

Random Samples:



Things Are Popping at the Academy

The folks who bring you Rice Krispies really put some snap, crackle, and pop in the National Academy of Sciences' budget. The W. K. Kellogg Foundation recently gave the Academy and its companion Institute of Medicine \$20 million in endowment funds to support studies in health, education, and agriculture. The donation is the single largest endowment gift in the Academy's 125-year history.

Kellogg gave NAS-IOM \$4 million in June and will add another \$4 million each year for 4 years ending in 1993. The latter funds must be matched one-to-one with endowment funds that NAS and IOM must raise from other sources.

The foundation is the legacy of W. K. Kellogg, founder of the cereal empire in Battle Creek, Michigan. Kellogg amassed several fortunes selling the cereals he invented as health foods. A devout Seventh Day Adventist (a sect whose members practice vegetarianism and promote personal health), Kellogg's generosity is the stuff of legends. "I never, at any period of my life, aspired to become wealthy," Kellogg once said. "It is my hope that the property that kind Providence has brought me may be helpful to many others, and that I may be found a faithful steward." In fiscal year 1987, the foundation gave away some \$96 million to that end.

The stewards of NAS-IOM haven't yet decided exactly how to spend the \$20 million in

Kellogg money, but you can bet they'll leave corn flake research to the Kellogg folks. The \$16 million in matching funds will be earmarked for environmental science, industrial productivity, and international security issues, among others.

A Bit of Science History Is Lost

The Waikiki Delicatessen, the birthplace of modern biotechnology, has fallen to the developer's wrecking ball.

It was late one night in November 1972 that Stanley Cohen and Herb Boyer sat down with friends in the deli and planned the collaborative experiments that would lead to recombinant DNA, a technology that the physicist Freeman Dyson once said would have a greater impact on civilization than the Industrial Revolution.

Cohen and Boyer had been attending a joint U.S./Japan meeting on bacterial plasmids and after a full day of scientific talks had taken a long late-night walk on Waikiki Beach to clear their heads. They built up an appetite, too, and spotted the deli. "We figured it might be a good kosher deli," Cohen recalls, "because it had this big banner saying 'Shalom' in the window."

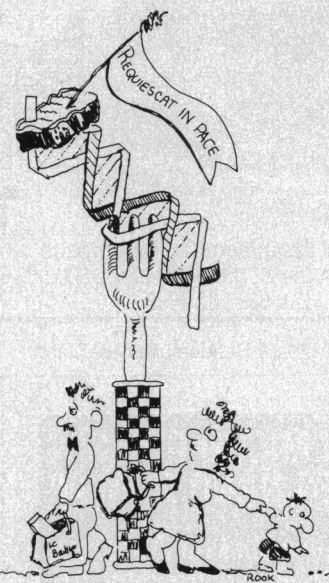
Cohen and Boyer, along with friends Stanley Falkow and Charles and Ginger Brinton, went inside looking for good corned beef, and came out with a revolution on their hands. Within 4 months the pair had proved it was possible to clone DNA.

Cetus Corp. President Ronald Cape recently was in Waikiki and suddenly realized he was in the area where the deli should be located. "I thought, 'My God, I'm near a place that's as important to the history of science as Mendel's pea patch,'" Cape recalls. "I felt I should go in and touch the walls, walk on the floor. It was a kind of pilgrimage."

Cape rushed to a phone booth and called Cohen, who

confirmed the location. But to his disappointment, Cape found the row of small shops had been demolished and replaced with an upscale open-air mall. "It's not quite Rodeo Drive or Fifth Avenue," Cape says, "It's just another yuppie shopping mall." Cape called Cohen back and told him, "They've obliterated a piece of history and they don't even know it. There's not even a plaque on the sidewalk."

Whether the world lost one of its few good kosher delis is unknown. "I don't recall the food," Cohen says. "I was too caught up in the science."



A Huge Problem for NIH?

The National Institutes of Health could have a really huge problem on its hands if comedian-activist-diet entrepreneur Dick Gregory gets his way.

Gregory appeared on Capitol Hill recently calling for a new National Institute of Obesity and Weight Management within NIH. The formerly 350-pound Gregory now peddles a diet nostrum called "Dick Gregory's Slim Safe Bahamian Diet" and is personally supervising the dieting of 13 obese people. Eight of his crew, some weighing more than 700 pounds, were on hand to lend weight to his arguments. The press conference was sponsored

by Representatives Louis Stokes (D-OH) and Mervyn M. Dymally (D-CA) and the Congressional Black Caucus.

The NIH family tree is already a bit cluttered, to say the least. A few years ago Congress established a new Nursing Center and a National Institute for Arthritis and Musculoskeletal and Skin Diseases—neither of which NIH wanted. A law establishing a new National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders has passed the House and is expected to pass the Senate soon, and legislation is pending on a National Center for Rehabilitation Medicine (News & Comment, 1 April, p. 19). NIH doesn't want these additions, either, saying that the research is already being done and that new institutes mean \$4 to \$5 million in new administrative costs.

Obesity is a case in point. NIH already has a "tremendously large" (ouch!) obesity research program, said Karen Donato, a nutritionist with the National Heart, Lung and Blood Institute. At least 8 of the 12 NIH institutes do obesity-related work, Donato said, including public education programs, epidemiological studies, twin studies, dietary studies, and studies of regional fat distribution (that is, is there a difference between upper body obesity and lower body obesity). "It's very unlikely one new institute would work well, because obesity is linked to so many other specific disease entities," Donato noted.

The total NIH commitment to studies of obesity, anorexia, and appetite control in fiscal year 1986 was \$29 million, according to Darla Danford of the NIH Division of Nutrition Research Coordination. In addition, the National Institute of Mental Health spent \$2.6 million last year for research on eating disorders.

The Congressional Black Caucus plans to introduce a bill establishing a new institute in September.

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