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The Brandenburg 300 Project

Honors

Linus Pauling

was the first man to win two Nobel Prizes (Chemistry and Peace). When asked how he had all these great ideas to win two Nobel Prizes he replied:

“We are not on this earth to have great ideas. We are on this earth to have ideas and a principle of selection.”





Linus Pauling in Big Sur

Excerpt from "A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to Energy Independence" by Robert Danziger

Linus Pauling Groupie

Linus Pauling is one of my heroes. The first man to win two Nobel Prizes, the first for chemistry and the second for peace. I know this because I was flipping through the channels one day when I heard an interviewer ask an elderly gentleman, "How did you get so many great ideas to win two Nobel Prizes?" He replied, "We're not on this earth to have great ideas; we're on this earth to have ideas and a principle of selection."

The statement was riveting, like being struck by a bolt of lightning, and by lightning, I mean genius. I stared at the TV. Who was this guy? It was Linus Pauling. Dr. Linus Pauling.

What I didn't know, but learned many years later, after having heard Linus introduced as "the first man to win two Nobel Prizes" countless times, was that he was actually the second person to win twice. A woman, Marie Curie, won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1903 and for chemistry in 1911. First man, but second person.

I met Dr. Pauling on a flight from San Jose. The seat next to mine was the only one still empty, and I heard a voice say, "Is that seat empty?" I looked up and it was Linus Pauling, and for probably the only time in my life I gushed like a groupie and literally shouted, "Linus Pauling!" Embarrassed, he quickly sat down beside me, then people came up to him for his autograph or just to say hello.

I had a chance to ask him if the quote above was accurate, and he said, "Sounds like something I might have said."

Dr. Gene Guth was my chief chemist at Sunlaw. His son, Dr. Ted, handled environmental matters for Sunlaw and arranged for us to hire Gene after he retired as chief chemist at TRW, where he co-invented rocket fuels and the air bag. Gene knew Linus Pauling and arranged for us to discuss the greenhouse gas CO₂. I was interested in designing an atom or molecule that would want to combine with CO₂ and loosen CO₂'s bonds so we could make it into something useful instead of a threat. We'd planted a hundred thousand trees, studied throwing CO₂ into the sea or underground, and were supporting wind and solar energy. We knew that separating CO₂ would be easier to do in a natural gas power plant than a coal-fired one.

Natural gas-fired power plants put out a lot less greenhouse gases than power plants that use coal or oil, but they still put out a lot. We'd made a profit in eliminating three other pollutants, so maybe

we could do the same for CO₂.

We started working on it. Linus Pauling had started speculating on a geometry for an atom or molecule that could do the job, but unfortunately Dr. Pauling died before we could complete the work.

I know this is supposed to be a funny book, but if someone out there knows someone interested in theoretical chemistry, this is an area I think deserves further study. If you are a theoretical chemist, what are you reading silly books like this one for? **GET BACK TO WORK.**

But seriously, to all those folks out there in the trenches, working every day for energy independence and a clean environment coupled with prosperity, despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles, I love you and thank you. Now,

GET BACK TO WORK.