

Biologist Kennedy to head FDA

Donald Kennedy, professor of human biology at Stanford University, has been appointed Commissioner of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. He is the first nonphysician appointed since 1965.

Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare Joseph A. Califano Jr. said he selected Kennedy because he is an internationally recognized scientist (a neurophysiologist) and because he has demonstrated a sensitivity to human needs with his Program of Human Biology at Stanford—an innovative attempt to gain better understanding of the relationship of public policy to human health and environmental quality by bringing together biologists, social scientists and physicians. Kennedy has also served the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy as senior consultant relating life sciences to fed-

eral policies, particularly in the area of food and nutrition.

Although Califano contends that he chose Kennedy because he was the most qualified person for the job, not because he was a scientist, certain FDA critics are delighted that a scientist was selected. They believe that physician commissioners have tended to side with drug and medical device manufacturers at the expense of the public. Even Califano admits that "it is imperative that the FDA act only in the public interest and with much greater dispatch than it has in the recent past. . . . I believe Dr. Kennedy can achieve this objective. He brings to this important post distinction in the biological sciences and a career devoted to the advancement of science for the public benefit." □

Japanese geosynchronous satellite

On Sept. 9, 1975, Japan's National Space Development Agency sent its first satellite, a little probe known as Kiku (chrysanthemum), into orbit (SN: 9/20/75, p. 184). The agency also announced that in about February 1977 it would attempt to put a payload into a 36,000-kilometer-high geosynchronous orbit. This was quite a claim since the University of Tokyo had already launched half a dozen satellites while the government was developing the booster that launched Kiku. But last month, only four days after the university's Institute of Space and Aeronautical Science had lofted yet another probe, the government made good its prediction. Japan's first geosynchronous satellite is in orbit.

Kiku 2 was launched on Feb. 23 by an

evolved version of the same "N" rocket that carried its predecessor. (The second and third stages of the booster were based on designs licensed from U.S. companies.) Once in orbit, the satellite was maneuvered several times to place it in position over the equator at 130°E longitude. The payload itself is primarily just a test module designed to report on the booster's performance and pave the way for future communications and weather probes.

The latest entry from the University of Tokyo is Tansei 3, launched Feb. 19 into a lower (nongeosynchronous) path to check out the latest member of the M-3 launch vehicle family: The M-3H was updated about 20 percent in thrust from its oft-flown forebearer, the M-3C. □

Young chemist wins science talent search

An 18-year-old Dallas, Tex., student has won first place in the 36th annual Science Talent Search, sponsored by Science Service, Inc., and Westinghouse Electric Corp. Richard Coin Schirato, a senior at Skyline High School in Dallas, won a \$10,000 scholarship for his re-

search in the field of photochemistry.

Many chemical reactions stimulated by light follow several stages and involve several unstable intermediate complexes. These intermediates, called "exciplexes," are not fully understood and Schirato studied how they react to dif-

ferent solvents. Using equipment at the nearby campus of the University of Texas at Dallas, he found a simple correlation between the wavelengths of light emitted by the exciplexes and known parameters of the solvents.

Schirato plans to attend Rice University in preparation for a career as a plasma physicist. He enjoys hiking, fishing and hunting. His hobbies include model rocketry, and he has studied karate.

The second place winner, who will receive an \$8,000 scholarship, is James Gary Propp, 16, a senior at Great Neck North Senior High School, Great Neck, N.Y. His project involved number theory, proving or demonstrating properties about sequences of integers. When a property could not be proven outright, Propp used a computer to generate many terms of a sequence to demonstrate the conjecture's probable validity. He hopes to study mathematics at Harvard and pursue a dual career in writing and mathematics. Propp sings, plays the oboe and has tried his hand at writing plays.

The third place winner, who also receives an \$8,000 scholarship, is Annie Laurie Murray, 17, a senior at Melbourne High School, Melbourne, Fla. She investigated the microorganisms that destroy gum tissue and are the leading cause of tooth loss. She conducted her work at the University of Florida where the techniques she developed for studying antigens of the microorganisms are still being used. Murray plans to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Her hobbies include piano playing, track and swimming.

Three students won \$6,000 scholarships. Evan Michael Tick of Flushing, N.Y., developed a computer simulation program for modeling rapid transit systems. Grant H. Stokes of Los Alamos, N.M., measured the gamma rays released in the annihilation of an electron with its antimatter analog, the positron. And Douglas Walter Laske of Jamaica, N.Y., demonstrated the connection between enzyme repression and inactivation of cyclic AMP involved in cellular metabolism of glucose.

Four students won \$4,000 scholarships: Daniel David Blau of Richmond, N.Y., for mathematical description of free electrons in crystals; Paul Augustine Cahill of Akron, Ohio, for developing computer programs to predict the location of earth satellites; Kenneth John Lohmann of West Lafayette, Ind., for studying voice patterns of frogs; and Glenn Curtis Poole of Springfield, Va., for programming a computer to identify the meaning of sentences regardless of construction.

At the awards banquet in Washington honoring the winners, the principal speaker was Leon N. Cooper of Brown University, winner of the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1972 and a finalist in the 1947 Science Talent Search. He was presented with a special award for being the first STS winner who is a Nobel laureate. □



STS winners Schirato, Propp and Murray: From photochemistry to oral microbiology.