

"Friends" Dance for Library of Medicine

One glittering evening last month, the "Friends of the Library of Medicine" gave a dance at the opulent new J. W. Marriott Hotel a couple of blocks from the White House. It was the first time anyone can remember that a traditional charity ball has been held for an agency of the federal government.

Prominent members of Congress and their wives lent their names. The dinner committee included Senator and Mrs. Pete Domenici, Mrs. Ernest F. Hollings, Senator Edward M. Kennedy, Senator and Mrs. Lowell P. Weicker, and Representative and Mrs. Henry Waxman.

But the stars of the evening were the more than 20 Nobel laureates who came to lend their prestige to the Library on its 150th birthday and to be honored themselves with hefty commemorative medals, engraved with the NLM's American eagle on one side and the double helix of DNA on the other. James Watson was there. So were David Baltimore, Paul Berg, Arthur Kornberg, Christian Anfinsen, Joseph Goldstein, and others.

Other notable guests included representatives of the big companies that contributed as much as \$10,000 a table as a sign of their support. Their number included several prominent drug houses; a smattering of law firms; health insurance companies; J. H. Whitney and Co., the investment company; the Reader's Digest Association; the Trump Organization; and Macy's department store.

The purpose behind the ball was to enhance the Library's image and spread the word about its role in the biomedical life of the country. Dinner chairman Edwin (Jack) Whitehead, founder of the Whitehead Institute at MIT, said that people need to know more about the NLM which is the "completest, if that's a word, the fastest, and the bestest" medical library in the world.

Whitehead, along with former congressman Paul G. Rogers, is among the moving forces behind the new Friends group which was formed about a year ago to promote and aid the library. For instance, heart surgeon Michael DeBakey has made television and radio spots about what NLM has to offer that have been distributed to the media. Friends paid the bill. Says NLM director Donald Lindberg, in the past it "seems that the NLM has almost been seeking obscurity. A little publicity is appropriate."



At the ball: Nobel laureate Christian Anfinsen, with Senator Lowell Weicker, Friends board member Rosalind Whitehead, and NLM director Donald Lindberg.

According to Rogers, the Friends plan to raise money for seminars, and are thinking about a program to bring outstanding scholars to the NLM. Lindberg notes that the Friends have helped with funds for entertaining important foreign visitors (the NLM's federal money cannot be used for this) and says that the Friends have expressed an interest in projects to help preserve the biomedical literature. Printing journals on acid-free paper is a case in point.

"It may be that the conventional wisdom is wrong," says Lindberg, referring to the widely held notion that it would be financially prohibitive to do so.

Overall, the Friends will help the library "do things that ordinary funding doesn't permit," Lindberg says. In fact, the Friends of the National Library of Medicine has itself been called ordinary, "just like any Friends group for a local library." Well—not quite. ■ **BARBARA J. CULLITON**

Herrington Backs Super Collider

Energy Secretary John S. Herrington says he is now convinced that the Reagan Administration should build the proposed Superconducting Super Collider (SSC). "I have seen enough that I think we will get a lot of benefit out of the SSC. It is something the country should do," Herrington said at a meeting with reporters on 3 December. But construction of the machine, he says, hinges on finding a way to pay for the \$4- to \$5-billion device.

Herrington has indicated that the SSC must be financed with supplemental funding, not from regular science accounts. Critics of the SSC within the science community have argued that the project directly or indirectly will crimp growth in other research areas. To limit the impact on the federal budget, Department of Energy (DOE) officials have been looking to foreign participants in Asia and Europe to contribute \$1 billion or more toward the SSC's construction.

Whether Herrington actually will ask the White House to endorse construction of the machine in fiscal year 1988 was uncertain at presstime. The project was not part of DOE's regular budget submission to the Office of Management and Budget. The DOE budget, however, can be amended before President Reagan sends his 1988 budget proposal to Congress on 5 January.

The SSC currently is the subject of inter-agency discussions, but White House officials confirm that no decision paper has been presented to the President as yet. A decision on whether to bring the accelerator project before the President is not expected until late December. Supporters of the project are anxious to see it proceed next year. They fear that if the Administration waits a year the project's political momentum could wane. Sizing up the scene, Alvin W. Trivelpiece, director of DOE's Office of Energy Research, says "the ball is at the top of the hill." ■ **MARK CRAWFORD**