

Preserving IGY's history and legacy

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The International Geophysical Year of 1957–1958 was a monumental achievement in technology and scientific cooperation. The effort culminated in the participation of 67 nations in research programs from pole-to-pole and out into space and the ultimate benefits remain difficult to assess. In fact, historians of science are still struggling to chart the IGY's origin, plans, and progress missing and/or conflicting information. The IGY Gold History Preservation Initiative strives to assist this effort by identifying IGY participants and gathering materials/resources which could be of significance in reconstructing/rediscovers the IGY's key events and personalities.



Figure 1. "IGY Gold" commemorative pin, awarded only to participants from the IGY 1957–1958.

50th anniversary activities. Several "legacy" activities are happening in concert with the 50th anniversary of the IGY:

- Earth Sciences for Society and the International Year of Planet Earth (IYPE) 2007–2009 continues the tradition of international cooperation in the geophysical sciences by sponsoring both scientific and educational activities.
- The Electronic Geophysical Year (eGY) 2007–2008 is a coordinated international effort focusing on improving data access, release, discovery, preservation, rescue, integration, and capacity building.
- The International Heliophysical Year (IHY) 2007–2009 focuses on our exploration and understanding of space, and extending the definition of "geophysical" to include the solar and planetary system.
- The International Polar Year 2007–2008 (IPY) follows in the tradition of the first International Polar Year (1882–1883), the second IPY (1932–1933), and the IGY.

The IGY legacy programs, also called I*Y's, have been developed in close cooperation with these activities. Although the IHY is hosting the IGY Gold Program, as always with international science and education, cooperation is essential for the success of historical preservation efforts. There are several important reasons that the 2007–2008 legacy activities choose to emphasize history as well as science. First, many IGY participants are still active and are participating in these new activities. They are an excellent source of information and, because many remain in

contact with their former colleagues, they are the most effective means of tracking down retired IGY participants. Second, a historical perspective adds to the sense of "celebration" on the 50th anniversary of IGY. Finally, each I*Y is concerned about its own legacy, to ensure that their efforts help lay a foundation for future scientific activities. The legacy of the IGY provides an exceptional role model and inspiration.

The IGY Gold History Preservation Initiative. As most historically significant materials pertaining to the IGY are more than 40 years old, there is concern that much of this information will be lost. The IGY Gold

Program (gold symbolizing the 50th anniversary) provides a means to locate and recognize participants from the IGY, and encourage them to search for any items in their possession that would aid historical studies.

The IGY Gold History initiative has several goals: identifying and recognizing planners of and participants in the IGY; preserving memoirs, articles, photographs, and all items of historical significance for the IGY; making these items available to historians and researchers; serving as a contact service for these activities; and spreading awareness of the history of geophysics.

Gold Club members must meet three requirements: participation in an IGY activity; contribution of an item of potentially historical significance to the initiative (a letter, a recollection, an article, a photograph, etc.); agree that the item be available to historians, librarians, and others investigat-



Figure 2. Photo from 1956 taken at the Yakutsk Branch of the USSR Academy of Sciences. Radio technicians S. N. Druzhinin and V. P. Razin undertake the calibration of muon counters in a shaft at a depth of 60 m. The extensive underground research complex at Yakutsk provided data for many important research papers and doctoral dissertations. (Photo provided by Sergei Druzhinin and Sergey Starodubtsev).

ing/and preserving the history of geophysics. Gold Club members will be rewarded with a special IGY Gold Anniversary certificate of recognition and a special commemorative IGY Gold lapel pin (Figure 1). The design evolved from the original IGY logo and is embossed with the years "1957" and "2007."

Hundreds of IGY alumni from around the world have already received IGY Gold pins and certificates. Many were nominated by friends or colleagues. Other (a steadily increasing figure) nominations are coming from programs in several nations that are undertaking a special effort to identify IGY alumni. A discussion group at *igy50.net* provides a forum to participate in discussions of historical events.

Historical artifacts from the IGY. Historians attempting to reconstruct the "true" history of any scientific event find that certain items can be extremely valuable (Figure 2). The IGY was an outstanding success, even more extraordinary when viewed in the context of the political climate of the era. However, most official records document the IGY's scientific activities but not the politics and personal strife. Reports and research papers, even transcripts, may not be very useful to historians because the authors of these records emphasized the scientific reasons and motivations for the decisions and activities of the IGY. The politics and the personalities behind these decisions are typically omitted from the "final" reports, meaning that the background information about many discussions and debates are missing. As a result, the official records of many major scientific activities may be oversimplified, inaccurate or even misleading; the IGY is no exception.

Because many elements of the IGY story are missing, historians find that informal records, letters, and correspondence can play a crucial role in the accurate reconstruction of the timeline and critical events. A personal letter or a newly discovered transcript may provide important historical clues not captured in the official records. For example, an IGY satellite conference took place in Washington, USA, in the week preceding the launch of Sputnik. Although there was a substantial effort by some to keep him out of the conference, Wernher von Braun attended and was fascinated with the USSR's sounding-rocket program with live animals. During one of the papers, von Braun realized that the speaker was the principal investigator for these experiments.

He exclaimed: "Oh, you're the dog man!" (thanks to Len Cormier of PanAero).

Conclusion. The IGY Gold initiative, in addition to recognizing the contributions of participants in the IGY, provides a means to locate items of historical

interest, adds to the sense of celebration on the 50th anniversary of IGY, and will encourage colleagues and friends to reconnect and reminisce. Although developed and supported by the IHY, IGY Gold's success is because of the cooperation of international science years and other scientific activities.

A special certificate, commissioned by SEG, is available to all IGY Gold members. Additionally, those who provide historical information but did not participate in the IGY are eligible for a special "Friends of the IGY" certificate of appreciation for their contributions. The nomination form can be found in the "History" section of the IHY Web site (ihy2007.org); e-mail igygold@ihy2007.org for more information. **TJE**

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