

Abstract Submitted
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SED Alumni—breeding ground for scientists BENJAMIN BEDERSON, New York University — In 1943 the US Army established the Special Engineering Detachment (SED), in which mostly drafted young soldiers possessing some scientific credentials (though usually quite minimal) were reassigned from other duties to the Manhattan Project to assist in various research and development aspects of nuclear weapons. The Los Alamos contingent, never more than a few hundred GIs, worked with more senior scientists and engineers, often assuming positions of real responsibility. An unintended consequence of this circumstance was the fact that being in the SEDs turned out to be a fortuitous breeding ground for future physicists, chemists, and engineers. SEDs benefited from their close contacts with established scientists, working with them side by side, attended lectures by luminaries, and gained invaluable experience that would help them establish academic and industrial careers later in life. I will discuss some of these individuals (I list only those of whom I am personally aware). These include Henry “Heinz” Barschall*, Richard Bellman*-RAND Corporation, Murray Peshkin-ANL, Peter Lax-Courant Institute, NYU, William Spindel*-NRC,NAS, Bernard Waldman- Notre Dame, Richard Davisson*-U of Washington, Arnold Kramish- RAND, UNESCO, Josef Hofmann- Acoustic Research Corp, Val Fitch- Princeton U. *deceased

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