

FILE NAME: General Motors (GM)

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June 25, 1985

Dr. J.C. Wagner

Dear Dr. Wagner:

I recently read in the New York Times about your award from General Motors. The Times' story attributed the grant to "two key discoveries: that only the thinnest and straightest fibers of asbestos, or similar fibers, cause mesothelioma; and that certain types of asbestos are more dangerous than others. Among the less dangerous is the white asbestos..."

It was my understanding that Stanton et al. discovered the first thing, and that, to the extent that your studies on animals addressed the latter point, they did not show white asbestos to be less carcinogenic. This is not to say I disagree with the idea of honoring your work and the very important research you have done.

However, I can't help but wonder if the General Motors Foundation has an agenda of its own. GM is a longtime user of chrysotile asbestos in brakes it manufactures, and GM is a defendant in numerous personal injury lawsuits brought by workers exposed to dust from working with these products as mechanics, etc. A defense raised in at least some of these suits is that chrysotile used in the brakes is either incapable of giving rise to a health risk or is incapable of at least causing mesothelioma. GM also stands to be regulated under new (expected) OSHA standards for asbestos, and a central aspect in dispute is whether there is adequate scientific basis for setting differing standards for the different types of asbestos dust.

I would be interested in discussing these issues with you while in Wales in late July or early August. If this would be suitable, please let me know when you expect to be available and how I might reach you by phone just beforehand.

Sincerely yours,

June 25, 1985

by imposing the death
State Supreme Court
decision.

ates Supreme Court
decision in an opinion
Justice Thurgood Mar-
shon of capital pun-
ishment said that the
penalty rulings, had
given that capital
law their task as the
determining whether a
person should die at the

and, a suggestion to
responsibility lay else-
where. "A tolerable danger
exists if we choose to mini-
mize its role."

Justice Marshall said, was
as well as to
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a sentence.

an appellate
sentence was
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high the intan-
siders.

Justice Miss., No.
Associate Jus-
ice, Harry A.
Justice and San-

was particu-
larly particu-
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in a 5-to-
4 constitutional
decision to the
effect today.

Death

A teen-
age murder-
er thrown
into what
is a jail at
the age of
17 years
for a mur-
der.

3 Cancer Researchers Named Winners of \$130,000 Awards

By HAROLD M. SCHMECK Jr.

Three scientists who have made im-
portant contributions to cancer re-
search and diagnosis were named win-
ners yesterday of the General Motors
Cancer Research Foundation prizes for
1985.

The winners, who each received
\$130,000, were Dr. Paul C. Lauterbur of
the State University of New York at
Stony Brook, Dr. John Christopher
Wagner of Llandough Hospital in South
Glamorgan, Wales, and Dr. Robert T.
Schimke of Stanford University.

Dr. Lauterbur was cited for pioneer-
ing research in the use of nuclear mag-
netic resonance. The technique pro-
duces sharp, exquisitely detailed, pic-
tures of soft tissues such as the brain,
heart, liver and muscles. In the 12
years since he published his first re-
search report showing such images,
the citation said, the technique has be-
come a leading diagnostic tool for de-
tecting tumors, strokes, hemorrhages
and other serious problems.

Dr. Wagner, an expert on the role of
asbestos in causing cancers, was cred-
ited with producing "a significant part
of the scientific knowledge that led to
safeguards against life-threatening as-
bestos levels in the workplace." In
addition to contributions to the evi-
dence linking asbestos to lung cancer,
Dr. Wagner's research showed that ex-
posure to small amounts of asbestos
fibers could cause a rare and deadly
form of cancer called mesothelioma.

Cells Thwart Anticancer Drugs

Dr. Schimke was cited for important
discoveries about the ability of cancer

cells to resist drug treatment. He
showed how cancer cells generate mul-
tiple copies of genes that direct the pro-
duction of enzymes that thwart the
drugs' intended action.

Using the multiple gene copies, the
cells produce unusually large amounts
of such enzymes. The extra copies evi-
dently arise spontaneously in some
cells. Under treatment with a drug,
these cells and their progeny become
dominant in the cancer tissue because
they are protected against the drug's
action.

The discovery of this process of gene
amplification in mammalian cells
came as a surprise to scientists. The
phenomenon is now believed to have
important theoretical implications.

Discoveries About Asbestos

Dr. Wagner, the asbestos expert, was
cited for two key discoveries: that only
the thinnest and straightest fibers of
asbestos, or similar fibers, caused me-
sothelioma; and that certain types of
asbestos are more dangerous than
others. Among the less dangerous is the
white asbestos called chrysotile mined
in Canada and used widely in the
United States.

In answer to a question at a news
conference yesterday, Dr. Wagner said
there may be more risk in the whole-
sale ripping of asbestos out of Ameri-
can buildings than in leaving the ma-
terial in place.

Each award consists of a prize of
\$100,000, a gold medal and a grant of
\$30,000 to finance a scientific sym-
posium in the winner's field of re-
search.