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## Lander brothers became leaders in their fields

Their cutting-edge projects advance human biology.

By **GARY ROBBINS**

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They look like extras from the old "Our Gang" comedy series, don't they?

I'm talking about the sandlot slugers in the photo, one of whom is holding a baseball mitt bigger than his head.

The image was projected on a screen recently at UC Irvine where the two kids, now grown-ups, were being introduced to a crowd that had turned out for a much-anticipated science lecture.

The photo was taken 41 years ago near their Brooklyn home. People smiled and said, "Aww." I did the same and got thinking about how you never know how kids will turn out when they grow up.

These kids turned out just fine.

The kid on the left is famed MIT geneticist Eric Lander, who traveled to UCI to give a public talk on genomics. Time magazine named him one of the 100 most influential people in the world last year for his work mapping the human and mouse genomes and teasing out data that might help in the development of therapeutic drugs.

The kid on the right is his brother Arthur Lander, chairman of the Department of Developmental and Cell Biology at UCI. You might recognize the name. I wrote about Arthur and his wife, UCI biologist Anne Calof, last year. Working through incredible grief, they helped identify the gene that causes the birth defect that killed their first child and that afflicts many others.

Eric was amused by the old photograph, saying, "We were less than spectacular" at baseball.

It's hard to imagine the Lander boys being mediocre at anything.

When he was a kid, Arthur complained a lot about his mother's cooking. She told him to learn to cook for himself. He did, becoming a wonderful chef. Ask his students. Arthur teaches "Science in the Kitchen," a hugely popular course in which he demystifies chemistry and biology through cooking.

In college (Yale), Arthur earned a medical degree, a doctorate and wrote and directed two musicals.

Eric was a Rhodes Scholar and a MacArthur "Genius" Fellow. He also was an economist at Harvard – in his 20s. He grew bored with that and went into genetics after Arthur sent him an intriguing paper on neurobiology. Eric subsequently led the largest of the Human Genome Project sequencing centers.

What do people like this talk about over dinner? I watched them eat dessert off the same plate at Sage on the Newport Coast. There was lots of shoptalk. But they also jabbered about their families and, with the slightest prodding, baseball.

**CURIOS DISPLAY:** The Discovery Science Center in Santa Ana says it plans to place a refurbished Delta III rocket on display. The booster, designed at Boeing-Huntington Beach, is a curious choice. From 1998-2000, Boeing launched its then new "D-3" three times. The first rocket exploded shortly after takeoff. The second also suffered a fatal problem. The third booster didn't put its payload into the desired orbit.

**Writing contest results:** I will announce the winners of the Orange County Register Blimp Writing Contest in this column next Saturday. The two winners will receive a pair of passes for rides on the Goodyear blimp, which is stationed in Carson. The roughly 200 entries came from a diverse audience that includes Jenine Wolfe's students at Western High School in

Anaheim to veteran pilots in south Orange County to "guests" of the OrangeCounty Jail. I'm still reading entries, but I've got to say I especially loved the heartfelt note from 10-year-old Ethan DeSon, who said, "I typed and wrote this story by myself and had no help from anyone but myself. "

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