

Right after Fermi ordered the reaction stopped, the Hungarian-born theoretical physicist Eugene Wigner presented him with a bottle of Chianti wine. All through the experiment Wigner had kept this wine hidden behind his back.

Fermi uncorked the wine bottle and sent out for paper cups so all could drink. He poured a little wine in all the cups, and silently, solemnly, without toasts, the scientists raised the cups to their lips—the Canadian Zinn, the Hungarians Szilard and Wigner, the Italian Fermi, the Americans Compton, Anderson, Hilberry, and a score of others. They drank to success—and to the hope they were the first to succeed.

A small crew was left to straighten up, lock controls, and check all apparatus. As the group filed from the West Stands, one of the guards asked Zinn:

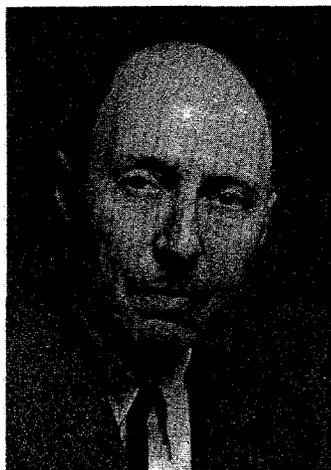
“What’s going on, Doctor, something happen in there?”

The guard did not hear the message which Arthur Compton was giving James B. Conant at Harvard, by long-distance telephone. Their code was not prearranged.

“The Italian navigator has landed in the New World,” said Compton.

“How were the natives?” asked Conant.

“Very friendly.”



*Eugene P. Wigner*

*The Chianti bottle purchased by Eugene Wigner to help celebrate the first self-sustaining, controlled chain reaction. Many of the participants, including Enrico Fermi, autographed the basket.*

