

KIPAC ground-breaking – Pierre R. Schwob – 6/28/2004

<Ladies and gentlemen>,

I'm honored to be invited to say a few words on this happy occasion.

We have entered a particularly interesting period in the study of cosmology: it is becoming an exact science in which, however, discoveries have gotten ahead of understanding. Indeed 96% of what makes our universe tick, has yet to be rigorously understood.

I regret to say that I am not a physicist. I am just a curious skeptic, inclined by instinct, and compelled by logic, to consider the profound questions one can ask about our universe and our place in it.

So when I was fortunate enough to meet the folks at KIPAC, Roger Blandford and Steve Kahn in particular, this meeting led me, in rather Planck-time, to offer support for the endeavors of the Kavli Institute.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank the friends who were instrumental in my involvement with KIPAC.

In 1993, I had helped organize the 2nd William Fairbank Conference on Relativity in Hong Kong. At that time my friend Alfred Yu introduced me to Peter Michelson. Peter was soon to become a close friend of ours: in fact Peter was the best man at both of the weddings which have united my wife Rosaleen and me: the first, Chinese-style, in Hong Kong, and the second in a civil ceremony in Atherton following our return to the States in 1997.

Once installed in Palo Alto, I also had the great good fortune to meet and become a close personal friend of Dan DeYoung, the retired U.S. Army Lieutenant-Colonel who was hired to help oversee the construction of SLAC in 1962 and who stayed on for several decades, as an executive at Stanford. Last year, when I asked Dan to introduce me to the physics/astronomy department at Stanford so I could discuss a possible gift, he put me in touch with Vahe Petrossian. And through Peter and Vahe, I met Steve Kahn, Doug Osheroff, Roger Romani, and finally Roger Blandford. The decision was an easy one.

Endowing the Computing and Information Center in the Fred Kavli building serves two purposes for me. One is to support this team of extraordinary talents; the other, to provide what I can to help solve the interesting challenges presented by the literally “astronomical” amount of data KIPAC will deal with when gathering, analyzing, simulating, and sharing the science that will come out of the various experiments and instruments they'll support.

I'm thrilled therefore to be here today, to see the ground-breaking for one of the buildings where these ventures into the future must be undertaken.

Thank you.