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.

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…”

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…”

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

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

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

___ start or ___ renew a subscription FOR ME (___ 1 year (6 issues) ___ 2 yrs ___ 3 yrs)

___ start or ___ renew a GIFT SUBSCRIPTION (___ 1 year (6 issues) ___ 2 yrs ___ 3 yrs)

My name, address, and all that:

Name:_________________________________________
Addr: _________________________________________
Addr: _________________________________________
City:____________________State:_______ZIP:_______
Country:_________________________
Phone:__________________ FAX:__________________
E-mail: _____________________________

I am giving a GIFT SUBSCRIPTION to:

Name:_________________________________________
Addr: _________________________________________
Addr: _________________________________________
City:____________________State:_______ZIP:_______
Country:_________________________
Phone:__________________ FAX:__________________
E-mail: _____________________________

___Send renewal notice to my beneficiary.
___Send renewal notice to me.

As a subscriber to the *Annals of Improbable Research*, you will receive an official Improbable Research Investigator Card.

Total payment enclosed:______________

Payment method:

___Check (drawn on US bank) or int’l money order

___Mastercard ___Visa ___Discover CARD #:_________________________ EXP. DATE______

RATES (in US dollars)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>2 yrs</th>
<th>3 yrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>$33</td>
<td>$60</td>
<td>$89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada/Mex</td>
<td>$39</td>
<td>$65</td>
<td>$95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overseas</td>
<td>$49</td>
<td>$90</td>
<td>$135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Send payment to:

AIR

P.O. Box 380853, Cambridge, MA 02238 USA

617-491-4437 FAX: 617-661-0927 air@improbable.com

WWW.IMPROBABLE.COM