

EDUCATION

Need Science Museums

MORE LOCAL museums are needed to play larger roles in telling the people about past, present and future science and technology, Watson Davis, director of SCIENCE SERVICE, Washington, told the American Association of Museums meeting in Pittsburgh, Pa. Museums can become major means of communication of intelligence and knowledge along with schools, newspapers, books and television.

"If the talents of young science experimenters in science clubs and fairs are enlisted in this major task of public education through demonstrations and exhibits," Mr. Davis said, "there would be major reinforcement of the renaissance of science and education that is now in progress."

A greatly augmented museum structure for the nation would have the triple purpose of showing objectively the astounding progress of the past, the accelerating developments of the present and the enticing future in science and technology.

In the year 2000, Mr. Davis predicted, museums will have halls devoted to the rise of automatic intelligence machines, and modes of energy production not yet de-

veloped such as power from the peaceful application of the fusion reaction in the powerful H-bomb.

Museums for art have dominated the museum situation, Mr. Davis said. More art museums are needed, he emphasized, but there should be a basic science and technology museum within easy traveling distance of every locality.

In addition to showing the fundamental evolution of our culture, local museums should preserve and glorify the ingenuity and mechanical progress that has occurred in their localities through the genius of inventors and scientists. They should point up great natural wonders, like geological records in the rocks, that otherwise would go unnoticed.

Through cooperation with schools, youth groups, colleges, newspapers, industries and professional groups, museums can become a greater force locally, Mr. Davis said. TV stations should have their cameras in museums. What happens in the new dynamic, objective centers of knowledge is just as important as sports events.

Science News Letter, June 13, 1959

AERONAUTICS

Invent Inflatable Plane

PILOTS downed behind enemy lines now have a "heaven-sent" escape system: a packaged inflatable airplane that can be dropped to them by parachute.

The invention is so simple to operate that the pilot can be airborne and on his way to safety five minutes after he reaches the package.

The entire package weighs 565 pounds, including the fuel, container, and parachute. The aircraft weighs 225 pounds empty and carries 180 pounds of fuel. Its maximum payload is 240 pounds.

The two-cylinder, partly aluminum engine develops 42 horsepower and runs for six and one-half hours on a full load of fuel. Cruising speed is 60 miles an hour and maximum is 72.

The air compressor used for inflation runs off the engine and maintains optimum pressure (with the help of a valve in the plane's tail) from the ground all the way up to the plane's 10,300-foot service ceiling.

The little (22-foot wingspan) ship requires a take-off run of 250 feet in calm air. But a slight wind reduces the run distance quite a bit. For example it can take off into a 10-mile-an-hour wind after a run of 125 feet.

Development of these escape planes has been one of inter-service cooperation. Ten test models, built by Goodyear Aircraft Corporation, are being tested, five each by the Army and the Navy.

Each of the models cost \$19,500, but on a production basis they are expected to run about \$8,000. One reason for the high

cost is the difficulty involved in weaving the special foldable inflatable fabric.

The inventors are Maj. Darrel L. Ritter, USMC, Cmdr. Leo B. Blocker, USN, and Lt. Col. Julian Willcox, USMC. All are on widely separated overseas assignments now, but they worked out the invention while together at the Air Branch of the Office of Naval Research.

They recently received a patent, which they assigned to the United States of America as represented by the Secretary of the Navy.

Science News Letter, June 13, 1959

AGRICULTURE

A-Irradiation Yields Rust-Resistant Bluegrass

ATOMIC radiation may soon present you with a better looking lawn, according to research reported by the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

A new strain of Merion Kentucky bluegrass has been produced that is resistant to stem rust, a major disease of this grass. The new bluegrass is apparently a mutant produced when rust-susceptible seeds were treated with varying intensities of radiation at the Brookhaven National Laboratory, Upton, N. Y.

Selected plants from the treated seed produced a second generation of more than 3,000 individuals, USDA researchers Angus A. Hanson and Felix V. Juska said. One line of ten plants remained free of stem

rust and continued to grow throughout the normal bluegrass season. In contrast, top growth was killed back to ground level in the majority of rust-infested plants.

When hybridization is difficult, as in bluegrass where few plants reproduce sexually, radiation may be an effective tool for introducing variation, the scientists pointed out.

Further tests under lawn-management conditions are necessary to determine the full potential of the new bluegrass. However, its future is promising, the scientists said.

Science News Letter, June 13, 1959



BETTER BLUEGRASS—Drs. Angus A. Hanson (left) and Felix V. Juska study the differences between new stem rust-resistant bluegrass on the right, which is making good progress, with the infected grass.

ASTRONAUTICS

Scientist Pleads for Russian Satellite Data

AN AUSTRALIAN scientist is hearing peculiar noises on his radio and would like the Russians to give out information about the radio transmission equipment on board Sputnik III.

The plea for even "a little information on the emitting equipment" is made in *Nature* (May 30). It comes from Dr. G. H. Munro of the University of Sydney's electrical engineering department.

Sputnik III is the giant satellite weighing one and a half tons launched in May, 1958, by the Russians. The radio signals from Satellite 1958 Delta 2, as it is officially known, have shown their peculiar behavior since March, Dr. Munro reports. The continuous radiation is not only audible but visible on records.

"The reason for this background radiation would no doubt be apparent if we had a little information on the emitting equipment," Dr. Munro concludes.

Science News Letter, June 13, 1959