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Newsletter of the Puget Sound Section
of the Optical Society of America

EDITOR'S COLUMN

Because Dave Capps, our Chapter Secretary, is on vacation in India and neighboring countries, there seems to be no report of the last meeting. Let me rush in where angels fear to tread by giving one.

A conference sponsored by this chapter is being planned for some time in 1990. The focus is on applied optics. Member input on place, etc. is solicited via the questionnaires in the last newsletter.

A T-shirt bearing Maxwell's equations embedded in a Genesis 1:1 context was left over from the August picnic. This was auctioned off in a short, spirited bidding session to Don Wunsch, who thereby gained some enlightenment. In a brief contributed presentation, AI (Artificial Ignorance) with applications to middle management was illustrated: a robot rams a wall, backs off and rams it again.

The annual OSA speaker was John N. Howard, former Chief Scientist at the Air Force Geophysics Laboratory, Bedford, Massachusetts, speaking on "The Scientific Contributions of John William Strutt, Lord Rayleigh". These were 600 papers (even more than David Casasent) and a number of famous students including Poynting and J. J. Thomson. After getting Cambridge's top senior wrangler physics degree of 1867 (usually THE prerequisite for a Cambridge or Oxford faculty post), Strutt returned to his parents' 6000 acre (9.4 square miles) dairy farm to begin research on Newton's color wheel work, using his extended family and any visitors as subjects. Noting weather-dependent results, he measured the skylight spectrum, related it to small-particle scattering theory and published "why the sky is blue" as paper number 8. He inherited his peerage in 1873. In 1879, recovering from rheumatic fever by making a vacation float trip on the Nile, he passed the time by writing his famous book on the theory of sound, deriving almost everything from first principles as he had brought few reference materials with him. As Cavendish Professor at Cambridge, he set up the surviving (Handbook of Chemistry and Physics) practical units for volt, amp and ohm, publishing 60 papers in 60 months. Lured in 1892 to the Royal Institution by the availability of DC electricity, he found discrepancies in the densities of nitrogen prepared from air and ammonia, chemically reacted away the nitrogen and in parallel with his colleague William Ramsey prepared the first samples of argon. This inserted a new column into the chemical periodic table and won Nobel Prizes for the two workers. The full text of Rayleigh's papers is available from Dover press.

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Tis the season to be jolly. Tis also the season to be thinking about next year's officers. As per the constitution, I am appointing a nomination committee consisting of the current officers, Dr. Ted Houk and Dr. Bob Marks. The committee will nominate one person for each of the offices of Secretary-Treasurer and President-Elect. The Student Member Representative Ralph Jorgenson will also be nominating his successor. If you have an active interest in filling one of these posts, please contact one of us and let your interest be known. Note also, that additional persons can be nominated by petition signed by five or more members and sent to the secretary-treasurer prior to February 1, 1989.

On a lighter note, we plan to repeat the well received gift exchange at this December's meeting. Unfortunately, the organization does not have enough funds in the bank to buy you all something. Instead, please bring a wrapped gift worth \$5 or less to place in the communal pile. Gifts relating to optics or perhaps something to make the spirits "light" would be especially apropos to the occasion. After the dinner we will redistribute the wealth with, I hope, as entertaining a style as last year.

Happy Holidays

REMEMBER
BRING A GIFT FOR THE EXCHANGE