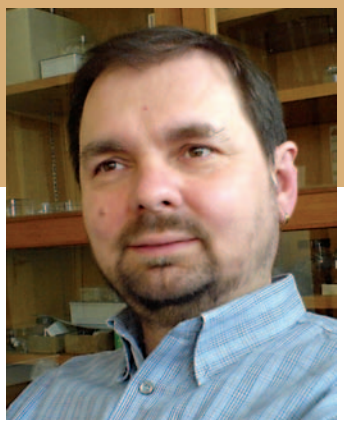

MEZGER AWARDED LEIBNIZ PRIZE

Klaus Mezger, geochemist at the University of Münster, is one of the eleven scientists and academics to have been awarded the 2006 Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz Prize by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG, German Research Foundation). Klaus Mezger and his research group have developed new methods that make it possible to determine the age of minerals and rocks, and thus of Earth and other planets, with far greater precision than was previously possible. Using isotope geochemistry and high-accuracy measurements, Mezger and his research group determined the time of core formation on Earth and Mars and the crystallisation of the magma ocean on the Moon. The analytical methods for isotope and trace element determinations developed at Mezger's institute are among the most precise in the world and have application in numerous fundamental and current topics concerning the development of Earth and other planetary bodies.

Klaus Mezger studied mineralogy and geology at the University of Würzburg and at the State University of New York at Albany and obtained his doctorate at the State University of New York at Stony Brook in 1989. After two years of postdoctoral research at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, he moved to the Max Planck Institute for Chemistry in Mainz. He was appointed to the University of Münster in 1997, where he has since headed the Central Laboratory for Geochronology.

The Leibniz Prize is the most valuable research prize in Germany. The award, of up to 1.55 million, funds research work over a five-year period and can be used flexibly by the prizewinners. The Leibniz Programme aims to improve the working conditions of outstanding scientists and academics, expand their research opportunities, relieve them of administrative duties and make it easier for them to employ qualified young researchers. Scientists and academics from any research area can be nominated for the prize. The DFG's Nominations Committee considers the slate of candidates and selects researchers who can be expected to advance their scientific achievements through this award. Since its establishment in 1985, the Leibniz Programme has awarded 239 prizes. Of these, 52 recipients have been from the humanities, 67 from the life sciences, 85 from the natural sciences and 35 from engineering. Of 148 nominations received for the 2006 prize, only eleven researchers were selected.

NATIONAL MEDAL OF SCIENCE TO CLAYTON

President George W. Bush named the University of Chicago's Robert Clayton among the recipients of the 2004 National Medal of Science (awarded in February 2006), the United States of America's highest scientific honor. Clayton was cited for his leading contributions to cosmic chemistry, from pre–solar system dust to planets, and for being an exemplary role model as a mentor, teacher, and advocate for rigorous science.

Clayton, 75, pioneered the use of oxygen isotopes in understanding the processes that formed the planets and asteroids early in the history of the solar system. His studies have provided surprising evidence supporting the theory that the Moon was part of the Earth until a collision with another planet-sized object blasted them apart.

Most of Clayton's lunar research stemmed from his examination of approximately 300 samples collected during all six Apollo Moon landings from 1969 to 1972 and during the Soviet Luna 16 and 20 robotic missions. But his laboratory also has become well known as a clearinghouse for the analysis of strange meteorites.

While studying meteorites with colleagues at the Fermi Institute, Clayton discovered in 1973 that the chemistry of oxygen in the early solar system was fundamentally different from that known on Earth. This led to the recognition of the importance of photochemistry (the interaction of light and chemicals) in the formation of the planets and to a new prediction of the abundances of oxygen isotopes in the Sun.

Clayton and his colleagues confirmed the identity of the first lunar meteorite in 1983. And by studying Martian meteorites they showed in 1992 that Mars probably once had water on its surface or in its atmosphere. In 2000, he was a member of a team that established the Tagish Lake meteorite from Canada as perhaps the most pristine sample of the solar system ever studied.

Clayton joined the University of Chicago faculty in 1958 and served as director of the University's Enrico Fermi Institute from 1998 to 2001. He officially retired in 2001, but still pursues an active research program. His honors include membership in the National Academy of Sciences. He also is a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, the Royal Society of Canada, the Royal Society of London and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. An asteroid also has been named in his honor.

IN MEMORIAM

Alfred A. LEVINSON (1927–2005)

Dr. Alfred A. Levinson passed away on December 12, 2005, after a valiant battle with lung cancer, at the age of 78 years. A native of Staten Island, New York, Al served in the US Navy during World War II and subsequently obtained his doctorate in mineralogy from the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, in 1952. His distinguished career as a geologist/mineralogist included positions at Ohio State University, Dow Chemical, and Gulf Research before he joined the University of Calgary (Alberta, Canada) in 1967 as professor of geology. During his tenure at U of C, he not only taught thousands of students, but he also served on the editorial boards of several major geological journals, edited the first scientific volumes on the rocks recovered during the 1969 Apollo 11 voyage to the moon, and authored a number of books. He was an energetic researcher and dedicated author, and dispersed his knowledge with a wonderful sense of humor.

Shortly before his retirement from U of C in 1994, Al developed an interest in gemology, which he pursued as author, editor, and lecturer until his death. In 2001, a new mineral species, levinsonite, was named in his honor. Al is survived by his sisters, Florence Spungen of Riverwoods, Illinois, and Sheila Leventhal of Palm Beach Gardens, Florida; numerous nieces and nephews; and his long-time friend Alice Keller of Encinitas, California.

Dr. Levinson was a member of the Mineralogical Society of America, the Geochemical Society, the International Association of GeoChemistry, and a life member of the Mineralogical Association of Canada.