

He's Scientist Extraordinary— Junior Grade

Photo Story by Les Line

Age is no barrier in science.

Roger Picou, like many other youngsters in this era of satellites, missiles and atomic energy, has become intrigued by today's rapid scientific strides.

But unlike most others, his interest does not end with newspapers and books. It merely begins there. For Roger, while just 13 years old and only an eighth grader at Bloomfield Hills, is somewhat of a scientific whiz—and the possessor of a well-equipped basement laboratory, a sizeable supply of technical books and an acute curiosity when it comes to one particular phase: rockets.

And in the matter of rockets—his paramount interest since the USSR's successful satellite launchings some five months back—this Bloomfield township lad has accomplished much.

Many hours of work in the basement of the John Picou home on Carriage road—with components supplied by his dad—produced a zinc-sulphur compound Roger felt would work as a rocket fuel.

It did!

The fuel's burning power was first tested in the open in the youthful scientist's backyard. Then it was tried in small projectiles—pieces of half-inch copper tubing about two feet long with tapered tips.

Finally came actual rockets, shaped from one-inch steel pipe with aluminum fins, wooden nose cones and standing two to three feet high.

Roger's launching attempts, all under his father's supervision and held safely in an abandoned clay pit near Franklin, have so far sent eight rockets soaring to heights of from 1,000 to 2,000 feet at an estimated 700 miles per hour.

Another 15 projectiles have been fired successfully.

There have been a few failures, though, and there will undoubtedly be more, for Roger's rocket activities have only begun. The youth is now working with new fuel mixtures he hopes will burn longer and provide his missiles with more thrust after takeoff. Later will come a two-stage rocket.

Where does his mom fit into the picture? She doesn't, except that she frowns somewhat on his missile projects and becomes a bit annoyed when one of his laboratory experiments goes wrong and fills the basement with a rather odoriferous smoke.

Such mishaps don't bother Bloomfield's young science enthusiast, however. He keeps a gas mask within reach just for such emergencies.



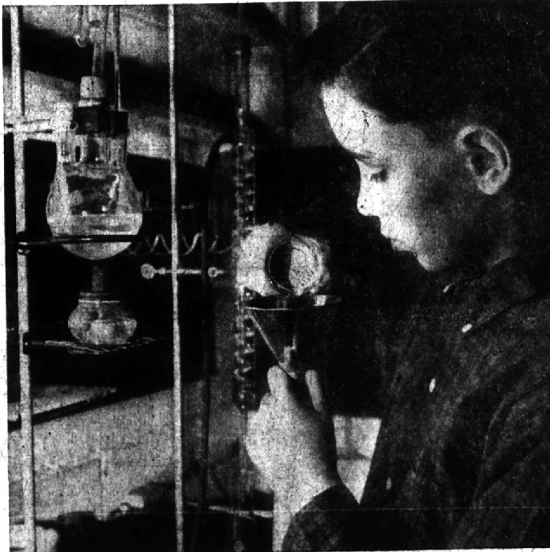
A whoosh, a roar, a cloud of smoke... and a rocket designed and launched by a young Bloomfield township science enthusiast, Roger Picou, heads skyward. His dad, John G. Picou, who supervises all attempts in an abandoned rural clay pit, ducks in the foreground. Roger has successfully fired eight rockets, some attaining an estimated height of 2,000 feet.



Thirteen-year-old Roger shapes one-inch steel pipe into a rocket to be used in his missile experiments. The nose cone on the bench is carved from wood.



Mixing the zinc-sulphur fuel compound is the most important step... and an exacting one. Roger uses copper tube projectiles to test various combinations. If results are satisfactory the mixture goes in a rocket.



The final task—loading the rocket. The junior rocketeer packs a carefully measured amount of fuel into the base. A fuse is then attached and the missile is ready for the testing site.

The Birmingham Eccentric

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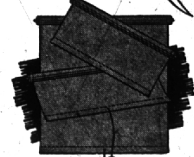
It has been said that trifles make perfection—that perfection is no trifle. Our material world is very largely created by the sum total of small tasks, co-operatively joined together to complete whatever heads and hands are assigned to do. The man who correctly lays the stones that give form to a cathedral is just as important as a Da Vinci who may glorify its interior.

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