ODE TO THE LASER

The laser turns fifty this week, An important event in history! But who developed this amazing technique? That's still kind of a mystery...



Was it Ted Maiman who built the first laser? Or was it Townes and Schawlow who wrote the seminal paper?



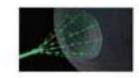
Was it Basov and Prokhorov who toiled in academic obscurity? or was it Gordon Gould who won the patents (eventually)?



Perhaps we should credit Einstein who had the key precognition "A splendid light has dawned on me" he wrote when he discovered stimulated emission.



Beautiful beams of light coherent in frequency and phase. The public expected your biggest impact to be Star Wars-like Death Rays.



Instead you're in our everyday lives
from bar codes to pointers to DVD drives
They say in Science is your biggest contribution shining a light on stars and molecular distributions.



But as all things cyber connect through optical fibers Let us not forget: Without the laser, there'd be no Internet!





