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65 South Main Street  
Pennington, NJ 08534-2839 USA  
Tel 609.737.1902  
Fax 609.737.2743  
Web: www.electrochem.org

Editor: Krishnan Rajeshwar  
e-mail: raj@utarlg.uta.edu

Contributing Editors: Johna Leddy and  
Mike Kelly

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e-mail: publications@electrochem.org

Production & Advertising Manager: Ellen S. Popkin  
e-mail: interface@electrochem.org

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## And the Winner Is...



Recently the Swedish Academy announced this year's Nobel prizes. The chemistry prize went to Alan MacDiarmid, Alan Heeger, and Hideki Shirakawa for their work on conducting polymers. The physics prize was shared by Jack Kilby, Herbert Kroemer, and Zhores Alferov in recognition of their contributions to microelectronics. The Nobel Prize in physiology or medicine went to three pioneers in neurophysiology: Arvid Carlsson, Paul Greengard, and Eric Kandel. It is worth noting that

recent meetings of the Society have featured symposia in nearly all of these research topics.

The chemistry awards and the recognition of Jack Kilby as a co-inventor of the integrated circuit were both particularly relevant to me—first because of my own foray into conducting polymer research in the 1980s and second because of Mr. Kilby's affiliation to Dallas (see *Interface*, Vol. 8, No. 4, winter 1999, p. 3). Incidentally, the name of (the late) Robert Noyce was a notable omission from the physics list. Recall that the prizes are not given posthumously nor are they shared by more than three people in any one category.

Two things come to my mind with these annual announcements from Stockholm. Hark back to the excitement at the Toronto ECS meeting in fall 1992 when Rudy Marcus was announced as the chemistry winner. (He happened to be at the meeting at that time; see *Interface*, Vol. 1, No. 1, Winter 1992, p. 20.) The second happened at the conclusion of a freshman chemistry class that I started teaching this fall. A student came up and asked me whether I had heard about the latest Nobel laureates in chemistry and physics. To me this was very significant. I used to include a bonus examination question in my senior-level chemistry course on the identity of the latest Nobel prize winners in chemistry. I either got blank spaces in the answer books in response or some truly wacky answers.

I wonder how many people (outside our scientific community) can identify some of the above names with the pocket calculator, the PC, or the bar-code scanner. Similarly how many of the dot.com entrepreneurs have heard of Robert Noyce? On the other hand, which golf hacker (no, make that which person in this country) hasn't heard of Tiger Woods? Therein appears to be the core of the problem with our business, at least in my mind. If the importance and excitement of what we do can be effectively smuggled into the public persona, we'll all be winners. Stay tuned.

Krishnan Rajeshwar  
Editor

Raj K.

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