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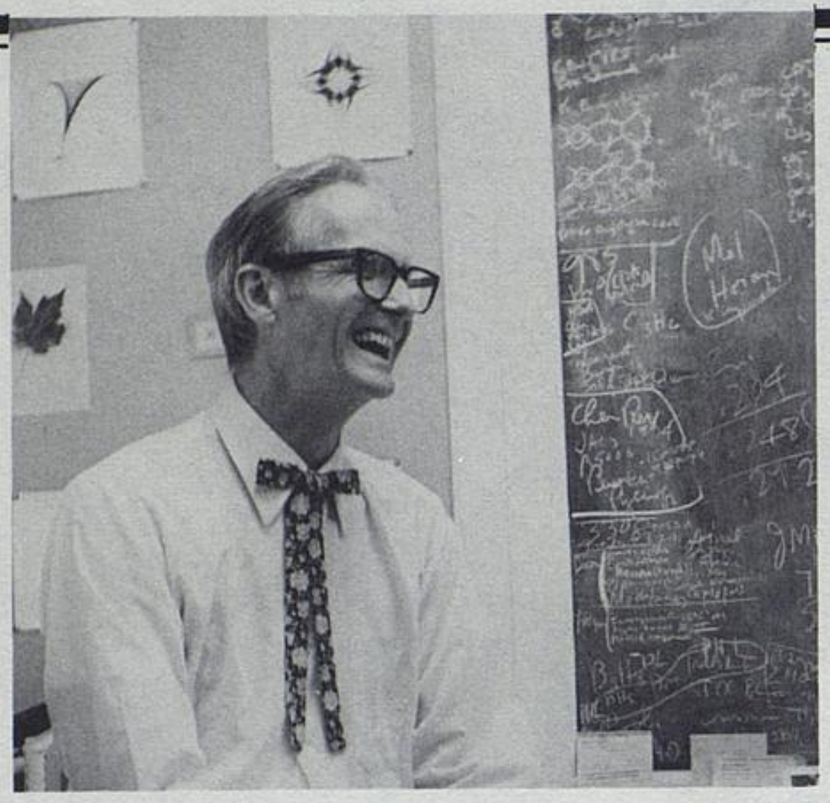

William N. Lipscomb

Lipscomb: UK's Second Nobel Prize Winner

When a university sees "one of its own" succeed, it has a certain right to indulge in that success.

And so it was with a sense of pride that the UK Alumni Association Board of Directors passed a resolution noting the achievements of alumnus Dr. William Nunn Lipscomb, Jr., class of '41, who was awarded the 1976 Nobel Prize for chemistry.

The coveted prize, which carries with it a $160,000 cash stipend, recognizes Lispcomb for his research into borane chemistry, a study of the combined gases of boron and hydrogen. Dr. Lipscomb determined the structure of these compounds, and developed the theories in the bonding of them. The knowledge gained from his research may some day be useful in treating cancer.

Currently his research interest centers on enzyme chemistry at Harvard University where he is the Abbot and James Lawrence professor of chemistry and has served as department chairman.

Vice president for academic affairs Lewis Cochran, a former physics professor, remembers Lispcomb as a "quiet, studious and friendly sort of student."

Dr. Donald Sands, an associate dean in the UK College of Arts and Sciences who knows Lipscomb and has worked in some of the same areas, characterizes Lipscomb as being "brilliant and full of imagination (who) just understands things. When he's around, there's activity—sparks flying."

At UK Lipscomb was a member of Phi Betta Kappa; Sigma Pi Sigma, a physics honorary fraternity, and Alpha Chi Sigma, a professional chemistry organization. He also was in a group called Simphonietta, which performed chamber music, and won a scholarship to UK as a marching clarinet player.

Today he maintains his interest in music playing with a chamber music group connected with the Boston Symphony Orchestra.

Lipscomb was a student of the late Dr. Otto Kopius, who had a long career in UK's physics department. Mrs. Lipscomb said Kopius helped her son get a scholarship for graduate study at the California Institute of Technology at Pasadena.

Dr. Lipscomb is a 1941 graduate of UK. He was awarded an honorary doctorate in science from UK in 1963 and in 1965 was awarded the distinguished alumni centennial award from the university. He is also a charter honoree in the Alumni Association's Hall of Distinguished Alumni.

The holder of three chemistry doctorates and numerous other awards in his field, he began experimenting with borane at the University of Minnesota in 1949.

Lipscomb, 57, is the second University of Kentucky graduate and the second Kentuckian to win a Nobel Prize.

The first was Dr. Thomas Hunt Morgan, also of Lexington, who won the prize in medicine and physiology in 1933 for his work in genetics.

Lipscomb's interest in chemistry blossomed when Santa Claus brought him a chemistry set for Christmas when he was 12 years old. Thereafter, according to his mother, Mrs. Edna Patterson Lipscomb, there was space in his bedroom for only a single bed and his lab. In high school, he set up an entire lab there, too.

Though chemistry is his main interest and the Nobel Prize, the greatest achievement award, Lipscomb said he hadn't given the possibility of winning the award much thought.

"Actually, I'd put it aside. I don't worry about such things. That's enough to make one worry if you think about that, and it's better not to."

He said the Nobel honor "won't really make any difference in the general direction of my work, the things that I'm doing . . . I still think my best work is ahead of me."