



Natasha Plotkin

*Hunter College High School, Manhattan
Winner, Chemistry*

Essay title: Richard Ernst and the Transformation of the NMR Spectroscopy

Natasha Plotkin aspires to become "a great problem solver." Born in Manhattan, she moved to the Bronx when she was two and is currently a seventeen-year-old junior at Hunter College High School. Intelligent and lively with a wide range of interests, she is truly a "renaissance teenager" - a scholar and athlete skilled at writing articles for the school newspaper; solving intricate math problems; and being a member and captain of her school's track team.

Natasha credits her parents with being the "most important in terms of guiding me ethically and academically." What they showed her was the excitement of combining the worlds of art and science. Like her mother, who works for the Bronx community newspaper, The Riverdale Press, Natasha loves journalism and recently became editor-in-chief for The Observer, the high school paper. Her father, who works as a medical editor but also as a musician, inspired her. "In addition to his work as an editor, he devotes almost every minute of his free time to writing music for the theater as well as commercial jingles," she says.

Natasha decided to write about Nobel Laureate Richard Ernst because his work had personal meaning for her. "His work produced applications that had value to me and others," she explained, describing how Ernst's development of NMR spectroscopy led to the development of MRI technology, which

"has helped diagnose illnesses and aided treatment for millions of people around the world. His great impact on the world is why I consider Ernst's work truly remarkable," she says.

A voracious reader, Natasha enjoyed doing research using the Nobelprize.org site. She committed weekends, evenings and any free time she had to work on the essay. Upon hearing that she had won, she cried, "I can't believe it!" When asked if his daughter might become a Nobel Laureate someday, Natasha's father replied, "I wouldn't put it past her."

Her upcoming trip to Sweden reminded her of another ambition - to explore the world. "I have been outside the U.S. only once," she says. "I was in Mexico for about four hours during the first and only cruise I have ever been on. I'm sure Sweden will be an awesome and unique experience."

Natasha also looks forward to entering college. Though she isn't sure what career she would like to pursue, Natasha says the field of engineering particularly appeals to her. "I prefer engineering because of its possible applications in improving the quality of life for the millions of people living in developing nations whose standards of living are so shockingly lower than ours," she says.

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