

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

SCIENCE NEWS

May 19, 1990
Vol. 137, No. 20
Pages 305-320



Life As We Don't Know It

SCIENCE NEWS®

The Weekly Newsmagazine of Science

A Science Service Publication
Volume 137, No. 20, May 19, 1990

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SCIENCE NEWS (ISSN 0036-8423) is published weekly on Saturday, except the last week in December, for \$34.50 for 1 year or \$58.00 for 2 years (foreign postage \$6.00 additional per year) by Science Service, Inc., 1719 N Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036. Second-class postage paid at Washington, D.C., and additional mailing office. **POSTMASTER:** Send address changes to SCIENCE NEWS, 231 West Center Street, Marion, OH 43305. Change of address: Four to six weeks' notice is required—old and new addresses, including zip codes, must be provided.

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Editorial and Business Offices:
1719 N St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036
(202-785-2255)

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Cover: Simulating biological processes on computers is a major pastime for researchers in the embryonic field of artificial life. In 1968, theoretical biologist Aristid Lindenmayer proposed a class of mathematical equations, now known as L-systems, to describe developmental processes in multicellular structures. Computer scientists have since refined L-systems into developmental models for plants. The image shown here, titled "A Flower Field" by its creators, emerged from a computer simulation of flower development based on an L-system that models variations within a species. (Image: Przemyslaw Prusinkiewicz/University of Regina)
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Honors for our own: A prize, a fellowship

Occupying the editor's chair at SCIENCE NEWS provides me with an endless procession of problems and pleasures. Few of the pleasures match that of seeing one of our staff feted for his or her work. Right now I'm savoring the double pleasure of having both of our Life Sciences/Biomedicine writers honored. Kathy A. Fackelmann has won first place in the magazine category of the National Media Awards competition held by the American Diabetes Association (ADA). And Rick Weiss has won a six-week summer fellowship at the Marine Biological Laboratory (MBL) in Woods Hole, Mass.

Kathy won her \$1,000 award, which she will receive June 17 in Atlanta during the ADA's annual scientific sessions, for the article "Hidden Heart Hazards: Do high blood insulin levels foretell heart disease?" (SN: 9/16/89, p.184). Her piece

explores some controversial but intriguing indications that "insulin resistance—a disorder in which cells respond sluggishly to insulin—forms the lethal core of a process that can lead to clogged arteries." If further research confirms this link, it could have sobering implications for diabetics and for seemingly healthy people with insulin resistance.

The judging panel expressed admiration for Kathy's ability to mold complex research findings into a "reader-friendly" article, something all of us at SCIENCE NEWS strive to achieve.

Rick's fellowship, one of eight awarded this year, will allow him to work alongside scientists at MBL, sharing the excitement, the intellectual ponderings and the drudgery inherent in everyday lab research. The program's aim is to give journalists a better understanding of how



Kathy A. Fackelmann and Rick Weiss

scientists carry out biological research.

I frankly envy Rick. Some of my more memorable moments in science writing have occurred with researchers in their laboratories, as I grasped the significance of their work and sensed their own, contagious excitement. While Cape Cod's beaches may beckon, friends who have spent time as MBL fellows assure me the lure of the lab outshines the sun, sand and surf. Life's a beach, it seems, but the true grit lies indoors at MBL. —Patrick Young

Wendy Smith