

Simsbury Boy Studies Windflow

by Karen Lytle

SIMSBURY — Did you ever talk to a 12 year old boy for an hour and not understand very much of what was being said? And realize that he knew what he was talking about, and must be thinking that for an adult you're not very bright.

The occasion was an interview with Eric Fossu, son of Mr. and Mrs. E.R. Fossum of Briarwood Dr. An 8th grade student at Henry James Memorial High School, Eric had been chosen this past year for the Talcott Mountain Science Center's program "The Sky's the Limit."

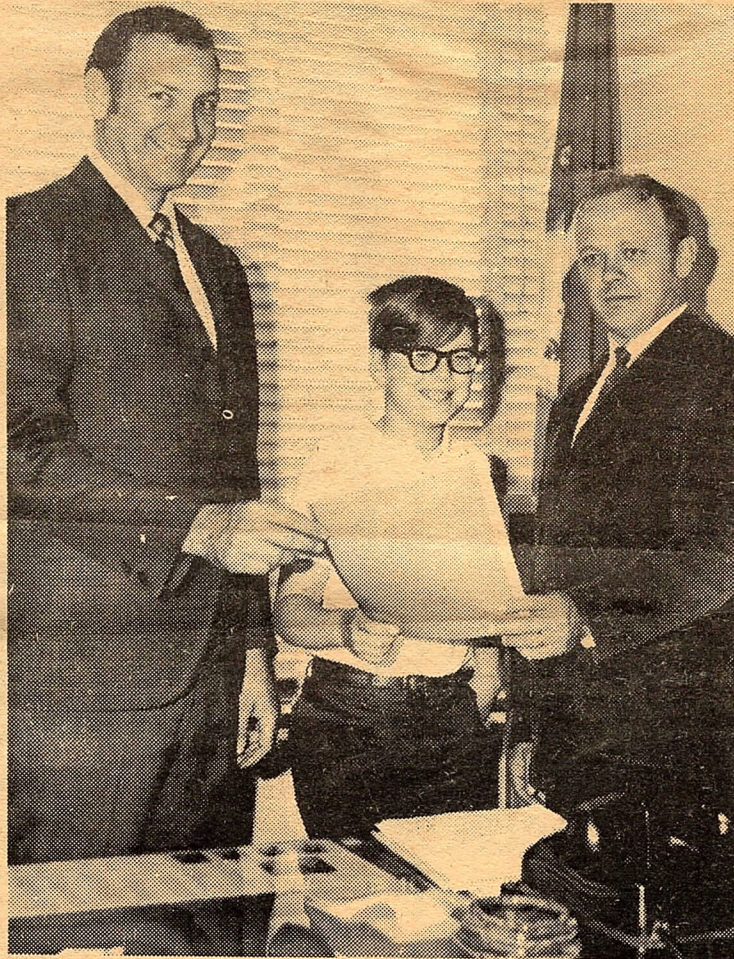
This program is one of individual research and study. The whole center is opened to the students to use the equipment. Instructors are there to assist them, but they don't teach formal classes. The program is designed for academically gifted junior and senior high school students from Connecticut.

The students choose what they would like to work on. In Eric's case it was Meteorology and he had a partner in his endeavor, Dan Hintz from New Britain. The students did their research on Saturdays. Eric and Dan decided to investigate the windflow over Talcott Mountain.

Their project concerned the launching of balloons filled with helium and establishing tracking stations to sight and record the paths. Eric said that the tracking is done through the use of a telescope which shows how many degrees you are looking up.

By using Trigonometry and tangents you can figure out how high the balloon is and its velocity. Eric has not had Trigonometry, but he said that his instructor gave them the fundamentals they would need. The highest speed they recorded was 23 miles per hour.

However, Eric said that he thinks "the wind flow is slightly faster on the mountain because the balloon has to push against the air."



Science Project Reviewed

SIMSBURY — Principal Robert Pelletier of the Henry James Memorial Junior High School, left, and Science Teacher Roger Carlson examine the report done by student Eric Fossu, center, on weather conditions as checked at the Talcott Mountain Science Center. Lytle Photo

The practical applications of his study, Eric noted, concern air pollution, airplanes and trees. It has bearing on why air pollution tends to stay in one place, provides data for small airplanes that fly over the mountain and encounter down-draughts and up-draughts, and explains why tree branches grow on only one side (wind force breaks leaves).

When questioned about the difficulty of his experiment, Eric

said that the hardest part was tracking the balloon, "cause it would wiggle all around. I don't know if you could call it hard; it was fun work."

Concerning the program, Eric said, "I liked it very much. I hope I return. It's a really good place."

Eric's other activities are a morning paper route, being a Star Scout, an acolyte at his church, and a member of school Math Club.

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another caller wonders what
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