

The Infinite Lectures

transcribed by Jessica Girard, AIR staff

NOTE: To see video of these speeches, and of the entire ceremony, see the Improbable Research web site www.improbable.com.

To celebrate the evening's theme -- Infinity -- the Ig Nobel Board of Governors commissioned three Infinite Lectures. Each lecture addressed a different aspect of infinity. Each lecturer was confined to a strictly enforced time limit of infinity. The time limits were enforced by Mr. John Barrett, the official Ig Nobel referee.



Dudley Herschbach explains the concept of infinity, starting from first principles. Photo: John Bradley.

Infinite Lecture #1

Lecturer: DUDLEY HERSCHBACH, Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, 1986

Assigned Topic: THE LECTURER WILL EXPLAIN THE CONCEPT OF INFINITY

Verbatim text of the lecture: "It's a very simple concept but you have to understand a lot of other concepts. you have to understand the concept of one. Of two. Of three. Of four. Of five... And minus one, minus two, minus three..."

Infinite Lecture #2

Lecturer: ROBERT WILSON, Nobel Laureate in Physics, 1978

Assigned Topic: THE LECTURER WILL RECITE, IN THEIR PROPER ORDER, ALL THE DIGITS OF THE NUMBER PI

Verbatim text of the lecture [NOTE: Dr. Wilson read his lecture from a roll of toilet paper]:

"3.14159265358979323846264338327950288419716931 ..."

Robert Wilson serves up the digits of pi. Photo: John Bradley.



Infinite Lecture #3

Lecturer: SHELDON GLASHOW, Nobel Laureate in Physics, 1979

Assigned Topic: THE LECTURER WILL TELL EVERYTHING HE KNOWS

Verbatim text of the lecture:

"Let me start with the year I was born, which was 1932, when the..."



Sheldon Glashow begins his firsthand recounting of infinity. Photo: John Bradley.



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