

Scientists gather from around country

By Dave Varga
staff writer

If theories on amorphous semiconductors or non-crystalline solids mean anything to you, chances are you probably attended a conference on the topic in Bloomfield Township last week.

For the rest of us, the worldwide draw of chemists and other scientists to the "theoretical conference" at the Institute for Amorphous Studies might seem like a yawner.

A description of the four-day meeting, according to a press release, said the purpose was "to probe deep into the molecular and atomic makeup of amorphous semiconductors, metals and metallic alloys. Among the topics will be the use of powerful computers to model structures, chemical approaches to the structures and mathematical methods of describing infinitely small changes in structures."

What all this has to do with us non-scientists is everyday applications such as solar cells to run calculators, rechargeable batteries and wear-resistant, decorative plastic coatings.

BUT THOSE are just some of the current uses for technology pioneered and produced by a company called Enrgy Conversion Devices Inc., located in Troy. That firm, which was started 25 years ago in a Detroit store front by Stanford Ovshinsky and his wife, Iris, owns and operates The Institute for Amorphous Studies.

The institute, set up in a former private school two years ago, features lectures, classes, workshops and conferences on this relatively new field of physics—amorphous materials.

Some of the product applications for amorphous materials are in more mature stages than others, according to

"It's an opportunity to exchange ideas among scientists who don't normally see each other. New theories are introduced and old theories are reshaped."

— Colleen Hudgens
institute spokeswoman

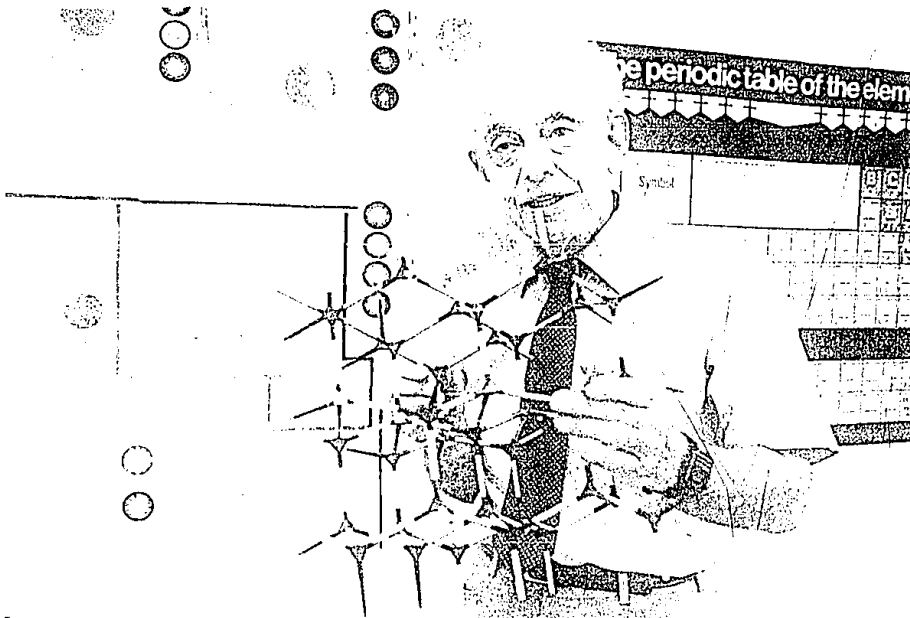
Colleen Hudgens, a spokeswoman for ECD and the institute. Solar cell calculators are currently in widespread use, while devices to convert waste heat to electricity are currently being developed in a joint venture by ECD and American Natural Resources Co. in Detroit.

The "rather significant" conference was a chance for 125 chemists and physicists from 11 foreign nations to get together to discuss the newest theories on how non-crystalline solids can be put together, according to Dr. Martin Steele of the institute's advisory committee.

THIS IS ACTUALLY the second conference at the institute, Hudgens said. About 200 physicists gathered in March 1984 to discuss "Transport and Defects in Amorphous Semiconductors."

These conferences provide an important chance for cutting edge researchers to find out what hypotheses others are developing, Hudgens said.

"It's an opportunity to exchange ideas among scientists who don't normally see each other," Hudgens said. "New theories are introduced and old theories are reshaped."



Scientists from around the world gathered in Bloomfield Township last week.

what's at the movies

AMADEUS (PG). Winner of eight Academy Awards. Superb rendition of Mozart's life with Tom Hulce and F. Murray Abraham. Directed by Milos Forman.

DESPERATELY SEEKING SUSAN (PG-13). Hoboken housewife changes identities with a free spirit. No wonder they make New Jersey jokes.

MASK (PG-13). Cher in true story of biker lady with genetically deformed child. Maudlin moments intermixed with uplifting performances by Eric Stoltz and Laura Dern.

POLICE ACADEMY II (PG-13). More of the same hijinks with those men in blue.

A PRIVATE FUNCTION (R). British comedy about small Yorkshire town preparing for

Doggedly factual

Here are some interesting facts about humans' favorite companion, the dog.

• The Tibetan bear dog is the rarest breed of dog, with only five known examples surviving. The dogs were formerly used for hunting big game by the Tibetan Indians of western Canada.

• The Yorkshire terrier, the Chihuahua and the toy poodle are the smallest breeds of dog. Miniature versions have been known to weigh less than 16 ounces in adulthood.

• As a species, the St. Bernard is the biggest breed. The heaviest example weighs 305 pounds, standing 39 inches at the shoulder.

wedding of Princess Elizabeth and Lt. Philip Mountbatten.

MOVIE RATING GUIDE

G General audiences. All ages admitted.



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