

Researchers copy material changes in superconductor

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — University of California scientists say they have duplicated a breakthrough superconductor material discovered earlier this year and hope to refine a second compound that could do even better.

If the first compound made by the team of researchers from Berkeley and the affiliated Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory can be perfected for actual use, it could offer substantial savings for such uses as long-distance electricity transmission and the "super collider" atom smasher envisioned by the Reagan administration.

The scientists, led by physicist Marvin Cohen, say they made an yttrium-barium-copper-oxygen compound that begins to function as a superconductor at temperatures as warm as 283 degrees below zero Fahrenheit, matching the breakthrough announced earlier by University of Houston physicist Paul C.W. Chu.

Superconductivity usually is defined by two crucial tests: disappearance of all electrical resistance and the sudden expulsion of magnetic flux.

Most superconductors require refrigeration to close to absolute zero, minus 460 degrees Fahrenheit, and that requires expensive and hard-to-handle liquid helium. Chu's discovery was the first material that could become superconducting at temperatures produced by easily made liquid nitrogen, 10 times cheaper than liquid helium.

While working with the material, Cohen said researchers have seen fluctuations suggesting it began to function as a superconductor at temperatures as high as 40 degrees below zero.

"But we can't stabilize it. It's not reproducible," he said Tuesday, countering published accounts that his team had invented a new and much improved superconductor. However, he said researchers hope that superconductivity eventually can be achieved with their second compound. The Berkeley researchers are not disclosing the composition of that material while their patent application is pending.

Physicists can not completely explain superconductivity. They describe it generally as a phenomenon where low temperature dampens molecular and atomic movement and electrons traveling in pairs can pass through certain materials virtually without resistance.

Superconductors could be used for purposes ranging from carrying an electrical current almost indefinitely to making for more efficient operation of electrical devices. Other potential applications include increasing the power of computers, replacing many uses of X-rays with magnetic imaging machines and powering high-speed trains cushioned on magnetic fields above their tracks.

Actor Danny Kaye, 74, dies of heart failure

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Comedian Danny Kaye, who enthralled adults and youngsters alike with tongue-twisting patter in such films as "Hans Christian Andersen" and "The Court Jester," then became an advocate for the world's children, died Tuesday at the age of 74.

The red-haired star, who worked his way up from busboy to Broadway, TV and the movies and international honors, died of heart failure brought on by complications of internal bleeding and hepatitis, publicist Warren Cowan said.

His wife of 46 years, Sylvia, and daughter Dena were at his bedside at Cedars-Sinai Medical Center when he died at 3:58 a.m.

Kaye, who also starred in such film classics as "White Christmas" and "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty," was hospitalized Sunday and had been in extremely critical condition, hospital spokesman Ron Wise said.

Dr. Charles Kivowitz, his physician, said Kaye contracted hepatitis, an inflammation of the liver, from a blood transfusion during heart surgery in February 1983.

President Reagan said the comedian "could light up a room by just smiling."

"A comedian, actor, singer and conductor, Danny Kaye delighted millions the world over with his special talent for making us laugh," Reagan said. "Children, especially, felt his warmth and humanity and he enjoyed a special bond with his young audiences."

Kaye's title as official permanent ambassador-at-large for the United Nations Children's Fund, UNICEF,

earned him the title of ambassador to the world's children.

U.N. Secretary-General Javier Perez de Cuellar said, "He was truly a champion for children in every continent."

Kaye said after visiting refugee camps in India in 1971, "While UNICEF gives them food and medicines, I make them laugh."

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences presented Kaye with a special Oscar in 1954 and the Jean Hersholt Humanitarian Award in 1982 for his charitable works, especially with UNICEF. He also received a special Tony award in 1953 and Emmy awards for "The Danny Kaye Show" in 1964 and best children's television special in 1975.

Queen Margreth of Denmark knighted Kaye in 1983 for his portrayal of Hans Christian Andersen in the 1952 musical film. Earlier that year, Kaye was awarded the 22nd annual Gold Medal of the USO. He had entertained U.S. servicemen in Korea, Vietnam and World War II.

Although Kaye couldn't read music, he conducted symphonies all over the world to benefit children and musicians' pension funds. He had a unique touch, like using a flyswatter to lead the New York Philharmonic in a 1981 performance of "Flight of the Bumble Bee."

Composer-conductor Leonard Bernstein said, "Danny's death has diminished grievously the American image the whole world loved — warm, frank, lovable, irreverent, funny, kind and generous."

There will be no funeral. In lieu of flowers the family asked that contributions be made to UNICEF.

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