

The Ig Nobel Awards

For the last 14 years, in a parallel universe, the Ig Nobel Prizes have been awarded for some of the world's most exotic research and dubious achievements. The ceremony began at MIT and then moved up the street to Harvard. Each year, 10 awards are presented in categories from Economics to Medicine, Literature to Peace. The criteria for the winners: "Ig Nobel Prizes are given for achievements that cannot or should not be reproduced." Some of the past announcements appear below. Skeptics can visit www.improbable.com for documentation.

1993 PEACE The Pepsi-Cola Company of the Philippines, suppliers of sugary hopes and dreams, for sponsoring a contest to create a millionaire and then announcing the wrong winning number, thereby inciting and uniting 800,000 riotously expectant winners and bringing many warring factions together for the first time in their nation's history.

1996 CHEMISTRY George Goble of Purdue University for his blistering world record time for igniting a barbecue grill—three seconds, using charcoal and liquid oxygen.

1999 PEACE Charl Fourie and Michelle Wong of Johannesburg, South Africa, for inventing an automobile burglar alarm consisting of a detection circuit and a flamethrower.

2000 COMPUTER SCIENCE Chris Niswander of Tucson, Arizona, for inventing PawSense, software that detects when a cat is walking across your computer keyboard.

2001 PHYSICS David Schmidt of the University of Massachusetts for his partial solution to the question of why shower curtains billow inwards.

2002 LITERATURE Vicki L. Silvers of the University of Nevada-Reno and David S. Kreiner of Central Missouri State University for their colorful report, "The Effects of Pre-Existing Inappropriate Highlighting on Reading Comprehension."

2002 HYGIENE Eduardo Segura of Lavakan de Aste in Tarragona, Spain, for inventing a washing machine for cats and dogs.

2003 PHYSICS Jack Harvey, John Culvenor, Warren Payne, Steve Cowley, Michael Lawrance, David Stuart, and Robyn Williams of Australia for their irresistible report, "An Analysis of the Forces Required to Drag Sheep over Various Surfaces."

2004 MEDICINE Steven Stack of Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan, and James Gundlach of Auburn University, Auburn, Alabama, for their published report, "The Effect of Country Music on Suicide."