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The Discovery of High-Tc Superconductivity and the Countdown to the Rally

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The guiding ideas on our road towards high-Tc superconductivity and the early work at the IBM Zurich Research Laboratory are briefly addressed. I will shed some light onto the environment and the decisive circumstances that in January 1986 led to the breakthrough with the discovery of superconductivity in the cuprates. The pre-“Woodstock” period, which lasted less than a year, covers the time in which the Zurich team tested different La_2CuO_4 -based compounds, confirmed the Meissner effect, and studied flux trapping in these new materials. It was also the time in which the news of the discovery started to spread and in which we experienced mixed reactions ranging from silent skepticism to polite (cautious) congratulations. This changed dramatically into excitement with the confirmation of the Zurich results by the Tokyo (S. Tanaka) and the Houston (C.W. Chu) group, and cumulated in the take-off of the new field at the famous “Woodstock Meeting of Physics” after the discovery of the 90 K superconductor.