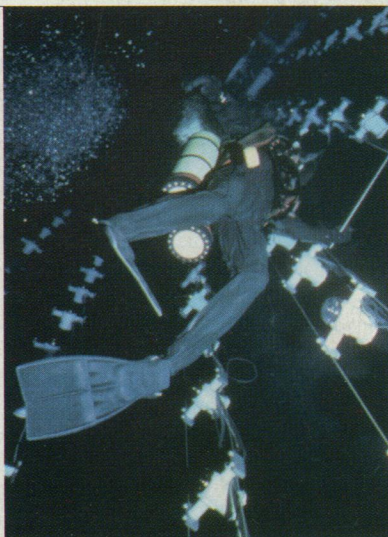


edited by ELIOT MARSHALL

Japan Wins U.S. Help in Proton Decay Search

A decade-long rivalry between physicists in the United States and Japan watching for the elusive signature of proton decay is over. Eight months after suffering a leak in their detector—an 8000-ton water tank in the Morton Salt mine near Cleveland—the U.S. group has decided: If you can't beat 'em, join 'em. In the next few months, U.S. researchers plan to strip parts from their experiment and send them to the proton decay detector in Kamiokande, Japan.

The U.S.-Japan race began in the early 1980s, shortly after theorists predicted that in order to satisfy the Grand Unified Theory, which treats the forces of nature as fundamentally the same, protons should last about 10^{28} years before decaying into smaller particles. U.S. and Japanese physicists set out to test this theory by



In the tank. U.S. proton decay sensor to be dismantled.

monitoring the protons in water baths shielded by thick barriers to minimize the intrusion of other particles. So far, neither team has registered a true proton decay.

Now it appears that if any pro-

ton decay is to be spotted, it will be underneath Japanese soil. "The cost of fixing our detector wasn't worth it," says physicist Hank Sobel of the University of California, Irvine, part of the U.S. collaboration (known as IMB) between Irvine, the University of Michigan, and Brookhaven National Laboratory. Sobel says he plans to submit a proposal to the Department of Energy that would allow IMB to send the Japanese group the 11,800 photo tubes that line the U.S. tank.

The improved version of the Japanese tank—dubbed "Super Kamiokande"—will hold seven times as much water, raising the odds of seeing a proton decay. Sobel says researchers hope to see this happen within a decade after Super Kamiokande is up and running in the late 1990s.

here to the approved Clinton economic plan. Meanwhile, some transition team leaders have been announced.

Sally Ride, the former astronaut and Stanford-educated physicist, will head the "cluster" that reviews the space program and other science matters that cut across federal bureaus. Tom Downey, a Democratic congressman from New York who lost his seat in the last election and an advocate of federal aid to child care programs, is overseeing the installation of a Democratic regime at the Department of Health and Human Services, including changes at the National Institutes of Health (NIH). (Clashing rumors say that NIH's chief, Bernadine Healy, is either about to depart—if you like the Capitol Hill version—or be asked to stay—if you favor the NIH campus line.) J. Gustave Speth, chairman of the Council on Environmental Quality under President Jimmy Carter and former director of the World Resources Institute, will head a cluster dealing with natural resources, energy, the environment, and agriculture. As these cluster chiefs deal with operational details, policy matters affecting science and technology will be handled by Reich's assistant for technology, manufacturing, and small business affairs, Laura Tyson, an international trade economist at the University of California, Berkeley.

AIDS Story Prompts Libel Suit

Hilary Koprowski, developer of an oral polio vaccine in the 1950s, has filed a major libel suit against the Associated Press (AP). Koprowski is seeking \$2.7 million in damages he claims he suffered after AP distributed a story on 6 March linking his vaccine to the origin of AIDS.

The complaint, filed on 29 October in Philadelphia County Court, alleges that AP, a wire service with 7700 subscribers, "intentionally and negligently" defamed Koprowski and invaded his privacy. AP refused to comment—as did Koprowski, the head of Philadelphia's Wistar Institute from 1957 to 1991, now a microbiology professor at the University of Pennsylvania.

According to Koprowski's suit, the AP story inaccurately reported that Robert Bohannon, while at Baylor College of Medicine, had tested a stock of Koprowski's polio vaccine and discovered evidence of "a type of AIDS virus found in monkeys." Furthermore, the suit claims, AP inaccurately reported that this finding was

the basis for an earlier article in *Rolling Stone* magazine that explored the possible connections between the Koprowski vaccine and the origin of AIDS. The suit claims Koprowski's reputation has been "blackened and injured," he has been exposed to "public contempt and ridicule," and he has suffered "severe mental and emotional distress." AP has yet to file a response. Meanwhile, a Koprowski attorney says he is planning a separate suit against *Rolling Stone*.

Transition Talk

Bill Clinton has sent a crew of transitioners to Washington to prepare the way for his presidency, but as *Science* went to press, he had not identified candidates for any top posts. Insiders predict that the job-filling process—particularly in technical agencies—will move slowly because Clinton's chief economic adviser, Robert Reich of Harvard, wants to be certain each appointee will ad-

Army Cancer Chief Gives NIH a Cold Shoulder

An attempt by the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to wrest control of \$210 million allocated to the U.S. Army for breast cancer research appears to have backfired. As a result, the Army is planning to look to others—specifically, to an expert panel brought together by the Institute of Medicine (IOM)—for advice on how to spend the funds, which must be obligated over the next 2 years (*Science*, 30 October, p. 732).

According to health researchers who asked to remain anonymous, Major General Richard Travis, chief of the U.S. Army Medical Research and Development Command, "went through the roof" after NIH chief Bernadine Healy and director of the National Cancer Institute (NCI) Samuel Broder asked Travis to delegate the grant-awarding



Richard Travis

to NIH and to use some of the \$210 million to convert an old Army anthrax lab at Ft. Detrick into a new cancer lab for NIH. Travis refused and was upset by the implication that the Army wasn't capable of selecting cancer researchers.

Travis is now planning to seek advice in future from a blue-ribbon panel of experts to be assembled by the private IOM, which is affiliated with the National Academy of Sciences.

Travis, on a trip to Korea, was unavailable for comment, while Healy and Broder said through spokespersons that they were unaware of the Army's plans. NCI, however, praised Travis for doing an "outstanding job under difficult circumstances."