

Text of Kevin Knobloch's 40th Anniversary Dinner Speech

I need to begin tonight with a confession. In 1969, at age 12, I did not have a subscription to the *New York Times* and *Science Magazine*. What that means, of course, is that I missed news of UCS's founding at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. I feel my age can be no excuse. In retrospect I should have led a teach-in with my fellow seventh graders at Masconomet Regional Junior High School.

What I do remember about 1969 is Neil Armstrong's Apollo 11 mission to the moon. My family lived 20 miles north of here, in the small rural town of Middleton, Massachusetts, and I recall watching our small black and white Zenith television with my parents and my six brothers and sisters, entranced as Apollo 11 beamed images back to earth. I can remember the pride I felt, probably for the first time in my young life, of being part of something much bigger than myself.

And that is how I feel on this day as we mark the 40th anniversary of the founding of the Union of Concerned Scientists.

It is a true privilege to help lead an organization that brings together scientists and citizens from all walks of life, to tackle and solve some of the greatest challenges civilization has ever faced.

In 1969, our country was in turmoil. At universities, a great deal of basic science was funded through the Defense Department. Some scientists were concerned that science was being used to destructive ends rather than to create solutions. They understood, as Winston Churchill so eloquently observed, that "the Stone Age may return on the gleaming wings of science."

At the time, Kurt Gottfried was a visiting professor at MIT. With him were two Cornell PhD students – Joel Feigenbaum and Alan Chodos. The day before Thanksgiving break in 1968, they brought Kurt a petition to organize a one-day strike at MIT. Kurt recognized the students' statement was very important and spent Thanksgiving weekend redrafting the document. (If you know Kurt, you know that's exactly what he would have done!) Kurt shifted the focus from MIT to where the country needed to go, especially highlighting concerns about the rapidly expanding nuclear arms race with the Soviet Union.

Kurt and his colleagues in the physics department—Herman Feshbach and Frances Low—enlisted a group of 50 senior faculty at MIT to sign their statement, calling for scientific research to move away from military technology and towards solving pressing environmental and social problems. Together with the student group—the Science Action Coordinating Committee—they organized scientists and students from universities across the country into a day of action on March 4 that attracted national attention.

Without the principals fully appreciating it, our organization was born. I should pause at this point to dispel any rumors – there was no secret vote on UCS's name.

Our first reports were 25 cents each, written by a core group of scientists, including future Nobel laureate David Baltimore. One was on missile defense, another on multiple warhead missiles, and a third on chemical and biological warfare.

After this initial push, the scientists went back to their day jobs. UCS might have faded away if not for another future Nobel laureate, Henry Kendall. It was Henry, with his vision, self confidence and ability to inspire the scientists and advocates who would become our core, who turned UCS into a nationally significant organization.

Henry's first hire was Dan Ford. Dan was a bold and creative recent graduate of Harvard. Together they transformed UCS from what Kurt has described as a hobby club into a serious force in the world of public policy and the corridors of power. Dan, would you please stand and be recognized?

Early in UCS's second decade, Henry and Kurt brought Bud Ris onto staff, and it was no surprise that before long Bud was promoted to executive director. In his 22 years at UCS, Bud built a talented team, broadened our issue scope and further professionalized our operations. Bud, would you please stand?

When Henry tragically died in 1999, Kurt without hesitation stepped up to accept the gavel and lead our organization through one of our more critical decades yet.

The organization that I inherited as President in 2004 was robust and accomplished in every respect.

What our early leadership did – and what UCS has worked very hard to do ever since – is follow in the example set by the scientific community. *We seek the truth. We* conduct research and analysis, ensure our methodologies are transparent, freely share information, and let our findings guide our conclusions.

This approach has allowed us to be a game-changing influence in every decade of our existence.

We were the group whose report on President Nixon's anti-missile system helped build public support for the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty.

We were the group that called for the shutdown of the Three Mile Island reactors, because of safety flaws we identified, two months before that infamous accident in the 1970s.

We were the group in the 1980s that demonstrated why President Reagan's Star Wars dream was technologically unworkable and politically reckless, while ending the B-2 Stealth Bomber program when its expensive mission ended with the Cold War.

We were the group in the 80s and 90s whose pioneering research on the benefits of wind and solar power and the potential of advanced vehicle technologies showed an alternative path forward away from fossil fuels.

We were the group that organized the majority of the world's Nobel laureates in a historic call to protect the environment.

We were the group in this past decade that published a landmark study on the overuse of antibiotics in animal agriculture, and in recent years we were the group to shine the national spotlight on the Bush administration's political interference with science, organizing more than 15,000 scientists to speak out on the issue and stop some of the worst abuses.

We've served as the de facto research arm of the environmental and security communities, but our know-how extends beyond research. We have helped frame the debate on a broad range of science issues, and our scientists and policy experts are "go to" sources for the media, with regular appearances in the *New York Times* and on NPR and 60 Minutes. Members of Congress, governors and presidents from both sides of the aisle, have come to rely on us, while our precedent-setting public education efforts have mobilized millions to act. We've achieved more victories than a group our size might otherwise expect—or as I like to say—we fight above our weight.

And now we are deploying all of these resources to stabilize our climate for future generations. Global warming was an issue that Henry Kendall had brought to the attention of the UCS Board at the end of the 1980s. Since then we've played a leading role at every

international climate treaty negotiation, while our headline grabbing reports on the regional impacts of global warming have made clear that we need to act swiftly to deeply reduce greenhouse gas emissions from every source.

Now is such an extraordinary time of possibilities, and exciting time to be doing this work — and it is gratifying to observe that the major policies we have crafted are at the heart of the national government's agenda.

And while science has always been our calling card, it is the intellectual power and dedication of all those who have served at UCS that has truly made this organization great.

From Henry and Kurt, and the other founders with us today, to our world-class Board of Directors and our new Chair, Jim McCarthy, to the hundreds of scientists at research institutions across our country who have co-authored our analyses and signed on to our campaigns, and to our current and former staff. I would need all weekend just to appropriately acknowledge the contributions of each of you to our success.

I also want to say a special thank you to our donors. Your generosity allows us to recruit and deploy an exceptional staff that I would happily compare to any organization in the country. Your support gives us the project resources that help us shape the nation's direction in profound ways, and I am profoundly grateful.

During the past 40 years we have grown from a loose coalition of students and faculty at MIT to a national organization with more than 120 staff in four offices, a National Advisory Board of more than 100 highly accomplished people, 80,000 members, and 200,000 activists. Now as then, we continue to seek practical solutions to some of the world's most daunting problems.

I feel confident that if Henry were here with us today, he would be pleased with how the people in this room have continued to build a movement for positive change – and perhaps in equal measure, knowing Henry’s spirit, he would be energized for the significant work we have ahead. The next 40 years look to be at least as critical as the first 40 for our work, and we need you every bit as much for the work ahead. We are a better and stronger organization because of your involvement, and we are deeply grateful to you.

Thank you.