



ZOOM in on america

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December is a time to evaluate the year and take account of its good and bad points. It is also a time for annual awards and ratings.

In December of each year, the Nobel Prizes for outstanding achievements in science are presented to those who have qualified for them in the previous year. This month, *Zoom in on America* brings you stories connected with this event and focuses on the American Nobel Prize winners.



Astronaut George Zamka

We also have something very special: a video with an interview with George Zamka, an American astronaut who was recently a guest of the U.S. Consulate in Krakow. His message for young people is: "Discover your liking for science!" To watch the video, simply click on the link below the text.

Our annual contest for the best *Zoom* cover of 2008 is announced on p. 4. Win one of the great albums!

Click to Watch Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yo1JR1gHcgU>

THE NOBEL PRIZE: A LIVING MONUMENT TO SCIENCE

It may be that while you are reading this article King Carl XVI Gustaf of Sweden is presenting the 11 leading world academics with one of the most prestigious medals a scholar can hope to receive - the Nobel Prize. A little earlier on the same day, December 10, the Norwegian Nobel Committee will have awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to this year's winner, Martti Ahtisaari of Finland.



Award Ceremony Photo Courtesy of © Nobel Museum

Who was Alfred Nobel, the man whose name has become so closely connected to the greatest scientific accomplishments over the last 100 years? He was a great scientist, as well as a successful businessman and entrepreneur, who could afford to fund a prize that still awards a considerable amount to those who are fortunate enough to be chosen laureates (this year each Prize will bring the winner/winners 10 million Swedish crowns).



Stockholm' City Hall where the banquet is held Photo © Bożena Grzebień

Nobel's greatest scientific achievement, the invention of dynamite, creates a dilemma for some that cannot reconcile how the man who explicitly stated that in addition to physics, chemistry, physiology or medicine,



Nobel Prize Banquet at the Stockholm City Hall Photo © AP Images

and literature, his prize should also be awarded to those who actively and successfully work for peace in the world. Nobel, however, invented dynamite for use in mines and in the building of railway tracks and canals, a purpose it has served well. The U.S. railway system and the great Panama Canal could not have been built without dynamite. However, despite dynamite's contribution to the building of these great engineering feats, controversy already existed around Nobel at the launch of the Nobel Prize in 1901. At the time, a newspaper article titled "Dynamite's Tribute to Peace" said:

"[...] It sounds like an enigma, but nothing is more likely than that dynamite may prove to be one of the greatest factors working in our time for the benefit of humanity, and that the inventor of dynamite may prove to have been the very best friend of the Peace Society."

Since 1901, with some breaks during the two World Wars, the Nobel Prize has been awarded on an annual basis in the five categories established by its founder. In his will, Nobel stipulated

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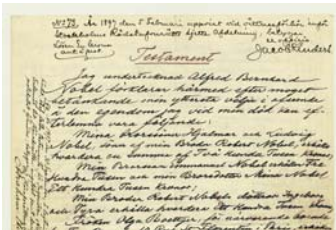
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that his estate, which was worth 31 million Swedish crowns at the time, should be converted into a fund and invested in "safe securities." The income from the investments was to be "distributed in the form of prizes to those who, during the preceding year, shall have conferred the greatest benefit on mankind." (from Nobel's last will: http://nobelprize.org/alfred_nobel/will/will-full.html) In 1968, a new category was added and called the Sveriges Riksbank Prize in Economic Sciences in Memory of Alfred Nobel.

Each year on December 10, the anniversary of Nobel's death, the Nobel Prize award ceremony is held in the Stockholm Concert Hall and then a banquet for 3000 people is given in the Stockholm Town Hall. There are not many events that call greater attention to the world of science; some-



Portrait of Alfred Nobel, Photo Courtesy of © Nobel Museum



Nobel's Last Will, Photo Courtesy of © Nobel Museum

thing that Alfred Nobel must have foreseen - he was truly a man of great ideas.

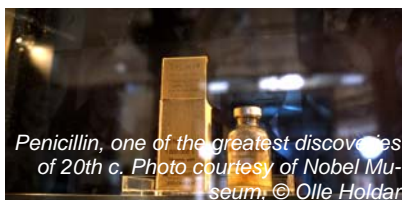
Biographical facts:

- Born in Stockholm on October 21, 1833
- 1842 - went with his family to St. Petersburg
- studied chemistry with Professor Nikolay Nikolaevich Zinin
- 1867 - obtained a patent for dynamite
- 1873 - moved to Paris
- 1891 - moved to Italy
- 1895 - wrote his last will
- Died at his home in San Remo, Italy, on 10 December 1896

THE NOBEL MUSEUM

In the heart of Stockholm's 'Gamla Stan' (Old City) is the Nobel Museum which features the recipients of the Nobel Prize and their discoveries, as well as the founder of the Prize, Alfred Nobel. Inside the Museum is the intriguing sound of small wheels rolling on the ceiling above. A look up reveals hundreds of laminated slips hanging down from the cableway. Were it not for the sound, one would not know that they are moving at all; they are arranged so tightly and neatly and travel so slowly. Only later when you proceed to the end of the exhibition hall can you see them moving at a greater distance from each other. That is when it becomes clear that each slip holds the photo and name of one of the 798 individual Nobel Prize winners. There are so many that it takes about 6 hours for one slip to complete the whole cycle.

The center of the Museum's main exhibition hall presents the history of the Nobel Prize by decades.



Penicillin, one of the greatest discoveries of 20th c. Photo courtesy of Nobel Museum, © Olle Holdar



Main exhibit hall in Nobel Museum, Photo courtesy of Nobel Museum, © Olle Holdar



Medals and diplomas on display at Nobel Museum, Photo courtesy of Nobel Museum, © Per Eric Bereglund, Znapshot

Documentaries from many of the award ceremonies and banquets are shown, as well as photos and press articles featuring both momentous discoveries and controversies that have at times arisen around the Nobel Prize.

The life and memorabilia connected with the founder of the Prize, Alfred Nobel, are showcased in one room of the Museum, while in another you can listen to interviews and speeches made by some of the laureates. These interviews present interesting tidbits about some of the winners of the Prize. William Faulkner and Ernest Hemingway speak in media interviews about their reactions to the news of being chosen as laureates in 1949 and 1954 respectively. There are also speeches made by Isaac Singer and Martin Luther King.

There is also a room that features items used by some of the greatest scientists; for example, a large pair of scales that belonged to Madam Curie-Skłodowska, the two-time winner of the Nobel Prize in Chemistry.

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ACTIVITY PAGE

Win a Prize!

Exercise 1:

December 2008 CONTEST

What Nobel Prize did Ralph Bunch win in 1950?

Send the answer (with your home address) to: zoom@usinfo.pl

Deadline: January 5

Win a Prize!

The answer in the November 2008 Contest was:

Lincoln

Thank you for participating

The winners are: Agnieszka, Sebastian and Jan

CONGRATULATIONS
The prizes will be sent to you by mail

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Below you can read a fragment from the biography of George Zamka. Some words have been removed from the text, and you can see them listed below. Please put them back in the appropriate places in the text:

NASA EXPERIENCE: Selected as a pilot by NASA in June 1998, he reported for astronaut candidate training in August 1998. He has served in various technical and leadership roles in the astronaut office, to include space ... (1) and proximity operations, landing and rollout instructor, and lead for shuttle systems within the Shuttle Operations Branch. Zamka served as lead for the shuttle training and procedures division and as supervisor for the astronaut candidate class of 2004. In 2007, he completed his first space ... (2) as a pilot on STS-120.

SPACE FLIGHT EXPERIENCE: STS-120 Discovery (October 23-November 7, 2007) launched from and returned to land at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida. During the mission, the Node 2 element named "Harmony" was delivered to the International Space Station. This element opened up the capability for future international ... (3) to be added to the station. In addition, the P6 Solar Array was re-located from the Z1 Truss to the end of the port side of the Integrated Truss Structure. During the re-deploy of the array, the array panels snagged and were damaged. An ... (4) spacewalk was successfully performed to repair the array. The mission was accomplished in 238 orbits, traveling 6.2 million miles in 15 ... (5), 2 ... (6) and 23 ... (7) .

a) unplanned b) days c) flight d) minutes e) laboratories f) rendezvous g) hours

(from the NASA website)

For more information on the Nobel Prize, videos from the award ceremonies, banquets, laureates' speeches, audios with interviews, etc, visit the excellent official site of the Nobel Prize:

<http://nobelprize.org/index.html>

The site has biographical information on all Nobel Prize winners complete with their lectures. In this busy week of the 2008 presentation of awards it will keep you updated on all the events. Visual resources include spherical panoramas of various venues, while photo galleries allow you to take a look at the gowns which queen Silvia of Sweden has been wearing since she started attending the ceremonies in 1976.

The Nobel Museums site can be found at: <http://www.nobelmuseum.se/>

* CONTEST * CONTEST * CONTEST * CONTEST *
Tell us which 2008 Zoom cover you like best. Three great albums about wild life are awaiting the winners!!!

