

Environmental Bioremediation and Biodegradation

A MEETING SUMMARY

The Keystone Symposium Environmental Bioremediation and Biodegradation, organized by Drs. James J. Valdes, Ananda M. Chakrabarty and Michael Bagdasarian, was held March 6 - 12, 1993 at Granlibakken, Lake Tahoe, California. The abstracts of the meeting were published in the JOURNAL OF CELLULAR BIOCHEMISTRY, Supplement 17C, 1993 (ISSN 0730-2312).

The purpose of the meeting was to bring together the leading scientists and engineers in this diverse area to further dialogue between those conducting basic mechanistic research and those designing fieldable systems, within the context of policy guidelines. The meeting was attended by 110 participants representing industry, academia, and government institutions, from 11 countries on 5 continents. To accomplish the goals of the symposium, the talks were arranged broadly into sessions covering basic molecular genetics, microbial physiology and biochemistry, applications and engineering systems, fate and effects and monitoring, and policy guidelines. In addition, there were poster sessions throughout the

One basic tenet of bioremediation is the occurrence of gene transfer between organisms which confers new properties on the recipient. Dr. Robert Miller described studies using virus vectors to transform bacteria and conditions resulting in the lysogenic response. The natural abundance of bacteria and phage particles in aquatic environments make subsequent infection of the bacterial community possible. Molecular genetic approaches also challenged the notion that dichloromethane dehalogenases were relatively recent adaptations to pollutants. Dr. Tom Leisinger's work suggests that it evolved in cyanobacteria and proteobacteria as a defense against oxygen toxicity and is, in fact, very ancient.

Other, more practical, observations include Dr. Michael Bagdasarian's work which showed that genetic regulatory sequences in soil bacteria act differently under starvation conditions than in culture. It therefore follows that one should select for promoters which function under these conditions, i.e., activate systems in soil under starvation conditions. Similarly, Dr. John Reeve looked at genes which cope with growth vs. non-growth (i.e., starvation) conditions. Using methanogenic organisms, he described studies aimed at activating methyl reductase systems under starvation conditions to achieve substrate degradation without growth of biomass. Another example of a practical application of a mechanistic observation was Dr. Gil Geesey's work defining the surface characteristics which stimulate exopolysaccharide production by bacteria. These biofilms often block bioreactors and injection wells, but can also be used to block the spread of plume of pollutants in ground water.

Lignin degradation was an important topic and Dr. Michael Gold's discussion of a proposed mechanism by which white rot fungi degrade lignin and many other aromatic pollutants produced the most incendiary debate at the meeting. Briefly, he proposed that peroxidases depolymerize lignin and the monomers are taken up by the fungi and oxidized to quinone, which is then degraded further by either reduction or methylation. Drs. C. A. Reddy, Steven Aust, and Irwin Gunsalus further elaborated on lignin degradative pathways.

Methanogens are a very diverse group of extreme anaerobes which were also discussed at length. Drs. Tom Leisinger, Mary Lindstrom and John Reeve led much of this discussion which centered on the genetic messages for methyl reductase, and manipulation of substrate specificity by altering nutrient

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A great deal of time was spent discussing biodegradation of haloaromatic, alkylated aromatic, and methoxyaromatic compounds. Dr. Joseph Suflita focused on a group of gasoline additives while Dr. Ronald Unterman discussed the treatment of TCE contaminated water. The latter used a genetic approach to separate the desired catalytic activity from metabolic regulation by using selective promoters, and also described a sequential aerobic/anaerobic approach to solid phase treatment of waste.

Sensitive monitoring and detection technologies are crucial to both locating toxic wastes and monitoring the condition of microbial systems. Biosensors and recently been developed which detect picogram quantities of chemicals and toxins, and work with a number of these technologies was discussed by Dr. James Valdes. Dr. Ronald Atlas described a modified PCR method to probe for genetic markers in soil as a way to monitor the presence of viable bacteria, and an enzyme amplified oligonucleotide probe technique.

This meeting was unique in its emphasis on applications and engineering, and closer cooperation between microbiologists and process engineers will be critical to the future. This need was evident by the rather spirited debates between these disparate disciplines which emphasized the lack of agreement on many issues from nomenclature to mathematical modeling. Dr. Rodolfo Quintero described a massive water remediation project in Mexico, Dr. Eugene Rosenberg described a successful remediation of an oil contaminated beach in Israel, Dr. Murray Moo-Young discussed airlift bioreactor systems in Canada, and Dr. Robert Hickey detailed plans for sediment remediation at the Savannah River site. The gulf between the biologists and engineers was most apparent in the heated discussion of Monad Kinetics which followed Dr. Leslie Grady's talk on mathematical modeling and system design.

Finally, discussions of policy issues and funding were raised in the final session. Mr. Walter Mikucki from the Army Corps of Engineers presented an overview of the Army's environmental problems and programs, and Dr. Hap Pritchard presented regulatory issues of concern to the Environmental Protection Agency. Many other papers and posters were presented and all had one thing in common other than outstanding quality — a recognition that neither the biologist nor the systems engineer can afford to live in a vacuum if bioremediation systems are ever to be successful on a large scale.

The Keystone Symposia organization will recommend that a second meeting be held in 1995 with Dr. James Valdes as Organizer/Chairman. A relatively greater emphasis will be given to issues of "concurrent engineering" approaches to science and engineering, and workshops to bring the many relevant disciplines together.

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a Keystone Symposium

ENVIRONMENTAL BIOREMEDIATION AND BIODEGRADATION

Organizers: James J. Valdes, Ananda Chakrabarty and Michael Bagdasarian

March 6-12, 1993, Lake Tahoe, California

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2.7 cm		1	P.H. Pritchard Environmental Protect Agency	
6:30 7:30 m	NCEINGHOID Contact I I I I	Lobby/Bay Room	"Measures of Bioremediation Effectiveness in the Field"	
7.20 8.20pm		Granhall	Coffee Break	
8.20 Onm		Granhall	Joseph Suflita Univ Oklahoma-Norman	
mgk-oc.o	Orientation	Mountain	"Anaerobic Biodegradation of Aromatic Chemicals of Environmental Concern"	Concern"
Sun 3/7			John Reeve Unio State Univ	
7-8am	Breakfast	Granhall 12nm Ann	Deres Co. 11.	c
8am-12pm	MOLECULAR GENETICS AND PHYSIOLOGY OF	•	Fosters: ANA FROBIC DEGRADATION: A FROBIC DEGRADATION	Bay Koom
	MICROORGANISMS (Session Sponsored by: U.S. Army Research Office)		Social Hour	Day Room
()x	Irwin Gunsalus * Univ Illinois-Urbana	6:30-7:30pm		Granhall
ijs 197	Michael Bagdasarian Michigan Biotechnology Inst	7:30-10:30p		Mountain/Lake
	"Gene Manipulation in Soil Bacteria"	•	Thomas Leisinger * Fed Technical Univ-Zurich	
٠.	Ronald Olsen Univ Michigan-Ann Arbor		"Chlorinated Methanes as Carbon Sources for Aerobic and Anaerohic Bacteria"	: Bacteria"
	"Degradation of Alkyl-Substituted Benzenes by Bacteria Functional Under	er	Burton Pogell Univ Maryland-Baltimore	
	Oxygen-Limited Conditions"		"Streptomyces as Homologous and Recombinant Vehicles for	
	Collee Break		Bioremediation of Pesticides, Nerve Agents, and Other Xenobiotics"	
	Gill Geesey Montana State Univ		Coffee Break	
	"Reporter Gene Activity as a Means of Evaluating Exopolysaccharides		Mary Lidstrom California Inst of Technology	
	Production by Bacteria in Reactor Systems"		"Oxidation of Small Hulogenated Solvents by Methanotrophs"	
۲.	Kensuke Furukawa Kyushu Univ-Japan			
	"Molecular Genetics and Ecology of PCB-Degrading Bacteria"	Tues 3/9		
	Ronald Crawford Univ Idaho-Moscow	7-8am	Breakfast	Granhall
	"Designing Biodegradability into Industrial Chemicals: Using our	8am-12pm	DETECTION AND MONITORING	Mountain/Lake
. !	Knowledge of Microbioal Biochemistry"	•	James J. Valdes * US Army	
12pm-4pm	Poster Set Up	Bay Room	"Biosensors for Monitoring Chemical Pollutants in the Environment"	
4-6pm	Posters: MOLECULAR GENETICS AND PHYSIOLOGY OF		Gary Sayler Univ Tennessee-Knoxville	
	MICROORGANISMS; LIGNIN AND CELLULOSE DEGRADATION		"Molecular Strategies in Biodegradation Process Monitoring and Optimization"	imization"
5-6pm	Social F	Bay Room	Coffee Break	
6:30-7:30pm		Granhall	Ronald Atlas Univ Louisville	
7:30-11pm	LIGNIN AND CELLULOSE DEGRADATION	Mountain/Lake	"Molecular Methods for Detecting and Monitoring Microorganisms"	
	Michael Gold * Oregon Grad Inst		Betty Olson Univ California-Irvine	
	"Degradation of Chlorinated Phenols and Chlorinated Dibenzo-P-Dioxins	1.5	"Gene Occurrence and Expression in the Environment"	
	by Phanerochaete Chrysosporium"		Anne Summers Univ Georgia-Athens	
	Steven Aust Utah State Univ		"A Biosensor for Mercuric Ion and Metallic Mercury Vapor"	
	"Biodegradation of Chemicals by White Rot Fungi"	12pm-4pm	Poster Set Up	Bay Room
٠	Cottee Break	4-6pm	Posters: DETECTION AND MONITORING; APPLICATIONS I	Вау Коот
	C. Adinarayana Keddy Michigan State Univ	2-6pm		Bay Room
	Lignin-Degrading Enzyme System of Phanerochaete Chrysosporium:	6:30-7:30pm		Granhall
	Molecular Biology and Kole in Organopollutant Degradation"	7:30-11pm	APPLICATIONS I	Mountain/Lake
Mon 3/8			Eugene Rosenberg * Tel Aviv Univ	
7-8am	Brankfort	:	Ronald Unterman Envirogen	:
Sam-12nm	ANA FRORIC DEGRADATION	Granhall	"Biological Treatment of Chlorinated Organics-Laboratory and Field Studies"	Sudies"
	Cariou Courses I In 175 American Courses American	Mountain/Lake	Daniel Abramowicz General Electric-in Y	
	James Tiedie * Michigan Cont. III.		"PCB Biodegradation in the Laboratory and in the Environment"	
	"Augustic Market State Only " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " " "		Coffee Break	

"Biodegradation of Aliphatic and Aromatic Compounds en Route to Uxeful Syntheses" Joseph DeFrank US Army

Coffee Break Bernard Witholt ETH

"Anaerobic Metabolism of Chlorobenzoates, Phenols, Biphenyls and PCE by Novel Anaerobes"
John Loper Univ Cincinnati
"Bacterial Isolates, Recombinant Yeasts, and Microbial Systems for

Degradation of Hazardous Compounds"

"Biochemical Demiliarization of Chemical Warfare Agents"

- SPEAKERS

DANIEL A. ABRAMOWICZ
CORP RSCHÜBEVELOFMENT CTR
GENERAL ELECTRIC COMPANY
PO BOX 8
SCHENECTADY NY
123010008
518-387-7072

RONALD M. ATLAS BIOLOGY UNIV OF LOUISVILLE 139 LIFE SCI BLDG LOUISVILLE KY 4029. 502-588-6771

STEVEN D. AUST BIOTECH CTR TAH STATE UNIV AM 105-C LOGAN UT 84324700 801-750-2730 MICHAEL BAGDASARIAN MICROBIOLOGY MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY ROOM S-110 PLANT BIOL BLDG EAST LANSING MI 488.4 517-353-8619

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WASHINGTON DC 20460 202-260-7676 CARL E. CERNIGLIA NATL. CTR TOXICOLOGICAL RSCH DEPT HLTH & HUMAN SERVICES

JEFFERSON AR 72079 501-543-7341 ANANDA M. CHAKRABARTY MICROBIOLOGY/COLL OF MED UNIV OF ILLINOIS 901 S WOLCOTT AVENUEMC 790 CHICAGO IL

312-996-4586

RITA R. COLWELL
MICROBIOL
UNIV OF MARYLAND
COLLEGE PARK MD
20742
301-405-5189

RONALD L. CRAWFORD MOLEC/AGRIC GENE ENGR UNIV OF IDAHO FOOD RESEARCH CTR RM 202 MOSCOW ID 208-885-6380 IOSEPH I. DEFRANK
R D&E CENTER
US ARMY EDGEWOOD
BIOTECH TEAM SCBRD-RTS.
ABERDEEN PROVING GRD MD
210105423

KENSUKE FURUKAWA
AGRICULTURAL CHEMISTRY
KYUSHU UNIVERSITY
FUKUOKA
812 JAPAN
992-641-1101

DAVID I. GALAS ENERGY OFFICE OF HEALTH ENVIRON RSCH ER70 WASHINGTON DC 20383

AL W. BOUROUIN

GILL GEESEY
ENGINEERING RSCH CENTER
MONTANA STATE UNIVERSITY
409 COBLEIGH HALL
BOZEMAN MT
405-994-4770

MICHAEL H. GOLD
CHEMICAL & BIOLOGICAL SCI
CHEMICAL & BIOLOGICAL SCI
OREGON GRAD INST SCI/
TECHNOL
BISGO NW YON NEUMANN DR
BEAVERTON OR
970061999

CP. LESLIE GRADY
ENVTL SYSTEMS ENGR
CLEMSON UNIVERSITY
RICH ENVIRONMENTAL RSCH
LAB
CLEMSON SC
296340919
803-656-5570

IRWIN C. GUNSALUS
BIOCHEMISTRY
UNIV OF ILLINOIS
1209 W CALIFORNIA ST/420 RAL.
URBANA IL
61801
217-333-2010
ROBERT HICKEY
MICHIGAN
BIOTECHNOLOGY INST
3900 COLLINS ROAD
LANSING MI

THOMAS LEISINGER
MICROBIOL
FEDERAL TECHNICAL UNIV
ETH-ZENTRUM
ZURICH
S092 SWITZERLAND
01-256-3324

517-336-4630

MARY E LIDSTROM
138-78 KECK LABS
CALIFORNIA INST OF
TECHNOLOGY
PASADENA CA
91125

JOHN C. LOPER
MOLECULAR GENETICS
UNIV OF CINCINNATI
3110 MEDICAL SCIENCES BLDG
CINCINNATI OH
42670234
S13-558-0086

WALTER J. MIKUCKI
ENYRNMITI. SUSTNMNT LAB
US ARMY CONSTR ENG RSCH LAB
BOX 9005
CHAMPAIGN IL
618269005

ROBERT V. MILLER MICROBIOLMOLEC GENETICS OKLAHOMA STATE UNIVERSITY 307 LIFE SCIENCE EAST STILLWATER OK 740780289

MURRAY MOO-YOUNG
CHEM BNGR
UNIV OF WATERLOO
BIOCHEM ENGR GROUP
WATERLOO ONTARIO
NZL 3GI CANADA

RONALD OLSEN MICROBIOLOGY/IMMUNOLOGY UNIV OF MICHIGAN 6643 MEDICAL SCIENCE BLDG II ANN ARBOR MI 481090620 313-763-4380 BETTY H. OLSON
ENVIRON MICROBIOL/GENET
UNIV CALIFORNIA-IRVINE
PROGRAM ON SOCIAL ECOLOGY
RVINE CA
92717

BURTON M. POGELL
CTR AGRICULTURAL BIOTECH
UNIV OF MARYLAND
9214 ISPAHAN LOOP
LAURELL MD
20708
301-504-5694

P. H. PRITCHARD
MICROBIAL ECOL/BIOTECHNOL
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RODOLFO QUINTERO-RAMIREZ CHEM ENGRINST BIOTECHNOL AVEXIDA UNIVERSIDAD SIN COLONIA CHAMILPA CUERNAVACA, MORELOS 62271 MEXICO C. ADINARAYANA REDDY MICROBIOL MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY EAST LANSING MI 48824101 517-355-6499

JOHN REEVE
MICROBIOLOGY
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
484 W 12TH AVE
COLUMBUS OH
432101292

BARRY P. ROSEN
BIOCHEMISTRY
WAYNE STATE UNIVERSITY
540 E CANFIELD
DETRIOT MI
48201
313-577-1512

EUGENE ROSENBERG
MICROBIOLOGY
TEL AVIV UNIVERSITY
RAMAT.AVIV

GARY S. SAYLER
CTR FOR ENVIRON BIOTECHN
UNIV OF TENNESSEE
10515 RESEARCH DRIVE STE 100
KNOXVILLE TN
37932
615-675-9450

SIMON D. SILVER
MICROBIOLOGY & IMMUNOLOGY
UNIV OF ILLINOIS
CHICAGO IL
GASSO

JOSEPH M. SUFLITA
BOTANY MICRO
BUNTV OF OKLAHOMA
T70 VAN VLEET OVAL
NORMAN OK
T3019

ANNE O. SUMMERS
MICROBIOLOGY
UNIV OF GEORGIA
261 BIOLOGICAL SCI BLDG
ATHENS GA
404-542-2669

JAMES M. TIEDJE CROP & SOIL SCI MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY SCIENCE EAST LANSING MI 48824 517-353-9021

RONALD UNTERMAN
RSCH & DEVEL
ENVIROGEN INC
4100 QUAKERBRIDGE ROAD
LAWRENCEVILLE NJ
609-936-9300

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JAMES J. VALDES
ERDEC/ATTN SCBRD-RT
U S ARMY
APG MD
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517-353-8619

BERNARD WITHOLT
BIOTECHNOLOGY
ETH OTHECH CENTER
HONGGERBERG, HPT
ZURICH
CH-8093 SWITZERLAND

PARTICIPATITS

ROGER A. ACEY
CHEMISTRY/BIOCHEMISTRY
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY
1250 BELLFLOWER
LONG BEACH CA
90840

BRUCE N. ANDERSON TECHNOLOGY GROUP ICI AUSTRALIA INICHOLSON STREET MELBOURNE VICTORIA 3000 AUSTRALIA 613-665-7727

312-996-7470

GEORGE P. ANDERSON CTR BIOMOLIC: SCI & ENGIN NAVAL RESEARCH LABORATORY 4555 OVERLOOK AVE SW WASHINGTON DC

PEGGY J. ARPS INST OF ARCTIC BIOLOGY UNIV OF ALASKA 308 RVING BLDG FAIRBANKS AK

907-474-6136

997750180

202-767-2531

HELMUT BACHMAYER
CORPORATE BIOSARETY
SANDOZ RESEARCH INSTITUTE
BRUNNERSTRASSE 59
VENNA
A-1235 AUSTRIA

MIRA BAGDASARIAN MICROBIOLOGY MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY S-110 PLANT BIOLOGY EAST LANSING MI

DAVID P. BALLOU BIOLOGICAL CHEMISTRY UNIV OF MICHIGAN 5420 MED SCI 1/BOX 6606 ANN ARBOR MI 481090606

313-764-9582

410-671-1396

MATTHEW S. BLOUGH
BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTER
CARNEGIE-MELLON UNIVERSITY
4400 FIFTH AVENUE
TITSBURGH PA
15213

19600 NW VON NEUMANN DR CHEM & BIOL SCIENCES **OREGON GRAD INST** -V. RENGANATHAN BEAVERTON OR OF SCI & TECH 503-690-1134 970061999

BIOTECHNOLOGY RESEARCH 10500 ELLIS AVENUE FOUNTAIN VALLEY CA HARRY F. RIDGWAY ORANGE COUNTY WATER DISTRICT 714-378-3266 927288300

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EXPERIMENTAL STATION SIMA SARIASLANI WILMINGTON DE EI DU PONT 198800228 G&BD

SWEDISH UNIVERSITY

BOX 7025

UPPSALA S-750 07 SWEDEN

YUICHI SUWA

302-695-7425

JOHN STENSTROM

703-222-0280

MICROBIOLOGY

ENVIRON ENGINEERING SCI CALIFORNIA INST OF JEREMY D. SEMRAU 3K LABS 138-78 PASADENA CA THNOLOGY

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY CIR FOR MICROBIAL ENCOL

EAST LANSING MI

517-336-3771

MANISH M. SHAH 818-356-2994

BIOTECHNOLOGY CENTER UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY BIOTECH 105 801-750-2730 LOGAN UT

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ENVIRON ENGINEERING SCI CALIFORNIA INST OF EDYE C. UDELL TECHNOLOGY

PASADENA CA 818-356-2994

UNIV OF MISSOURI BIOCHEMISTRY IUDY D. WALL

117 SCHWEITZER HALL COLUMBIA MO 314-882-8726

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