
A Pat On The Back For Westinghouse Finalists— And For The Talent Search Sponsors, As Well

Reprinted from *THE SCIENTIST*® 7(5):12, 8 March 1993.

As this issue was going to press, 40 remarkable American teenagers—finalists in the 52nd annual Westinghouse Science Talent Search—were on their way to Washington, D.C., to find out who among them was to be declared winner of this year's competition. All of the finalists, of course, are winners in a sense: Their research projects were selected as especially meritorious among 1,600 entries submitted from throughout the United States—and all finalists will share in the \$204,000 college scholarship funds distributed by Westinghouse Electric Corp. in partnership with Science Service, publisher of *Science News*.

For a number of personal reasons, I eagerly look forward each year to scanning the list of finalists. For one, I've been tracking the activities of Science Service—and have been a reader of *Science News*—for more than 40 years, ever since I first met Watson Davis, a pioneer in the field of scientific documentation and the founder of Science Service.

Also, a certain amount of academic chauvinism heightens my interest in the list: This year, I was pleased to see that two of the finalists—Martin Fisch and Erwin Lin—

are students at New York City's Stuyvesant High School, a school I attended as a teenager. Over the years, youngsters from Stuyvesant have frequently been among the finalists—and I've always felt pride in that. (Incidentally, Martin's Westinghouse project addresses "Undocumented Complex Social Relations in Captive *Theropithecus gelada*," while Erwin's project is titled "Loop Two Amino Acids Important for Ability of P-glycoprotein to Confer Multidrug Resistance." Not bad for 17-year-olds!)

Moreover, I take particular pleasure as a parent in being reminded of the Westinghouse competition's durability over time. My eight-year-old son, Alexander, like thousands of other second-graders around the U.S., is already studying science in his classroom. It's gratifying for me to know that my child's intellect and imagination are being sensitized at this early age to the great beauty and mysteries of nature. As time passes, Alexander's fascination with science may well deepen; in a few years, he could find himself harboring, as I did as a teenager, professional aspirations toward the world of research. The Westinghouse program's very existence stands as a

clear sign for our inspired youngsters—my son and other boys and girls, as well—that the U.S. science establishment does indeed value their fledgling endeavors and has the wherewithal to feed their hunger for encouragement.

In a previous essay (*The Scientist*, Jan. 11, 1993, page 12), I remarked that all of us in the science community owe the future generation of scientists our commitment to mentor and counsel them and to provide wherever possible as much material support as we can. And in the Opinion section of this issue (page 11), the eminent inventor, businessman, and philanthropist Arnold Beckman expresses the view, consistent with my own, that a helping hand here, a pat on the back there, can do wonders to fan the flame of young genius.

A few weeks ago, after receiving the roster of this year's Westing-

house finalists, I directed our circulation department to put all of these budding researchers on the publication's complimentary subscription list. I like to think of this as my way not only of rewarding them for their fine work, but also of reinforcing their sense of legitimate membership in the science community.

I hope that reading *The Scientist*—and discussing it with their classmates, teachers, and families—will enrich their understanding of how research professionals really lead their lives. I trust that the publication will help alert these young people to the wide variety of issues that will surely continue to shape the research environment as they move forward in their careers.

And so, I congratulate the finalists, while once again offering my pat on the back to Science Service and Westinghouse Electric for a job well done.