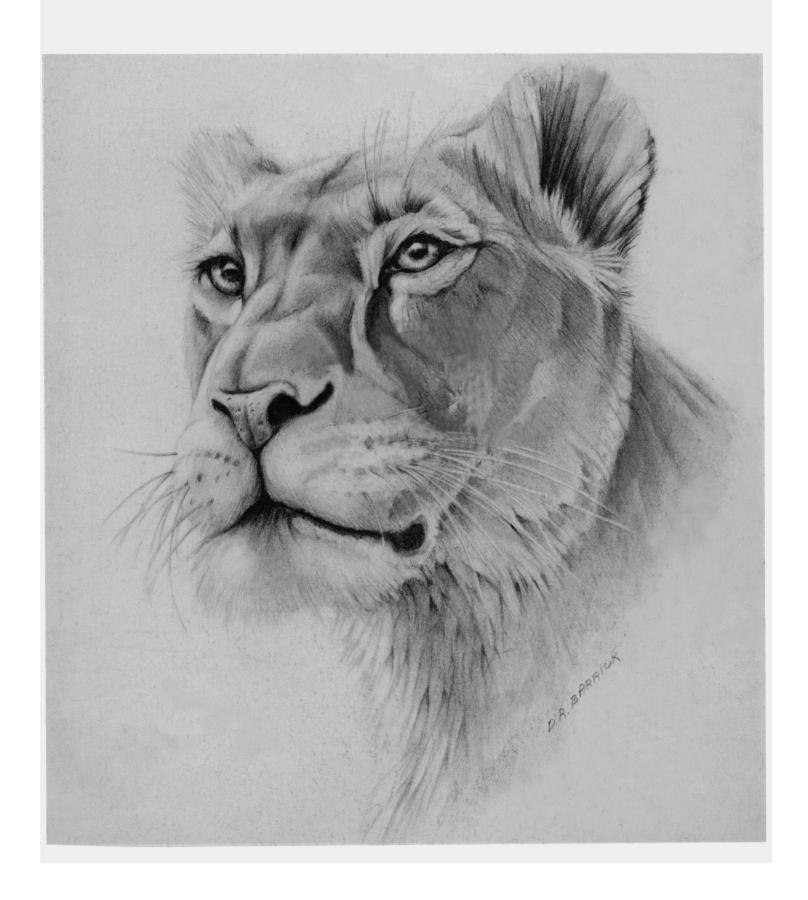
# SCIENCE

19 July 1974

Vol. 185, No. 4147

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF SCIENCE



# 25 years in nuclear analysis

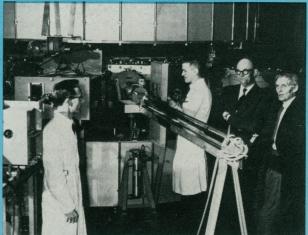
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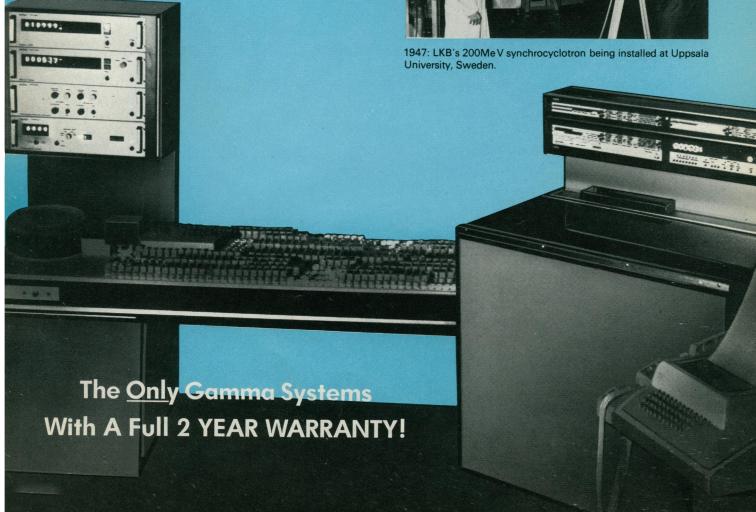
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Each of these interviews—like fragments of a jigsaw puzzle—tells little. Assembled, they give a panorama of science that is revealing of its depth, its breadth, and its dynamic state.





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# SCIENCE

LETTERS	Herbicides in Vietnam: K. V. Thimann; Velikovsky Forum: I. Michelson: Metrication as Cultural Adaptation: A. H. Dupree	207
EDITORIAL	Targets: D. Stetten, Jr.	209
ARTICLES	Superconductivity: Large-Scale Applications: R. A. Hein	211
	Physical-Chemical Basis of Lipid Deposition in Atherosclerosis: D. M. Small and G. G. Shipley	222
	Analog as a Source of Knowledge: K. Z. Lorenz	229
NEWS AND COMMENT	Sahelian Drought: No Victory for Western Aid	234
	U.SSoviet Summit: Make Science, Not War	237
	Agriculture: FDA Seeks to Regulate Genetic Manipulation of Food Crops	240
RESEARCH NEWS	Stereology: Promise of a More Quantitative Microscopy	243
	Undersea Storms: Experiment in the Atlantic	244
BOOK REVIEWS	Beta Decay and Muon Capture, reviewed by B. R. Holstein; Mechanisms of Elimination Reactions, D. J. McLennan; Depositional Sedimentary Environments, G. V. Middleton; Books Received	248
REPORTS	Helicoidal Crack Propagation in Aluminous Orthoamphiboles: J. H. Stout	251
	Long-Lived Chemiluminescence in Cigarette Smoke: H. H. Seliger, W. H. Biggley, J. P. Hamman	253

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	Microwave Hearing: Evidence for Thermoacoustic Auditory Stimulation by Pulsed Microwaves: K. R. Foster and E. D. Finch	256
	Surface Electronic Properties of Tungsten, Tungsten Carbide, and Platinum:  J. E. Houston, G. E. Laramore, R. L. Park	258
	Silurian Trilete Spores and Spore Tetrads from Gotland: Their Implications for Land Plant Evolution: J. Gray, S. Laufeld, A. J. Boucot	260
	Lassa Virus Isolation from Mastomys natalensis Rodents during an Epidemic in Sierra Leone: T. P. Monath et al	263
	Thyrotropin-Releasing Hormone: Regional Distribution in Rat Brain:  A. Winokur and R. D. Utiger	265
	Thyrotropin-Releasing Hormone in Specific Nuclei of Rat Brain:  M. J. Brownstein et al	267
	Lectins: A Possible Basis for Specificity in the Rhizobium-Legume Root Nodule Symbiosis: B. B. Bohlool and E. L. Schmidt	269
	Microbodies (Peroxisomes) Containing Catalase in Myocardium: Morphological and Biochemical Evidence: V. Herzog and H. D. Fahimi	27 <sup>.</sup>
	Noise-Induced Reduction of Inner-Ear Microphonic Response: Dependence on Body Temperature: D. G. Drescher	273
	Gelation of Sickle Cell Hemoglobin: Effects of Hybrid Tetramer Formation in Hemoglobin Mixtures: K. Moffat	274
	Extracellular Acidosis Protects Ehrlich Ascites Tumor Cells and Rat Renal Cortex against Anoxic Injury: A. Penttila and B. J. Trump	277
	Adrenergic Innervation of the Parasympathetic Ciliary Ganglion in the Chick:  D. Cantino and E. Mugnaini	279
	Cation Dependence of High-Affinity Angiotensin II Binding to Adrenal Cortex Receptors: H. Glossmann, A. Baukal, K. J. Catt	28
	Technical Comments: Ethnic Classification of Mexican-Americans: T. E. Reed	283
MEETINGS	Second Cat Conference: R. L. Eaton; Forthcoming Events	28

GEOLOGY AND GEOGRAPHY ( erah L. Smiley Ramon E. Bisque	BIOLOGICAL SCIENCES (C Beatrice M. Sweeney Jane C. Kaltenbach	G) ANTHROPOLOGY (H) Bernice Kaplan Philleo Nash
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## **Targets**

The targeting of research has always been with us, but it has lately become a more insistent theme. This stems, in part, from the demands of an increasingly informed public which looks to science for the prompt solution of an array of troublesome problems. As the fraction of the federal budget assigned to research and development in health, ecology, energy, space, and many other areas of science has increased, the tax-paying citizen has properly exhibited increasing interest in the selection of specific areas in which research is to be pursued. The taxpayer pays the piper and with some justification demands, if not to call the tune, at least to contribute to the cacophony.

The word "target" is one of a number of terms derived from the military which have been adopted by science, perhaps as a consequence of the shotgun marriage between scientist and soldier which took place during World War II. Other military words and phrases now somewhat incongruously but firmly fixed in the scientist's jargon are "strategy" and "task force."

A target, we may take it, is a special kind of a goal. It is well defined and clearly visualized, falling within the direct line of sight of the eye or, at the very least, of the mind's eye of the observer. He knows beforehand what the target looks like and has ways of ascertaining whether a hit has been scored. He need only muster his task force, assemble his ammunition, determine his strategy, and bang away.

Yet, targets are sometimes deceptive. Occasionally they may prove to be mirages. Not infrequently the map is inaccurate or is misread. The judgment of target size and distance may be erroneous, the estimate of munition needs may be faulty. As in war, so in science one of the most difficult judgments the investigator is called upon to make is the selection of a target toward the conquest of which he will dedicate his resources.

From the pages of history comes an anecdote that may prove illustrative. During the War of 1812, an arm of the British Royal Navy was cruising in Chesapeake Bay. At dusk on the evening of 10 August 1813, the ships approached the harbor of the modest fishing village of St. Michaels, on the Eastern Shore of Maryland. The British command, sensing that it had found a vulnerable target, neglected to send a spy ashore to case the joint. It therefore did not learn that the villagers, aware of their peril, had all agreed to extinguish every light in the village and hang all available lanterns on the branches of trees in a nearby forest. The ruse worked magnificently, and all night long the British ships lobbed cannonballs, most of which fell harmlessly among the trees. St. Michaels is known to this day as "The town that fooled the British."

The morals of this tale are self-evident.

- 1) The identification of the proper target may be more difficult than is generally supposed.
- 2) Aiming at the wrong target can be enormously costly in terms of ammunition and other resources.
- 3) In selecting a target, one should secure and study the latest and most sophisticated available information. This conclusion is equally true whether the target be military or scientific.—DeWitt Stetten, Jr., Deputy Director for Science. National Institutes of Health, Bethesda, Maryland 20014

# A membrane potential spike becomes with Kodak's Merocyanine 540 a light flash

This dye can now be ordered as EASTMAN 14014.\* A report in Nature New Biology 241: 159 (1973) tells how a group at Yale stained giant axon from squid with it, illuminated at 540 nm, and recorded fluorescence redward of 590 nm in response to electrical stimuli. The fluorescence lagged the action potential by less than 50  $\mu$ sec. With good linearity found between the fluorescence intensity and the potential as measured with an internal electrode in the axon, optimism is expressed that electrodes may no longer be needed to pick up membrane potential spikes. We hope this is no flash in the pan.

#### What happened

Contact was initiated by L. B. Cohen, Department of Physiology, Yale University School of Medicine. He had heard that at the Kodak Research Laboratories new dye molecules are constantly being designed and constructed. According to the tales one hears, we have been putting together a few new dyes each working day for the past 50 years. Suspecting that such tales are not altogether apocryphal, Cohen told the Kodak Research Laboratories what he wanted a dye to do and asked that it be provided to him. Just like that.

Inexplicably, a warm, cordial letter informing Doctor Cohen that the Laboratories do not operate that way failed to go out. Instead, our D. W. Heseltine, a leading molecular architect, found himself contemplating Cohen's request. To which he responded thus:

Just like that. Zap. Call it Merocyanine 540. After a decent interval, dark crystals of Merocyanine 540 arrived in New Haven, where Cohen in company with H. V. Davila, B. M. Salzberg, and A. S. Waggoner got it into their seawater at a final dye concentration of 0.05 mg/ml, with 1% ethanol and 0.025% surfactant polyol.

There is reason to brag. The spike of in-

\*From a lab supply house, or at \$38.50 for 1 g from Kodak, Organic Chemical Sales, Rochester, N. Y. 14650. Price subject to change without notice.

tensity increase above resting fluorescence is five times larger than the authors had seen with any of over 150 dyes before Merocyanine 540. There is also reason to be modest: that great spike represents a change in resting fluorescence of about one part in 103. Perhaps if Heseltine had worked harder, that 10-3 might have been 10-2, or 5% or even 20%. The thought nags.

Perhaps a better fluorochrome than Merocyanine 540 might turn up in a large paper bag of hundreds of little vials of dye

samples from Heseltine's shelves. Reasons why a business executive, accountant, or lawyer might turn down a neurophysiologist's request for such a bag would not be well understood by the neurophysiologist. For screening at the seashore by the great axon of Loligo pealii, Cohen et al want many more dyes than the mere 15 Heseltine sent after Merocyanine 540. None of them was as good. Like Merocyanine 540, they had been designed for another purpose. Now the purposes of the neurophysiological laboratory interest Heseltine.



Since long before molecular biology turned on the light of fluorescence to see by, we have been marketing biological stains. With changes in the textile-dye industry, we have had to start making many a dye that we formerly were able to buy and have certified for laboratory use. As a result, quality is up. We do seek opportunity to put our competence with dyes at the service of the life scientist. Inquiries should impart nothing confidential, should be directed to G. S. Grau, Dept. 742B, Kodak, Rochester, N. Y. 14650 (not to the Kodak Research Laboratories!), and might say something like, "Your Eastman XXXXX is fine as far as it goes, but what I and my buddies really want to buy for money is [ 1."

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11502	4-Chloro-7-nitrobenzo-2-oxa-1,3-diazole
11514	4-Dimethylamino-4'-isothiocyanatostilbene
11313	4-Dimethylamino-4'-maleimidostilbene
9090	5-Dimethylamino-1-naphthalenesulfonyl Chloride
11218	5-Dimethylamino-1-naphthalenesulfonic Acid
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