

## GENERAL SCIENCE

# Decide Careers Early

► FORTY GIFTED young scientists have revealed that their enthusiasm for lifetime careers in science was fired very early in their lives.

According to the winners of the 1958 Science Talent Search for the Westinghouse Science Scholarships and Awards, the age at which they had their first yen to be a scientist ranged from three to 15, with the greatest number charted in the years between six and 10.

About a fourth of them have always wanted to be an astronomer, a physicist, a chemist or a teacher, for example. If they wandered off the path, lured by a temporary interest in some other career, they came back the next time science appeared on the scene.

In the majority of cases, various fields of science have been "tried on for size" as the youngster became aware of them, with the highest number of their present career choices having been made at the ages of 10, 15 and 16.

One boy relates that from the time he was seven years old he has known that he wanted to "satisfy a growing curiosity about the world around me." Even at that tender age he experimented a great deal and once devoted several days to seeing whether it was possible to dissolve coffee grounds.

Another boy developed an intense interest in astronomy when he was ten years old, acquired a telescope, and has wanted to be an astronomer ever since.

Many of these high school seniors mention home influences, books on science and scientists, chemistry sets, and science courses in school as prime reasons for their interest in their chosen specialties. One student credits the results of aptitude and interest tests and his own increasing maturity with giving him sufficient self-understanding to know that he wanted to be a scientist.

Asked what specific contribution they would like to make during their lifetime, these young people describe some very definite and admirable ambitions. They hope to accomplish major breakthroughs toward artificial photosynthesis, chemicals to retard aging, the "secret of life" and a cure for cancer. They anticipate greater understanding of magnetic fields and fusion processes, and of mental illness through biochemical research in psychopathology.

One boy would like to provide a stepping stone to new concepts and theories of the universe by developing a contribution like Planck's quantum theory or Einstein's special theory of relativity. Another 18-year-old, who has been an inspired "builder" all his life, hopes to develop a research tool for physical chemistry that will correspond to the bevatron and cyclotron in the field of nuclear chemistry.

Science News Letter, March 8, 1958

## AERONAUTICS

## Ramjet Missile Sets Speed-Altitude Marks

► THE X-7 RAMJET missile has set a new speed and altitude mark for its propulsion type, the Air Force has reported, but exact details have not been made public.

The records were set on separate flights of the X-7 over the desert proving range at Alamogordo, N.M. The X-7, built by Lockheed's missile systems division for the Air Force's Air Research and Development Command, is used to prove powerful ramjet engines that propel some of the nation's most advanced defense weapons.

It is recoverable by parachute and a nose spike so that it can be flown time and again.

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## ASTRONAUTICS

## Economic Reasons May Slow Space Travel Era

► THE AGE of space travel may be farther in the future than many persons expect, not for technical but for economic and social reasons.

The interest in space flight may soon drop from its current high level, Dr. Donald Michael of Dunlap and Associates, Inc., Stamford, Conn., warned the American

Rocket Society meeting in New York. He suggested space exploration might by 1975 be "just another social problem in allocation of effort, money, prestige, emotional involvement and sheer day-to-day expedience."

In 18 years, Dr. Michael said, one person in ten of the expected U.S. population of 225,000,000 will be 65 or older. He concluded "there is no reason to believe that the adventure or rewards going to the strong and youthful and deriving from space exploration will inspire these elder citizens to place supporting governmental expenditures for space research above expenditures for increased social security, old age insurance, and other services which will inherently be more appealing to them."

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**BURNED MISSILE** — Air friction heat burned the black waffle pattern on the Lockheed X-7 ramjet missile that recently set new speed and altitude records. The parachute and nose spike enable it to be recovered and reflown.