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25. Curtis states that he is not "the author of the theory" of the origin of AIDS. He says that the idea came to him from Blaine F. Elswood, whose paper written with R. B. Stickler "has been accepted by *Research in Virology*." This paper is still not published.


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## Fetal Tissue Banned . . . and Used

In his editorial "Fetal tissue research" (26 June, p. 1741), Daniel E. Koshland, Jr., says that research on the use of fetal tissue "could lead to the development of cell lines or drugs that could be the basis of large-scale therapy." In fact, normal human fetal cell strains have been used in precisely this way in the United States since 1962. Thirty years ago my colleagues and I reported that a poliomyelitis vaccine produced in such cells was both safe and efficacious (*1*). Our human fetal cell strain, WI-38, and similar strains derived from surgical abortions, are used in the United States for the production of vaccines against poliomyelitis, rubella, adenoviruses, and rabies. When he recently vetoed the bill that would have sanctioned the use of human fetal tissue in transplantation research, President Bush might well have pondered this: it is quite likely that, like tens of millions of other Americans, he has received vaccinations produced in human fetal cells.

Seventeen years ago, the WI-38 cell strain was said by federal government officials to be so valuable (they called it a "national resource") that they claimed title to it and confiscated the cells from my laboratory. After 7 years of litigation, my lawsuit against the government was settled out of court in my favor (*2*). Title to the self-duplicating systems that soon became the heart of the emerging biotechnology industry was agreed to be vested in the discoverer (*3*). Thus, the government returned to me most, but not all, of the ampules of WI-38 cells. Throughout the Reagan and Bush administrations the government has funded the distribution of its WI-38 cells for profit—a use of surgically aborted human fetal tissue that they publicly trumpet to be so abhorrent.


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## The Rowland Institute

The profile by Ivan Amato of the Rowland Institute for Science (News & Comment, 19 June, p. 1625) suggests that Edwin H. Land never explained the origin of the name. The institute is surely named in honor of Henry Augustus Rowland (1848–1901), first Professor of Physics at Johns Hopkins University. Rowland was a founder of scientific optics. At the Rowland Wood Symposium at Johns Hopkins University, brilliantly organized in 1975 by William G. Fastie and Aihud Pevsner, Land indicated that as a youngster he had written to a professor at Hopkins (undoubtedly R. W. Wood) and received strong and continuing encouragement of his interest in optics.


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In Amato's article, "The Rowland Institute for Science: Land's last experiment," an institute investigator, Steven Block, is quoted as saying that "this place would not have worked if it were somewhere in the middle of Kansas." We *live* in the middle of Kansas, and we disagree. Unfortunately, some think that Dorothy and Toto remain the only inhabitants of the state and overlook the fact that a few others, accomplished business people and scientists among them, have taken up residence happily amidst the amber waves of grain. Although its "intellectual fellowship" may use telecommunications instead of mass transit, Kansas has much more to offer the Rowland Institute and the scientific community as a whole than an occasional tornado.


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*Response*: Henry has a good instinct, but staff members at the Rowland Institute for Science consider Land's admiration for Henry A. Rowland as only a possible source of the Institute's name. Another theory is that Land combined the word "row," which might have referred to his son-in-law's love for rowing, and land, for obvious reasons. "Land absolutely wouldn't tell," says Institute scientist Steven Block.

As for the Conrads' objection to Block's colloquialism that happens to reduce Kansas to an intellectual backwater, I hear ya. I'm from New Joisey, which even Kansans have been known to mistakenly think of as a turnpike with vast acreages of blacktop on either side—**Ivan Amato**

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## Biological Motors

The recent Research News article by Michelle Hoffman about biological motors (26 June, p. 1758) includes a section on chromosome movement that gives me more credit than I deserve or desire. I was not the first to provide evidence that chromosomes might be self-propelled, as implied in the article. Mitchison and Gorbsky and co-workers (*1*) are the true pioneers. My remark that "No one had taken [the] suggestion [of self-propulsion] seriously before" was a celebration of these collective efforts, not of my one experiment.


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