

*Greetings to the friends of the Connecticut Science Fair and the Science Horizons Science Fair.*



We are here! ISEF 2007. ISEF, otherwise known as the Intel International Science and Engineering Fair is abuzz and alive in Albuquerque, New Mexico – and we are so excited to be a part of it! Approximately 1500 talented science students representing almost 50 countries from around the world have converged here to share their research. Of the 1500, our special five are ready, willing, and excited to present their authentic work.

The delegation gathered with family at Bradley Airport, Sunday morning around 9 in the morning.



The students are:

From Brewster High School: Alex McJe and Elisabeth Baseman

From Greenwich High School: Russell Slater and George Hansel

And from Newtown High School: Dayton Horvath.

Joining the students are

Bob and Sue Wisner (Bob is the CSF fair director)

Sandy and Wynn Muller (Sandy is the CSF president, Wynn is the CSF registration chair and ISEF coordinator)

Ed Schmidt (Brewster High School Science Research Teacher)

and me, Frank LaBanca (Newtown High School Science Research Teacher).

We shared stories, got to know each other and checked our luggage right at the curb. After saying our goodbyes we headed to security. Sandy Muller was promptly stopped for having a ticket and an ID with different names, but Wynn came to her rescue with the right ticket. After having our shoes inspected we sat down together for a light breakfast. Our flight was in two

segments – first a puddle jump to Baltimore and then the long haul to Albuquerque. Our 4-hour trip was long, and enhanced only slightly by the beverage service and the honey roasted peanut package that was about the size of a 9-volt battery. Our spirits were uplifted as we passed over the absolutely gorgeous Sandia Mountain and made our decent into Albuquerque.



After checking in at the hotel, we enjoyed dinner before heading to the convention center to register. Most of us took advantage to enjoy the Southwestern menu – some of us realized how hot and spicy they like it in New Mexico. We then made our way to the exhibition hall to check the status of our projects. We are happy to report that nothing was damaged and everything looked great.

Monday morning began in Mr. & Mrs. Muller’s room for breakfast. Students snacked on various cereals, breads, and muffins. We learned how much Mr. Schmidt likes Fruit Loops. Between him and the students, the box is almost empty. We then headed out to the exhibition hall to set up projects. Each student was shadowed with one of the adult chaperones. We unpacked boxes, made minor corrections, and had display and safety check out everything to insure that we were in compliance with all of the rules. Dayton took advantage to make some more “substantial” changes. Thus, he and I were in the hall a bit longer than the other students. I am happy to report that all of the posters look fantastic!



After setup, the students enjoyed lunch at a local establishment while Bob and Wynn prepared for their presentation about the online CSF registration system. George currently holds the record for the largest meal – a giant bowl of soup, an entire plate of quesadillas, a plate of fried shrimp, and some other side dish.



Early evening, we went to dinner and the opening ceremonies. A thunderstorm took us by surprise during the meal, but we eventually headed in for an exciting program, complete with authentic Southwestern dance and music. We heard from the dignitaries and had a great talk from Dr. Andrea Belcher of MIT.

We headed home, a bit hungry from our dinner rain out – ordered some pizzas and enjoyed each other's company before heading to bed. Tomorrow we'll tell you about our exciting adventures to Los Alamos.

For each edition of the newsletter, I have asked each of the students to write an anecdotal story to share with you. You can read their official bios on the CSF website, but I thought it would be fun to learn something different about the students than what you would ordinarily find in their resume. I hope you enjoy!

Today's writing comes from George Hansel of Greenwich High School. His project is in the Physics category.

The most striking theme, so far, of our visit to Albuquerque, has been the immense scale of everything around us. Driving out of the airport, we could see for miles and miles around us – there was no terrain, nothing in the way. I was surprised by the sheer flatness of the expanse of New Mexico. Much to my astonishment, the feeling I had when I walked into the exhibition hall of the convention center here was not much different. Rows upon rows upon rows of posters – around 1200 of them – filling an enormous interior hall, are almost too much to look at. Regardless, it is absolutely fantastic to be surrounded by so many people who like science so much.

The immense scale of the 2007 Intel International Science Fair, highlighted by the immense scale of the scenery around it, brought to mind an immediate question: How big is too big? At the opening ceremonies tonight (I write this at around 11 o'clock the same night) the speaker mentioned that there were around 150 more participants from 10 more countries (or territories or regions) than in 2006. It's wonderful to have people from a wider array of countries. But I wonder – is the goal really to involve more people, or to have high standards for quality? If you interest a person in science, but in 'science' lacking both rigor and sophistication, have you really performed a service to them or to society? There are many people who can appreciate science and revel in all the challenges and systematic complexity it presents; there is no need to 'dilute' the affair – no pun intended. None of this is to say that I find the quality of the projects at ISEF in any way lacking. There is a very high standard of quality, sophistication, and scientific rigor in the posters I've seen. I'm looking forward to talking to people about their projects, because I find conversation, a quasi-Socratic questioning, the only true way to judge what they know and what they've accomplished.

Tomorrow we go to Los Alamos to visit the laboratories there. I'm looking forward to that a lot because it is one of the few true American symbols of science and engineering. As science-friendly a culture we claim to be, we have precious few concrete symbols of our achievement.

I've set up a photo album online which can be found at <http://team19.no-ip.org/isef> and upload pictures daily (111 today). As of now they are only my poorly-focused (manual lenses do not lend themselves to snapshots), sketchily composed images, but there's no technical barrier stopping other people from adding their own pictures, so I'll work on that.

Pictures are everywhere for you to view:

George's pics: <http://team19.no-ip.org/isef>

Bob's pics: <http://web.mac.com/bobwisner/iWeb/ISEF%202007/ISEFSunMon.html>

My pics:

<http://new.photos.yahoo.com/album?c=franklabanca@sbcglobal.net&aid=576460762401564026&pid=&wtok=I9NRmWPiiu8aip6g1ctWw--&ts=1179203043&.src=ph>

See you tomorrow!

For the Connecticut Science Fair and Science Horizons,

*Frank LaBanca*

Newtown High School