

# Scientists Find, Boston Really, Really, Extremely Cold in January



By Keith Christmas

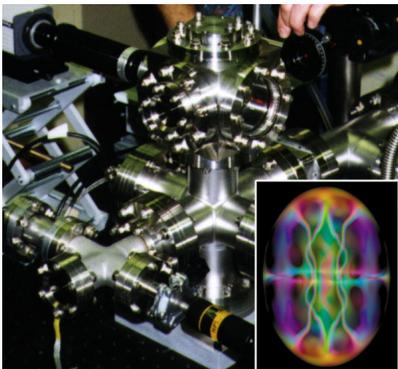
In light of a recent study, scientists at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and Harvard University, both announced independently this week that, despite many doubts, Boston is indeed really, really, amazingly, ridiculously cold in January.

Harvard spokesman Harvey King helped to put things in perspective, "I mean, Harvard and M.I.T. don't agree on a lot of things, so the fact that both groups came to this, admittedly controversial, conclusion independently really gives us more confidence in the results. It was surprising to me personally because first, I never realized how god damned cold it was, and secondly, because M.I.T. is usually always wrong. Seriously. The general state of depression there tends to lead to a lot of careless research mistakes."

M.I.T. spokeswoman Eva Katerinova gladly produced a counterpoint, "Mr. King is a dipshit. He's still pissed off because he never got into M.I.T. as an undergrad and is now at Harvard only as a lame ass public relations spokesman. Its not like *I* hate my job, but...well, I guess I never did get that assistant professorship in the Chemistry department. And yeah, I suppose I am a little depressed. Yeah, I'm actually really depressed." Ms. Katerinova, then proceeded to emit an isotropic deluge of tears for several minutes.

I first offered to let her cry on my shoulder as a gesture of moral support, but then recanted my offer as I realized that her tears were freezing into sharp projectiles immediately after leaving her tear ducts, even though we were indoors. The prospect of getting impaled in the eye with dozens of high velocity ice shards was enough to get me to back off a little bit and shield myself with the nearest Math textbook, of which I was able to choose from several conveniently laying on her nearby desk. Luckily, with the many choices and the option of at least one with high quality M.I.Teflon™ paper, the ultra-relativistic frost daggers were only able to penetrate to chapter 11 of Stewart's "Early Transcendentals", on Three Dimensional Analytic Geometry and Vectors. And who says calculus isn't useful for anything?

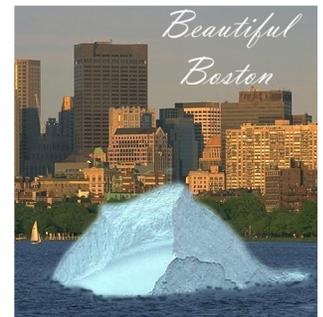
But getting back to the point, I decided to see what the scientists themselves had to say about the new "coldness" finding, having noticed how non-illuminating and actually rather dangerous it was to speak with the public relations staff. I myself was still a bit skeptical, as I stood shivering outside the Physics building and noticed that my eyebrows were cracking off.



**Bose-Einstein condensate, yesterday's state of the art in coldness, now 2nd best**

Harvard Physics professor Lene Hau kindly offered to give me a statement, as long as I signed a waiver agreeing to not steal any of her ideas under pain of Japanese water torture. After signing with a false name, and getting a good look at her new, state of the art, laser cooling apparatus, and starting to draw up some rough schematics on a notepad in my pocket, she interrupted and said, "Up until now, we had been sure that the coldest point in the universe was this Bose-Einstein condensate right here on *my* desk. And mind you, I created it with my god damned bare hands!" I was at first taken aback by the abrupt, Terret's syndrome like outburst, but then I realized it was more of a factor that my spinal cord fluid had frozen from the bone-chilling temperatures in the lab and on the walk over. Naturally, Hau was unfazed as I collapsed to the floor and went into mild seizure due to temporary lack of motor control.

Hau continued, "Bose-Einstein condensate is an exotic state of matter that occurs when the temperatures get ludicrously cold. My condensate had a temperature of only a few nanokelvins, ( $10^{-9}$  K) easily making it the coldest known point in the observable universe...that is, until now. But I'm confident that my Bose-Einstein condensate will still hold the record vs. Boston from February-July."



## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

"Is she saying that Boston is in the nanokelvins?", asked M.I.T. Chemistry Professor Slavko Ivanovicjck. "That's preposterous! Everybody knows now that it's in the femtokelvins. She's off by like 9 orders of magnitude! What does she think this place is, Bermuda? These Harvard people are all goddamned morons!" I proceed to raise the point that if the whole femtokelvin, or even the nanokelvin thing was true, for that matter, wouldn't all life on earth be dead already? "When did you last take Physics?", asked Dr. Ivanovicjck. "I don't know, maybe 3 years ago", I said. "Then shut the hell up! It's January and its four femtokelvins outside."

Professor Hau declined to comment, but simply handed me a thermometer and a lit medieval torch, and told me to go measure the temperature myself. For some reason the thermometer reading never seemed to change from its value of 6 nanokelvins, even as I held it in the flame of my new torch. Curious, I thought. I guess she must be right.

Nonetheless, when I went outside to double check Dr. Hau's claims, right near the Harvard Law School library, I happened to pass by a couple of wooly mammoths, who were both shivering. "I'm moving to California," said one wooly mammoth. "I hear that." said the other wooly mammoth.

Not much further down the road, I ran into a mastodon calmly strolling down the path. "Hey where'd you get the North Face jacket," I asked the mastodon. With a thick British accent, curtly, he replied, "At the North Face outlet, you retard! Didn't you know Boston gets really fucking cold now? I mean the freezing point of water is 273 Kelvin, for Christ's sake!"



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Speaking of noses, well known M.I.T. linguist and amateur expert on climate Noam Chomsky noted that, "When you breathe in through your nose and you feel that little twinge as icicles begin to form on your nose hairs, that should be a clue that it's extremely fucking cold. I mean I've known this for years, but nobody ever listens to me because to listen would be to undermine the legitimacy and interests of the powers that be. It would be purely dysfunctional to the system. But now people will have to listen. They can't ignore this result." Chomsky's coffee cup then proceeded to spontaneously shatter on his desk. "SEE! Anyway, I've got to remember to close that window", he said, as the water vapor from his breath proceeded to freeze and form an accurate sculpture of Michael Keaton from the first Batman, before Chomsky demolished it with his handy pocket flamethrower. "I hate it when that happens," said Chomsky as he handed me the flamethrower. "Here, you take this. You wanna talk politics?"

After leaving Chomsky's office I discovered that in a recent related study, the vacuum of empty space was also found to be reasonably cold. "On average it's about 3 Kelvins, just 3 degrees above absolute zero", says new Harvard-Smithsonian Center For Astrophysics Professor Mattias Zaldarriaga. "It's the weak ass temperature left over from the Big Bang, which we call the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation." When asked about what was colder, Boston or the vacuum of space, Zaldarriaga announced, "In light of the new results, I'd have to say Boston. I mean just a few weeks ago, I would have been likely to say that empty space is clearly much much colder, but it just goes to show you how fast science progresses. I mean it's almost obvious in hindsight. It's the Cosmic Microwave Background Radiation, for God's sake and everybody knows that microwaves are very hot. I mean just five minutes ago I use one to heat up my Hot Cheese Pocket™, and it came out steaming, I tell you." Unfortunately, Professor Zaldarriaga accidentally entered into abrupt, natural cryogenic suspension as he quickly stepped outside for a cigarette, forgetting to bring his surplus NASA spacesuit for the last and only time.



**California Bound?**

A passerby noted, "Don't you mean 273.15 Kelvin?" The embarrassed mastodon said, "Yeah, I guess." "Mastodons today", remarked the amateur layman passerby in mock disgust as she casually jotted down a novel form of Einstein's field equations on a napkin, then chiseled the more important results on a block of ice.

The musings of prehistoric ice age mammals and genius ice chisellers notwithstanding, the consensus was that the new "Boston Is Cold" result came as a surprise to the entire scientific community, who after all, aside from a few, are all too high strung and pretentious to have noticed that it was sitting right under their noses, all this time.



**Moral: To Avoid Sudden Cryogenic Freezing, Don't Smoke Cigarettes**

## SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Luckily I had brought my spacesuit, Professor Hau's medieval torch, and Chomsky's flamethrower, so I was good to go. At the very least, I figured it would give me roughly a 50-50 chance of getting to my next interview without coming into thermodynamic equilibrium with my surroundings. As it happened, I did make it to my destination while only losing my left leg, which froze to the pavement, and remained fixed there as I continued hopping towards the nearest phone booth, finally beginning to understand this surprising scientific result.



**Guess Who's Running For Governor in California? "If you don't like it, I'll shove my fist through your stomach and rip out your goddamned spine!" says Arnold.**

Once snugly propped up in the phone booth, in an attempt to get a non east coast perspective, I decided to call up Arnold Schwarzenegger, the new president of Pepperdine university in southern California.

When asked what he thought about the new finding that Boston is incredibly, preposterously frigid, Schwarzenegger answered, *"My name is Freeze, learn it well. For it is the chilling sound of your doom! Ha Ha, Ha Ha Ha! I'll shatter you pretentious east coast bastards into thirty three schwarzillion pieces just like I did to the T-1000 with that conveniently placed liquid nitrogen truck."*

Schwarzenegger then followed up on his threat, adding insult to injury, by aiming and firing his Hyper-Liquid-Helium-Superfluid-Freeze-Gun at the entire Boston metropolitan area. As it happened, the ice lord's plans backfired as Boston area residents began uniformly claiming that it had finally, "warmed up a bit around here."