

# Conference Report

## 53<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of Nobel Prize Winners in Lindau 18th Meeting of Laureates in Physiology or Medicine

30 June to 4 July 2003.

This year twelve Nobel laureates attended the conference in Lindau. A record number of about 550 students and research workers from 36 countries came to make this year's meeting a truly international gathering. For the first time students from Chile (7), Pakistan (8) and Ukraine came. 20 students were sponsored by the Ministry of Science and Technology, India. Various organizations like Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, D.A.A.D., US Department of Energy sent a number of participants. In addition, about 250 professors and assistants from German universities, government officials and dignitaries, members of the press came to the opening ceremony.

There were 12 lectures by Nobel laureates on two days and two Round Table Discussions on Future in Medicine and From Basic Discovery to Clinical Practice on two other days. Nobel laureates sat on the podium of the Round Table and discussed questions from the

chair as well as from the floor. On two afternoons the laureates met exclusively students with admission cards for informal discussions. The excitement of

young scientists of talking directly to the Nobel laureates and discussing their problems, can be well imagined. In the plenary lectures, following tradition, the laureates themselves chose the topics of their talks. As always, each of these lectures was a veritable gem of scientific communication, starting with an introduction they were packed with up to date and advanced information illustrated by slides and videos. It was a delight to listen directly to the creators of modern science. After the lecture sessions members of the press could ask the speakers questions about their talks or related matters. The daily programme, which proceeded with clock like precision, is given below.

### Monday, 30 June

Round Table Discussion : Future in Medicine.

Günter Bobbel, Leon Cooper, Edmond Fisher, Robert Huber, Erwin Neher, Christiane Nüsslein-Vollhardt, Hamilton Smith

### Tuesday, 1 July

Edmond Fisher (1992) Seattle/USA : How Proteins Communicate with One Another to Integrate Intracellular Signals.

Erwin Neher (1991) Göttingen/Germany: Messenger Cascades in Neurotransmitter Release.

Leon Cooper (Physics 1972) Providence/USA: Towards a Cellular and Molecular basis for Memory: Theory and Experiment.

Christiane Nüsslein-Vollhardt (1995) Tübingen/Germany: Of Genes and Embryos

Günter Bobbel (1999) New York/USA : Protein Traffic

Robert Huber (Chemistry 1988) Martinsried/ Germany: Proteases and their Regulation Concepts for Therapeutic Intervention.

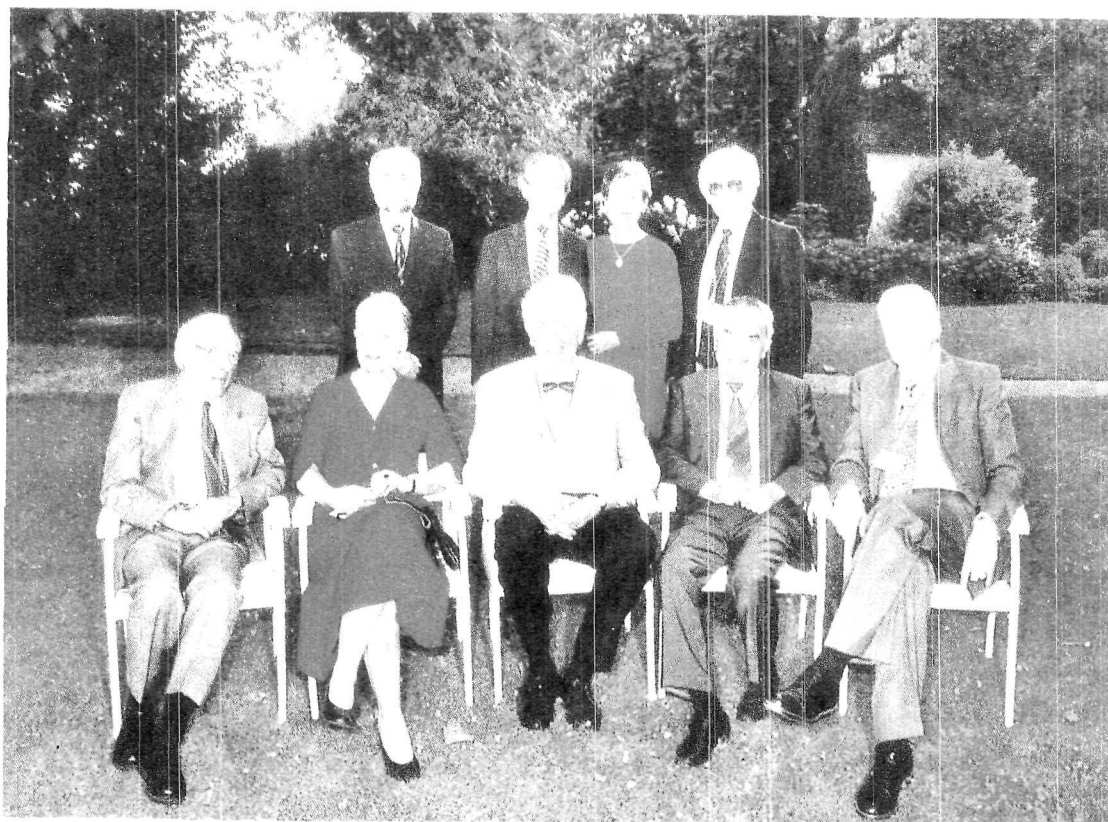
**Wednesday, 2 July**

Round Table Discussion : From Basic Discovery to Clinical Practice.

Werner Arber, Rudolph Marcus, Bert Sakmann, Torston Wiesel, Hamilton Smith

Werner Arber (1978) Basel/Switzerland: Insight into Molecular Evolution — Practical and Philosophical Consequences.

Rudolph Marcus (Chemistry 1992) Pasadena/USA: Electron Transfer Reactions in Chemistry and Biology.



**Sitting : (from left)** Edmond Fisher (USA), Christian Nusslein-Vollhardt (Germany), Günter Bobbel (USA), Werner Arber (Switzerland), Hamilton Smith (USA)

**Standing : (from left)** Erwin Neher (Germany), Torston Wiesel (USA), Griffin Sonja (Germany), Leon Neal Cooper (USA)

*by courtesy of Regine Lahme, Press Secretary, Lindau Nobel Laureates Conference*

**Thursday, July 3**

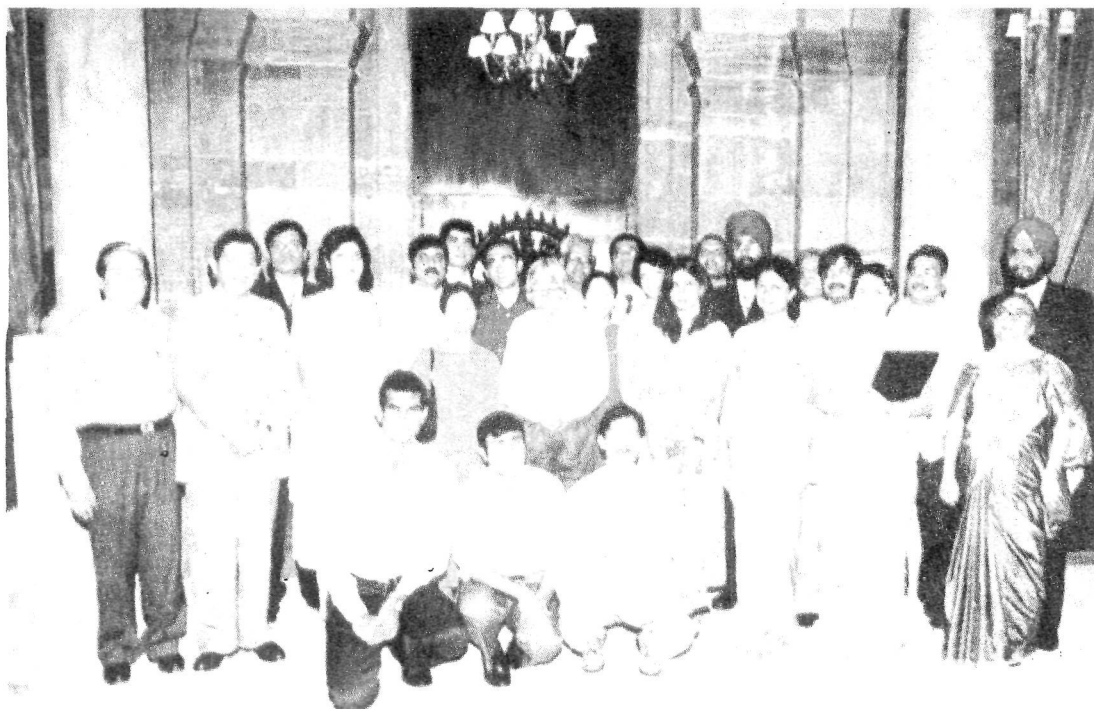
Bert Sakmann (1991) Heidelberg/Germany: Cortical Microcircuits and Cortical Plasticity

Hamilton Smith (1978) Reisterstown/USA: Defining Minimal Life

Hartmut Michel (Chemistry 1988) Frankfurt/Germany: Membrane Proteins as Target. Structure in Agriculture and Medicine.

Torsten Wiesel (1981) New York/USA: Do We Learn to See? The Role of Nature and Nurture.

The Round Table Discussions were chaired by Professors Ludwig E. Feinendegen, Lindau and Hans Jörnvall, Sten Lindahl, Sten Orrenius (all from Stockholm).



*President APJ Abdul Kalam met the Indian participants  
after their return from Germany on July, 2003*

As one can see from the programme, the lectures and round table discussions covered a wide range of modern biology and medicine including Human Genome, Proteomics, Neuroscience, Drug Design etc. In addition to these topics, the audience and the press raised questions on

bioethics,  
need for paying attention to the problems of poor countries, such as malaria, rather than focussing on rare diseases in the west,  
safety of genetically modified food,  
immediate benefits of basic research to the man in the street, etc.

As on other occasions, there were interesting social activities this time too a dinner and dance party on the opening day, a concert on Wednesday evening, a boat trip to the island of Mainau on the last day. Ms. Regine Lahme, the Press Officer, organised a nice evening party in an Italian restaurant for all the journalists who had come to Lindau.

As already mentioned in our report on the 51<sup>st</sup> Meeting (Ind. Sci. Cr. July 2001), since the birth of the Foundation Lindau Nobel Prize-winners Meetings at Lake Constance, the financial problem of holding the annual meetings in Lindau in the future seems to have eased. The Foundation is now supported by 70 Nobel laureates. It is now becoming increasingly clear that the main goal of the Lindau meetings should be an interaction between the laureates and promising young scientists rather than providing a platform for discussion among Nobel laureates themselves. At the closing ceremony it was announced the next meeting, the 18<sup>th</sup> Meeting for Prize Winners in Physics will be held from 28 June to 2 July 2004. The web site for information on Lindau meetings is [www.lindau-nobel.de](http://www.lindau-nobel.de).

**Dr. Saurabh Sanatani,**  
Vienna,  
6th July 2003