

Report from the 2003 ICPS

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Beth Reid in front of the Hans Christian Andersen House, Odense, Denmark.

ICPS 2003 in Odense, Denmark was a weeklong conference with over 215 participants from 20 different countries and organized entirely by physics students. This was an opportunity for students to be exposed to many different cultures and traditions while celebrating their common fascination with physics. The conference featured lectures by Danish physicists at the forefront of a broad spectrum of sub-disciplines, an opportunity to share our own work with each other, some excellent sightseeing, and no doubt some fantastic parties!

For me the week began with a pleasant walk in Odense through a neighborhood

and some fields between our accommodations and the university where the lectures would be taking place. The sights were great until I got a bit disoriented on my way home and almost missed the 'Practical Information' meeting. As most nights during the conference, that evening was spent at the bar with the other students discussing movies, university life, culture, politics, and yes, physics.



Nobel Laureate Ben Mottelson on Bose-Einstein condensation.

The guest lectures were the highlight of the conference for me. Not only were the topics intriguing (Bose-Einstein condensation, quantum teleportation, self-assembly of biological structures, and life on Mars); the talks were prepared specifically for an audience of students, and so important details often skipped were spelled out for us. As a prospective biophysics student, I particularly enjoyed Professor Mouritsen's demonstration of the novel properties of fat(!) and Professor Knudsen's inquiries about life as part of the general organization of matter. The lecture on quantum optics by Professor Polzik came to life when I visited his lab

at the Niels Bohr Institute on our excursion to Copenhagen.



The winning Simpson's poster.

The student talks and poster session were also an important part of the conference. Unlike most other conferences I've attended thus far, the topics were not confined to a specific sub-field of physics, so I could hop from a lecture on baryogenesis to one on quantum dots. Of course I also had the opportunity to present my work in a rather relaxed environment and receive some fruitful comments about my presentation. What amazed me about the lectures was the universality of the physics community – students from all over were interested in the same topics as those being heavily studied in the U.S. The award-winning poster by Tomislav Terzic from Croatia was a Simpson's cartoon in which Lisa explained the concept of extra dimensions to Homer and Bart.

On the excursion to Copenhagen I visited the Niels Bohr Institute. We stood on the original carpet in Niels Bohr's office while an archivist related anecdotes about the photographs and mantel décor. We also saw some laboratories and shivered in the freezer where ice cores from Greenland are housed.

The physics was excellently balanced with fantastic social activities and sightseeing. The featured event was the National Party, at which each country provided characteristic food and drink, followed by a performance of a skit, song, or dance. We also had ample time throughout the conference to mosey through central Odense and Copenhagen. Odense featured the



SPS delegate James Hitchcock sits at the USA table During the National Party.

childhood home of Hans Christian Andersen and we were treated to a boat tour in Copenhagen.

The plane ticket to Europe also allowed me to do a bit of traveling on my own before the conference began, with stops in Munich, Paris, Belgium, Amsterdam, and Denmark. I enjoyed taking in the old (by American standards) and intricately aesthetic architecture, relaxing in cafés, and traversing the bike lanes and train routes so much more extensive in Europe. All in all it was a fantastic experience and I look forward to continuing the process of cultural exchange in my career as a physicist.