

Nobel Physics laureates undeserving, colleagues say: report

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Former colleagues of two American scientists who won the 2009 Nobel physics prize say the winners, Willard Boyle and George Smith, did not deserve the award, Canada's Globe and Mail reported Tuesday.

The Nobel committee awarded the two men the prize in October, citing their invention of an image sensor called a charge-coupled device (CCD) that revolutionized photography and cleared the way for digital cameras.

But two scientists who worked with Boyle and Smith at Bell Laboratories in New Jersey say they played no role in developing the technology the Nobel committee cited in awarding the prize.

"They wouldn't know an imaging device if it stared them in the face," said Eugene Gordon, 79, according to the Globe and Mail.

Gordon alleged that the patent cited by the Nobel committee does not have anything to do with digital imaging tools.

"I think they made a mistake," he said of the committee. "That citation was totally wrong," he told the newspaper.

Gordon said the prize should have been awarded to Mike Tompsett, the former head of a research group working on CCD, who built the first two examples of the device.

"He invented how to do it," Gordon said.

Tompsett told the newspaper that Boyle and Smith deserve recognition for their original idea, but said the pair were taking their concept in the wrong direction.

"They were looking at memory," he said. "They did not anticipate imaging."

"If you take it all literally, the prize should have been given to me," he said. "I think if their name is on it, mine should be, too."

Speaking to another Canadian newspaper, the Halifax Chronicle Herald, Smith rejected his former colleagues' criticism.

"I have documentation that disproves most of what they are saying and the rest of what they are saying is not at all logical," he said.

Smith told the Herald that Tompsett can take credit for good engineering but not for inventing the concept.

But Tompsett said the Swedish committee responsible for awarding the prestigious prize made a "real error" and "did extremely poor research."

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