

Lindau Meeting

Ames Lab student hobnobs with Nobel Laureates

As fall semester begins and students return to class, there's almost always a certain amount of "catching up" that must take place. Whether it's over coffee, dinner or drinks, people will be bringing roommates and friends up-to-date on their summer activities. But of all the activities undertaken this summer, there are none in the state of Iowa that duplicate or even come close to Christine Aikens' adventure.

Aikens, a student associate working with Mark Gordon, program director of Applied Mathematics and Computational Sciences, spent July 1-5 at the 52nd Meeting of the Nobel Laureates in Lindau, Germany. Since 1951, the Nobel Laureates have convened annually in Lindau to have open and informal meetings with students and young researchers. Aikens was one of 37 students nationwide who traveled to Lindau as part of an annual program administered by the Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education. ORISE administers the program for the U.S. Department of Energy and Oak Ridge Associated Universi-

ties. Those students selected to participate are U.S. doctoral students whose current research at their respective universities is funded by the DOE or the National Institute of Standards and Technology. Gordon nominated Aikens to be considered for the trip based on her research potential. She was the only nominee from ISU to be selected for the program.

The Nobel Laureate meetings rotate by discipline each year. This year's event focused on chemistry and was of special interest to Aikens, who is working on her doctorate in theoretical chemistry and is interested in electronic structure theory method development. "I was exposed to a number of areas of chemistry, such as atmospheric chemistry, that I may consider for future research projects," she says. "I saw how different all of the Nobel Laureates were, in particular their varying perspectives on science and its relationship to politics. They discussed an amazing amount of politics — it was eye-opening. They also discussed issues within their own areas of research and the need for

better science education."

Besides sitting in on the five days of conferences and round-table discussions with the Nobel Laureates, Aikens and the other students from the U.S. and around the world were able to visit with them more informally at various lunches and dinners throughout the week. "One of the highlights of the trip was dining with Nobel Laureate Paul Boyer," says Aikens. "He was very interested in meeting the students at his table and getting to know them. I was very impressed that he remembered details about us and was able to introduce us to other people."

(Paul D. Boyer was named 1997 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry for elucidation of the enzymatic mechanism underlying the synthesis of adenosine triphosphate, or ATP.)

An event that became a special trip highlight for Aikens and the other students in the U.S. delegation was an unexpected but welcome reminder of home. "The British students planned and hosted a dinner for us on the Fourth of July," she says.

One of the major benefits of



In addition to attending the 52nd Meeting of the Nobel Laureates, Christine Aikens found some time to shop for souvenirs. She brought this beer stein home for her husband, Christopher.

the trip, according to Aikens, was the networking opportunities it provided — especially with the other students. "It was interesting to talk with some of the students from Europe and compare education systems or hear their perspectives on the United States," she says. "I developed friendships with many students from the United States and from around the world, and these are the people I'll be seeing at professional conferences for years to come." ■

~ Saren Johnston



Christine Aikens (far left corner) says one of the biggest highlights of her Lindau trip was dining with Nobel Laureate Paul Boyer (center, right).