

# Questions Led the Way

May's misadventures at  
the Beckman Institute

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# Questions Led the Way

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# The Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology

Everyone sees the world differently. At the Beckman Institute, looking at problems from different perspectives leads to amazing results.

The Beckman Institute opened in 1989 and is located on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus. It was designed to encourage researchers from different areas of science and technology to work together on complex problems. Go team science!

Researchers from more than 40 University of Illinois departments have found a home at the Beckman Institute, where they explore human and artificial intelligence, study molecules to design better materials and improve the brain and medical imaging technologies we use to detect cancer and diseases.

We hope that you'll join us, and see how at the Beckman Institute, working together is what sets us apart.

For small askers of big questions.







May knew that she was 9 years old.  
She knew that she liked sunny days better than rainy ones.  
She knew that she liked coding, astronomy and feeding Bella the bearded dragon an evening snack.  
And she knew that she loved making May's Marvelous Monster Cookies (especially when she got to lick the bowl).

She also knew that there was a lot she didn't know.  
So, May asked a lot of questions.

Like, a lot, a lot.



Usually, no one minded May's questions.



Sometimes, May's questions were easy to answer ...





... and sometimes they weren't.



Once in a while, May's questions got her into trouble.







What?  
What did they lead to?

### May's List of ?s

Why does dad snore?  
Why do fish smell bad?  
Why are there green stars?  
Why does the oven make the bread brown?  
Why do hot coffee make mom so happy?  
How come cats don't like water?  
How do they make different colors?  
Why are planes green?  
When are the water go down?  
Where do the water go down?  
How does the washing machine make things clean?  
Why are you so angry?  
How can I be an astronaut?  
Why are little babies so angry?  
If you stop pumping on the swing, how long will you keep going?  
???

And always, no matter what,  
May's questions led to ...



# MORE QUESTIONS!

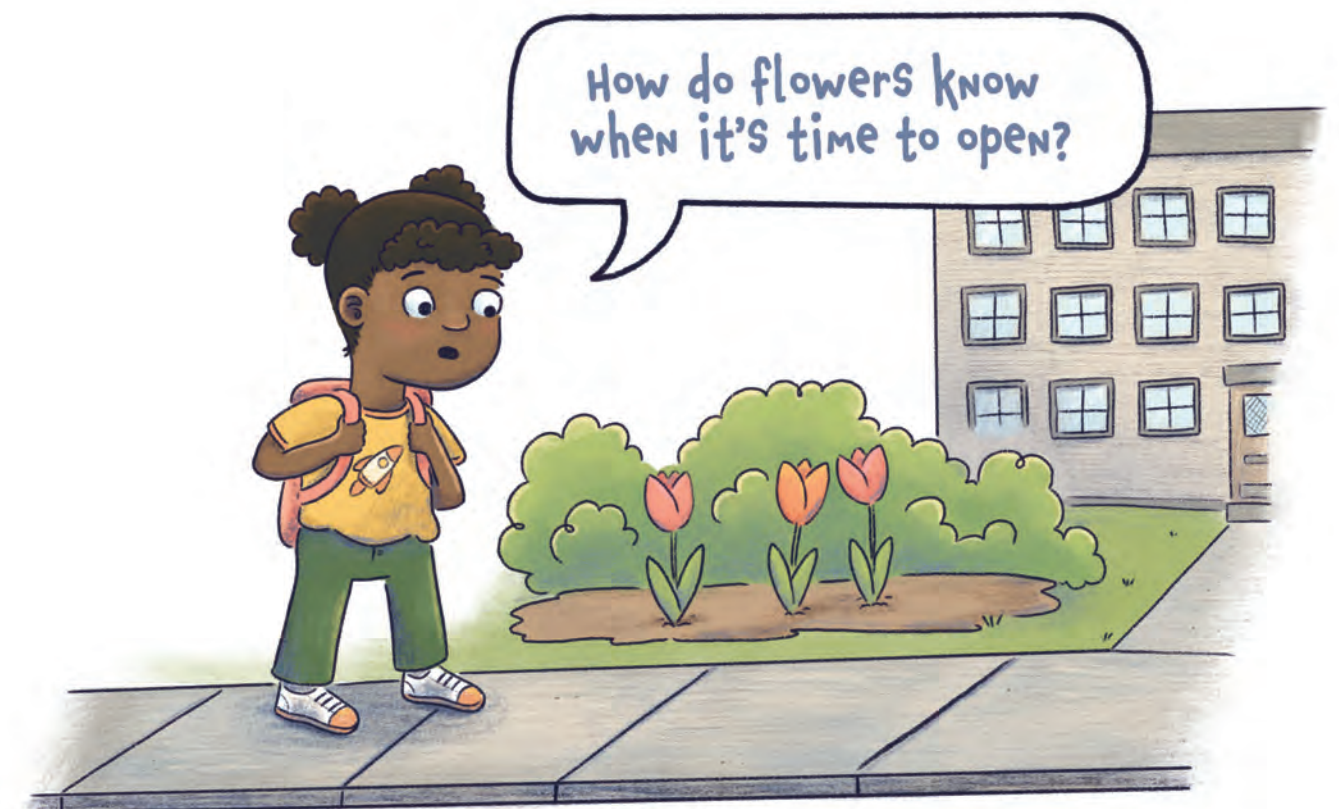
Everywhere May went, questions led the way.  
They bubbled up while she brushed her teeth.



They buzzed like bumblebees in the garden.



And they bloomed like flowers on her walk to school.





School was the best place to ask questions.  
May asked Mr. Brown at least 10 a day.  
And he answered them. Sometimes.

“Even grown-ups don’t know everything,”  
he would say.

One day, May arrived at school with more questions  
than usual, which was saying something!

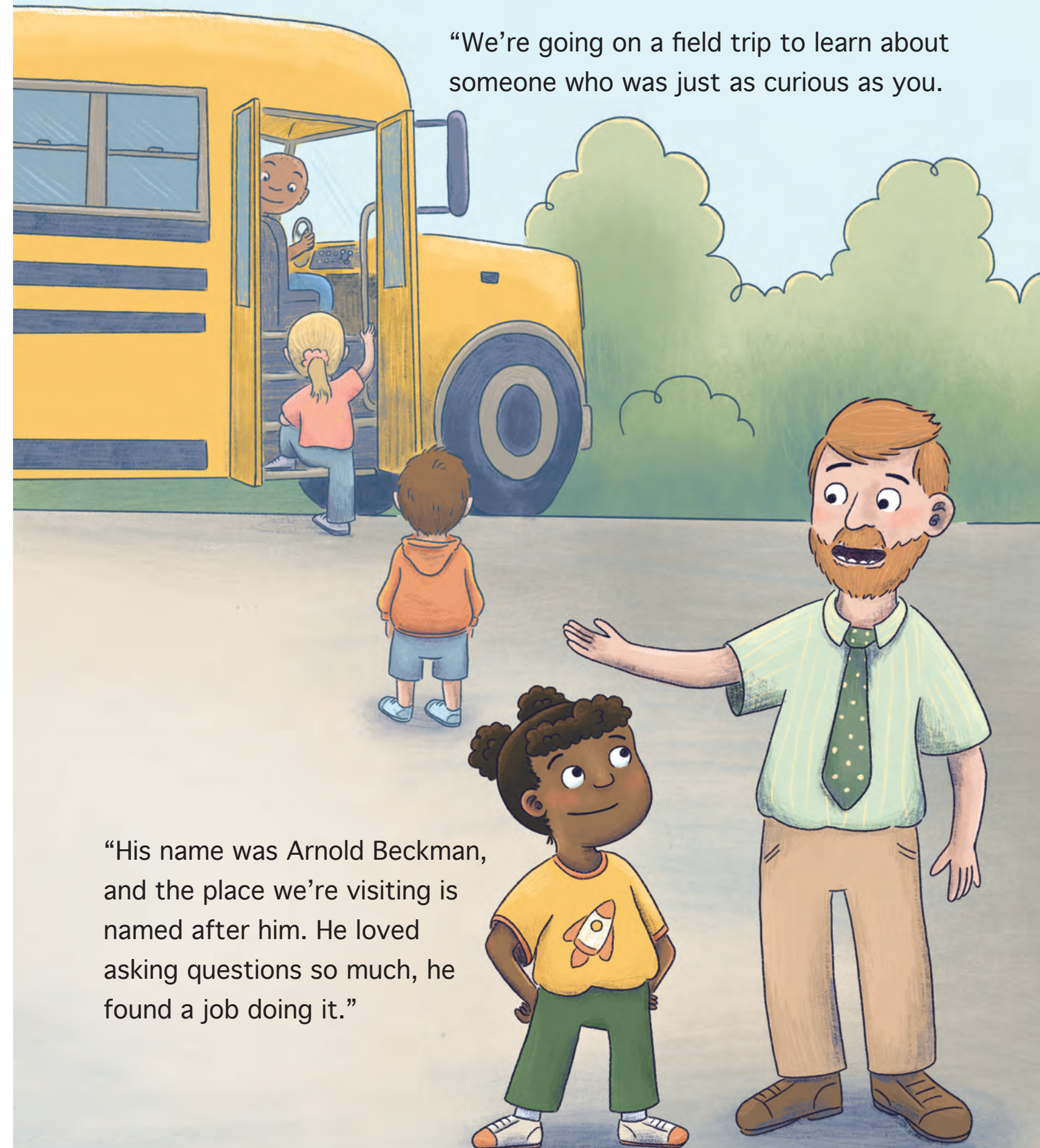




"You must be wondering why the bus is outside," Mr. Brown said.  
"That's a question I can answer!"



"We're going on a field trip to learn about someone who was just as curious as you."



"His name was Arnold Beckman, and the place we're visiting is named after him. He loved asking questions so much, he found a job doing it."





May felt a question bubble up.  
“What was his job?” she asked.

Mr. Brown chuckled. “We’ll get there!  
The first step is going inside.”

May’s questions buzzed and bloomed.  
“We’re going into a building? Aren’t  
we learning about a person?”



“Yes, and yes!” Mr. Brown grinned. “We are going into  
the Beckman Institute, a building named after Arnold Beckman.



“But before all of this was  
here, he was young and  
curious just like you!”

“Yeah, right!” said one of  
May’s classmates.

“Just wait,” said Mr. Brown.  
“You might be surprised.

“AHEM.”



Arnold knew that he was 10 years old. He knew that he liked starry nights better than cloudy ones. He knew that he liked practicing the piano, catching catfish and playing hide and seek with his siblings.

And he knew that he loved tinkering with homemade toys and contraptions (especially when he could use them for his clubhouse).

He also knew that there was a lot he didn't know.

So, Arnold asked a lot of questions.





Usually, no one minded Arnold's questions.



Sometimes, his questions were easy to answer ...







... and sometimes they weren't.





And always, no matter what, Arnold's questions led to ...



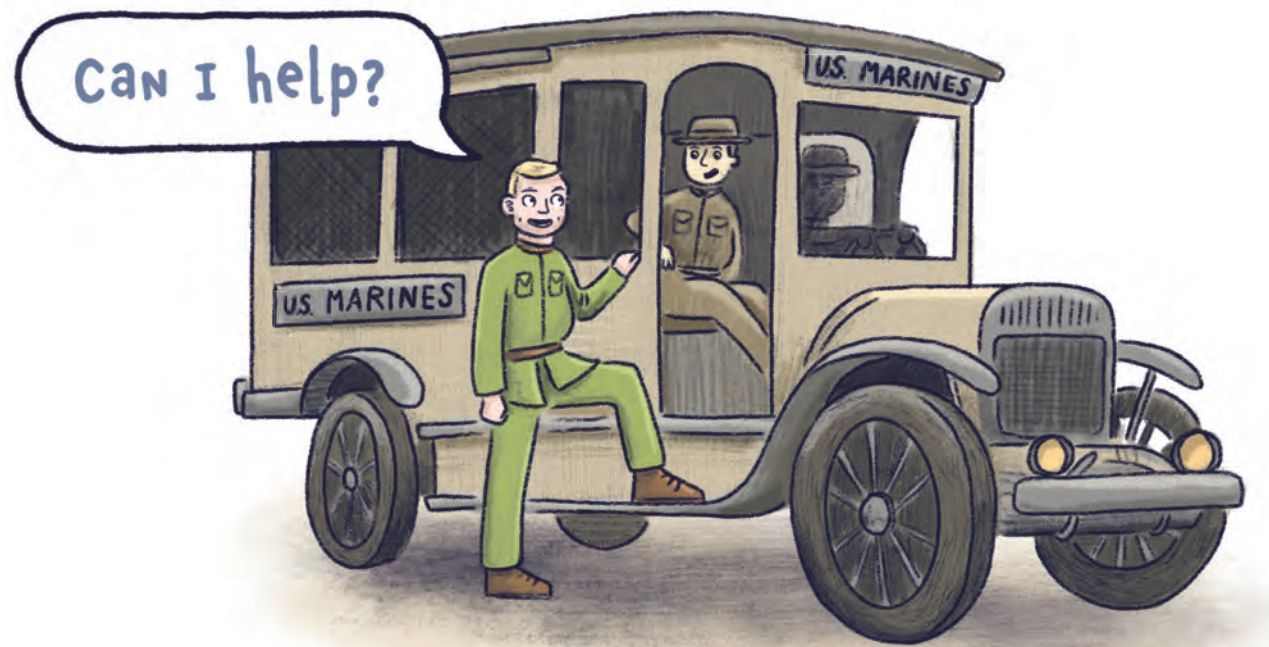
Hmm. This seems familiar.





# MORE QUESTIONS!

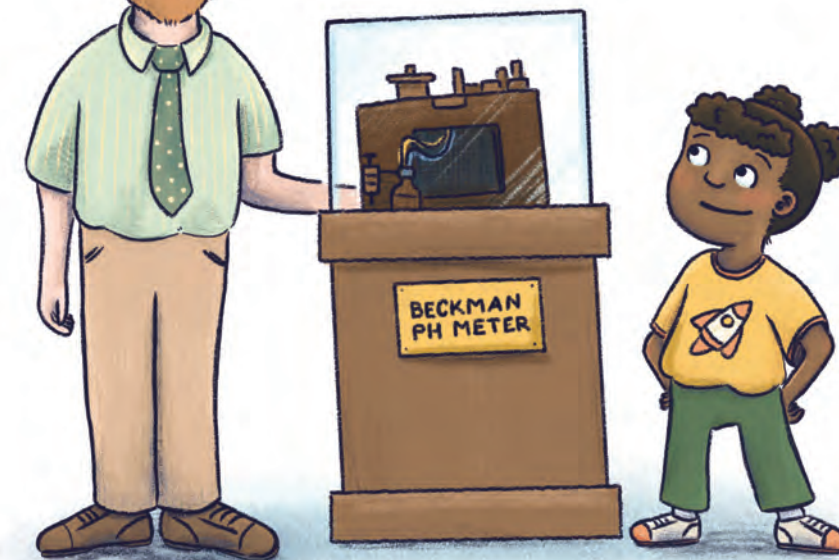
Everywhere Arnold went, questions led the way.  
They guided him to lend a hand.



They gave him the words to start his family.



And a very important question from a friend ...



... led him to a job he loved.

To answer his friend's question, he created a machine that measured how sweet or sour something was.

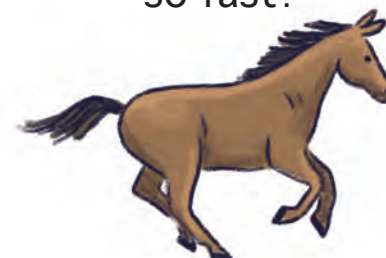


But Arnold also had questions of his own.  
He decided to become a scientist.



Scientists ask questions about anything in the world.

Why do horses run so fast?



How do astronauts exercise?

Why does bread rise?



Can we make the air cleaner?



Why are oranges sweeter than lemons?



How do beetles jump so high?



Grown-ups can have jobs where they ask questions all day long?  
That made May wonder ...





“Did Arnold ever run out of questions?” she asked.  
“He never did!” Mr. Brown answered.

One day, he and his wife Mabel asked each other a very important question.



The answer was creating a place where all kinds of scientists can use teamwork to ask questions and find answers: the Beckman Institute.

May thought about all the questions she had heard that day and about all the scientists who asked them.  
She wondered if she might be a scientist, too.  
There was just one problem ...

“How do I know what kind I want to be?” May asked.



Mr. Brown chuckled. “We’ll get there! The first step is to ask your questions. Even better, write them down!”



That evening, May did everything she always did.  
And she had questions, just like always.

But now, she had her notebook, too.  
She helped make rolls  
for dinner and watched  
the dough rise.



She looked out the window.

And she tucked Bella  
in for the night.



That night, May drifted off to sleep,  
her questions safely written in her notebook.  
Tomorrow, she would be a scientist.  
Asking questions and searching for answers.







Arnold Orville Beckman was born April 10, 1900, in the small farming community of Cullom, Illinois. A scientist, inventor, educator, philanthropist, veteran and businessman, Beckman started Beckman Coulter Life Sciences, a company that still exists today. He also founded the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology, which opened in 1989. He married Mabel Meinzer in 1925, beginning the couple's 70-year partnership. The Beckmans are commemorated by an exhibit on the first floor of the institute.

Theodore "Ted" Brown, the Beckman Institute's founding director, inspired the character of Mr. Brown.

The Beckman Institute is located on the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign campus at 405 N. Mathews Ave., Urbana, Illinois.