

SRI's McKubre Speaks on Cold Fusion

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On October 11, Dr. Michael McKubre presented "What Happened to Cold Fusion" as part of the monthly Café Scientifique program at SRI International in Menlo Park, California. Café Scientifique is one of a growing number of independent, grassroots science cafes held around the world. The Silicon Valley branch meets on the second Tuesday of each month and is sponsored by Altos Therapeutics and SRI International (<http://www.cafescisv.org/>). Nearly 300 people attended the presentation.

McKubre, who has worked for SRI International for over 30 years, has conducted extensive cold fusion experimentation since 1989. His presentation focused on his team's work with electrochemical loading of deuterons into palladium, including a brief overview of the field. McKubre made some very interesting personal statements about the field, including: "This is a field of huge technical complexity. I think of cold fusion as my second Ph.D. I've learned more in the pursuit of this field than I learned in any other pursuit in my entire life. I had to learn whole new disciplines in order to keep this thing moving forward. It is probably the greatest learning experience of my life if you discount childraising."

McKubre calls his mentor, Prof. Martin Fleischmann, the "cleverest experimentalist I ever worked with." He noted, "I went to do my post-doctoral fellowship at Southampton [under Prof. Graham Hills] specifically because it was the #1 school of electrochemistry in the English-speaking world and the reason for that was because Martin Fleischmann was there." He said of the March 23, 1989 announcement by Fleischmann and Pons at the University of Utah: "Had anybody else made that announcement, by the way, I probably wouldn't have paid any attention to it and I wouldn't have been here. The fact that it was Martin made me say, 'Okay, I give this a 50-50 shot.' We converted \$30,000 of my sponsor's money to a three-month study to see whether this was right or wrong. It was the first of my gross underestimates of the amount of money and the amount of time that this problem would take to solve!"

In defense of the time that has lapsed since the burgeoning of the field in 1989, McKubre said, "If . . . you start to think in terms of new science, you need to develop some new theory. The experiments are difficult, yes. We need more experiments. . . New knowledge is being developed and there is a new principle in physics which we are doing our very best to try to understand."

McKubre also discussed the gas loading of protons into nickel, highlighting the 1993 Francesco Piantelli approach.

He noted, "Some recent results at SRI seem to support the idea that nickel and light hydrogen also can produce nuclear level excess heat." McKubre did not focus much on this year's progress made by Andrea Rossi. He commented that Rossi's approach is "interesting, provocative, uncertain." He said, ". . . Rossi is the master of misdirection. I think he's brilliant actually and I just hope he has something. Because if he has something, his strategy is truly brilliant. By keeping it ambiguous, by keeping it never certain, he avoids competition. People don't want to get in because they're not sure."

In McKubre's opening statements, he made one comment which we find particularly fitting for all new energy claims: "Anybody that makes claims about energy better be prepared to back them up with solid data."

McKubre's presentation is available online. One will find the approximately 60-minute talk in eight sections on <http://ecatnews.com/?p=1430>. The video is also available on the Café Scientifique section of SRI International's YouTube channel (innovationSRI): <http://www.youtube.com/user/innovationSRI#p/c/4E3D946BECCF7DE3>



Dr. Michael McKubre
(Photo courtesy of SRI International.)