

GREATER SAN DIEGO SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING FAIR  
AWARD OF HONOR  
*CECIL MUNSEY*

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WITH DEEP APPRECIATION FOR YOUR YEARS OF  
SERVICE AND DEDICATION TO THE YOUTH  
OF SAN DIEGO AND IMPERIAL COUNTIES

PRESENTED JUNE 20, 1986

THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
GSDSEF

## **What's on the minds of our young people?**

My research on the subject in the title is admittedly light. It consists entirely of visiting this year's Greater San Diego Science & Engineering Fair, where the work of 849 very smart students was displayed.

I love the science fair because for years I was one of the people who operated it and for the things I learn there.

As I wandered the aisles of the exhibit hall where the projects were arranged, what struck me the most was the emergence of common themes. First among them: bacteria awareness.

They could have devoted a wing just to the topic of bacteria, with one student after another documenting its presence everywhere, from lip gloss to steering wheels to the sign-in pen in the nurse's office at school.

Many youngsters were called to this line of scientific inquiry, but the indisputable Queen had to be a seventh-grader.

Aided by a chemist in the water services department, the youngster compared the bacterial levels in the ice machines and toilet water at 18 San Diego hotels. At 13 of these fine establishments more bacteria turned up in the ice than in the toilets.

A case of filthy ice, or amazingly clean toilets? Ponder that riddle if the Federation ever holds its annual convention and show in San Diego and you are tempted to visit a hotel bar and order a Scotch and water on the rocks.

And speaking of libations, a second preoccupation of our budding scientists appears to be caffeine, particularly when it arrives in those calorie-laden concoctions known as energy drinks – you know, the beverages that come in those beautiful cans that some bottle collectors are beginning to collect (*Bottles & Extras*, Summer 2006 and March-April 2007).

Most of the students' experiments with energy drinks "proved" an increase in abilities. It seemed there was no end to the benefits of caffeine – until one student fed cans of Monster Energy to his plants, hoping to increase their growth by 20 percent. Instead, he killed them.

And then there was my favorite that resulted in the knowledge that you should not clean your driveway with Coca-Cola because it stains the concrete an undesirable grayish

brown. Who knew? Like most of you, I have read that there is almost no limits to what Coke will clean. As I said, who knew?