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Nobel Peace Prize Winner: Pierre-Gilles de Gennes

Pierre-Gilles de Gennes was born in 1932 in Paris, France. From 1955 to 1959, he was a research engineer at the Atomic Energy Center (Saclay), working on neutron scattering and magnetism. During 1959 he was a postdoctoral visitor with C. Kittel at Berkeley, and then served for 27 months in the French Navy. In 1971, he became Professor at the Collège de France, and was a participant of STRASACOL on polymer physics. In 1974, Pierre explained his theories in a textbook called "The Physics of Liquid Crystals," which has become an extremely influential text for scientists

He received the Nobel Peace prize "for discovering that methods developed for studying order phenomena in simple systems can be generalized to more complex forms of matter, in particular to liquid crystals and polymers" in 1991. Pierre-Gilles de Gennes has also received among his many other prizes, the Holweck Prize from the joint French and British

Physical Society; the Ampere Prize, French Academy of Science; the gold medal from the French CNRS; the Matteucci Medal, Italian Academy; the Harvey Prize, Israel; the Wolf Prize, Israel; The Lorentz Medal, Dutch Academy of Arts and Sciences; and polymer awards from both APS and ACS.

Dr. de Gennes did not invent or build liquid crystal displays, or L.C.D.'s, but instead answered important questions of how they behave. He showed how the equations of superconductors could be applied to liquid crystals, even though they have different physical compositions. Dr. de Gennes later became a professor of physics at Collège de France and director of École Supérieure de Physique ET de Chimie Industrielles. After winning the Nobel Prize, Dr. de Gennes visited about 200 high schools to give talks to students about science and innovation. He also appeared regularly on talk shows.

Pierre-Gilles de Gennes, who received the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1991, hailed the "Isaac Newton of our time," died in Orsay, France. He was 74. His survivors include his wife, Anne-Marie, and seven children.