APR11-2011-000690

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the APR11 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Working (And Sparring) With Luis: Some Personal Recollections

MOISHE PRIPSTEIN, Physics Division, National Science Foundation

Luis Alvarez was the most remarkable physicist I have ever worked with. As a member of his bubble chamber group at the Lawrence Radiation Laboratory in Berkeley and subsequently as a leader of that group for several years, I could appreciate his outstanding attributes as a physicist and his forceful and colorful personality. Each day at the lab seemed exciting. Although he created the largest research group in particle physics in the world at the time, Luis was an ardent foe of group-think, which he characterized as "intellectual phase-lock". He had an uncanny intuition about physics and technology, coupled with an insatiable curiosity about the world around him. He is justly renowned as a member of the Inventors Hall of Fame for his myriad inventions and as a Nobel Laureate in physics for his contributions to particle physics through his development of the hydrogen bubble chamber technique, leading to the discovery of a large number of resonance states. However, it was his wide-ranging curiosity which led him to one of his finest achievements, while working with his son Walter – developing the asteroid impact theory as the explanation of the extinction of the dinosaurs. I will offer some personal recollections of Luis and the group in this period, including some of his other intriguing efforts which illustrate the breadth of his interests, pertaining to the Kennedy assassination and x-raying the pyramids, among them. All in all, a brilliant and most unusual scientist and stimulating colleague.