



## *Press Release*

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### **2004 Draper Prize Presented to Inventors of First Practical Networked Computer--Alto**

CAMBRIDGE--The Charles Stark Draper Prize will be presented by the National Academy of Engineering (NAE) to the inventors of the networked personal computer on Tues., February 24. The engineering profession's highest honor will be awarded at a dinner in Washington, D.C., to the team who led development of the Alto computer at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center (PARC).

Alan C. Kay, Butler W. Lampson, Robert W. Taylor, and Charles P. Thacker will share the distinguished Draper Prize – a \$500,000 annual award that honors engineers whose accomplishments have significantly benefited society – “for the vision, conception, and development of the principles for, and their effective integration in, the world’s first practical networked personal computers.”

#### **The inventors of the first practical networked computer**

National Academy of Engineering president Wm. A. Wulf stated that “These four prize recipients were the indispensable core of an amazing group of engineering minds that re-defined the nature and purpose of computing” through their work on the Alto computer. From their achievements stem the versatile, ubiquitous personal computers of today used in offices, schools, and homes around the world. Alto operated for the first time in April 1973.

Robert W. Taylor ran PARC’s Computer Science Laboratory during those critical days and says his team came to work with a shared dream; that “the value of closely connecting people and their interests could dwarf the value of computing only for arithmetic.”

Alan C. Kay is now Senior Fellow at Hewlett Packard Labs and President of Viewpoints Research Institute, Inc. At PARC he led one of several groups that together developed modern workstations (and forerunners of the Macintosh), Smalltalk, the overlapping window interface, Desktop Publishing, the Ethernet, Laser printing, and network “client-servers.”

Butler W. Lampson is a Distinguished Engineer at Microsoft Corporation and an Adjunct Professor of Computer Science and Electrical Engineering at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He was of the designers of the SDS 940 time-sharing system, the Alto personal distribution computing system, the Xerox 9700 laser printer, the two-phase commit protocols, the Autonet LAN, and much more. He says that, even while working at PARC, he could see the future of the personal computer. “We wanted to make the computer an indispensable part of everything that people do with information,” said Lampson.

Charles P. Thacker joined Microsoft Corporation in 1997 as director of advanced systems. Among his numerous distinctions, Thacker served as project leader of the MAXC timesharing system, and as the chief designer on the Alto computer. He is also the co-inventor of the Ethernet local area network. Asked to look toward the future, Thacker says he sees computers getting smaller and smaller – “more or less as they have in cars. My wife of 40 years, who doesn’t use computers at all, says ‘the best computer is an invisible computer.’ I suspect she’s right.”



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### **The Charles Stark Draper Prize**

The Draper Prize was established in 1988 at the request of The Charles Stark Draper Laboratory, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., to honor the memory of "Doc" Draper, the "father of inertial navigation," and to increase public understanding of the contributions of engineering and technology. The prize is awarded annually.

The National Academy of Engineering is an independent, nonprofit institution. Its members consist of the nation's premier engineers, who are elected by their peers for their seminal contributions to engineering. As such, the academy provides leadership and guidance to government on the application of engineering resources to social, economic, and security problems. Established in 1964, NAE operates under the congressional charter granted to the National Academy of Sciences in 1863.

The presentation ceremony also will feature the Bernard M. Gordon Prize, a \$500,000 award recognizing innovation in engineering and technology education. Frank S. Barnes will receive the Gordon Prize from the NAE "for pioneering an Interdisciplinary Telecommunications Program (ITP) that produces leaders who bridge engineering, social science, and public policy."

For additional information about the Draper Prize, contact Draper Laboratory or Leila Rao, NAE awards administrator, at (202) 334-1237 or [lrao@nae.edu](mailto:lrao@nae.edu), or Randy Atkins, NAE media relations officer at (202) 334-1508 or [atkins@nae.edu](mailto:atkins@nae.edu). Visit the NAE Website at <http://www.nae.edu>. Their news release is available on the web at <http://www4.nationalacademies.org/news.nsf/isbn/02242004?OpenDocument>.

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