UC SANTA BARBARA

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Gail Gallessich

ASTEROID NAMED FOR UCSB NOBELIST

Last year it was the Nobel Prize; this year it's a heavenly body. An asteroid, previously named number 24751, has been named Kroemer, after Herbert Kroemer, a recent Nobel Prize winner and faculty member at the University of California, Santa Barbara.

The asteroid was discovered in 1992 by the German astronomer Freimut Boerngen, who also suggested naming the asteroid Kroemer. The name was recently approved by the Minor Planet Center of the International Astronomical Union in Cambridge, Mass., part of the Harvard Smithsonian Center for Astrophysics.

According to the Minor Planet Center, when a new asteroid is discovered, the discoverer has the privilege of naming it and submitting the name to an international committee for approval. Approximately 800 asteroids have been named, close to one third of the total discovered. The rate of discovery has increased recently.

UCSB Chancellor Henry T. Yang said he was "just delighted" to learn that an asteroid had been named for Kroemer. He said that Kroemer "continues to be a source of inspiration and pride for our entire campus. That his name will now be a fixture in the firmament is truly wonderful."

Kroemer, who holds the Donald W. Whittier Chair in Electrical Engineering and is also a professor of materials, shared the year 2000 Nobel Prize in physics for developing semiconductor heterostructures used in high-speed and opto-electronics. One of his UCSB colleagues, physicist Alan Heeger, shared the Nobel Prize in chemistry last year.

When asked how he felt upon hearing about the asteroid named after him, Kroemer said, "It's the most surprising thing that can happen to you. I enjoyed it."

A native of Germany, Kroemer received a Ph.D. in theoretical physics in 1952 from the University of Göttingen, with a dissertation on hot-electron effects in the then-new transistor, setting the stage for a career in research on the physics of semiconductors and semiconductor devices.

He worked in a number of research laboratories in Germany and the USA, and taught electrical engineering at the University of Colorado from 1968 to 1976. He joined the Department of Electrical Engineering at UCSB in 1976 with a plan to put its resources into the emerging compound semiconductor research technology. In this field, Kroemer saw an opportunity for UCSB to become a leader. He became the first member of the group, thus founding what has grown into a large group that is second to none in the physics and technology of compound semiconductors and devices based on them.

Kroemer's research has been widely recognized by the semiconductor community, and he has been honored with numerous awards, including several national and international ones: for example, the Alexander von Humboldt Research Award (1994); membership in the National Academy of Engineering (1997); and, most recently, an honorary doctor of science degree from the University of Colorado, Boulder.

The asteroid named for Kroemer has an elliptical orbit around the sun between Mars and Jupiter. The asteroid never gets close to Earth and is not in a collision path.

For more information on Kroemer and the Nobel Prize, check the website: http://www.ucsb.edu/nobel/index.shtml

For more information on Kroemer go to: http://www.engineering.ucsb.edu/faculty/profile/100

To learn more about the Minor Planet Center of the International Astronomical Union, check: http://cfa-www.harvard.edu/iau/mpc.html

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The University of California, Santa Barbara is a leading research institution that also provides a comprehensive liberal arts learning experience. Our academic community of faculty, students, and staff is characterized by a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of our multicultural and global society. All of this takes place within a living and learning environment like no other, as we draw inspiration from the beauty and resources of our extraordinary location at the edge of the Pacific Ocean.