we hear that

stitute of Technology. Other new appointments include **Don Taylor**, from the Steward Observatory at the University of Arizona, as associate professor and **Roger Kirby**, from the University of Illinois, as assistant professor. Promoted to associate professor was **Robert J. Hardy**.

Sandia Laboratories has promoted **Jim Powell** to supervisor of the laser plasma-physics division.

L. G. Polgar has returned from a year's postdoctoral appointment in the low-temperature group at the Eindhoven University of Technology to join The Research Corporation of New England as a research scientist in the environmental-sciences division.

At the University of South Florida **Stanley R. Deans** has been promoted to associate professor, and **Robert Gilmore**, formerly of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, has been appointed assistant professor.

Lars Onsager, the winner of the 1968 Nobel Prize in Chemistry, will leave Yale University in September to join the University of Miami Center for Theoretical Studies as Distinguished University Professor.

obituaries

Maria Goeppert Mayer

Maria Goeppert Mayer, 1963 Nobel Prize laureate, died on 20 February. Although her health had been impaired for some time, the news of her death was a shock to her many colleagues and friends, close and more distant. Her modesty, unpretentiousness, charming personality and the sincerity of her interest in her subjects of study endeared her to all.

Mayer was descended from a long line of German scholars; her father was professor of pediatrics at the University of Göttingen. She also spent her student years at the University of Göttingen, with the exception of one year's study in Cambridge, UK. As a student she was popular with teachers and students alike. She also met Joseph Mayer in Göttingen and married him in 1930, the same year she took her PhD degree with Max Born. In 1930, the couple moved to Johns Hopkins University; because of the nepotism regulations of that university, and since her husband was a member of the chemistry department, she was a "volunteer" in the physics department there. The couple moved to Columbia University in 1939 (where similar nepotism rules were in effect). While at Columbia she also taught at Sarah Lawrence College, and during the war she worked on the nuclear-energy project. After the war the Mayers moved to the University of Chicago, and she made a deep imprint on the physics department of that institution as well as on the Argonne National Laboratory where she held the title of senior physicist. It was during this period that she created the shell model for nuclei (independently but almost simultaneously with J. Hans D. Jensen of Heidelberg). In 1960 the couple moved from Chicago to the University of California at San Diego. She was professor in the physics department; her husband, professor of chemistry.

Mayer's scientific work extended over several areas, all of which she contributed to not only by means of original ideas but also by the lucidity of her exposition and the clarity of the articles (and books) she authored or coauthored. Her first paper, on the probability of the emission of two light quanta in a single atomic transition, is a masterpiece of clarity and concreteness. From the quantum theory of

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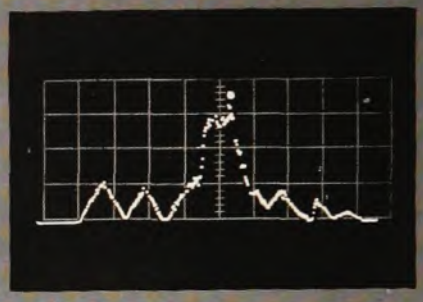

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electromagnetic transitions, her attention soon turned to physical chemistry, and she wrote several important papers partly on molecular and partly on solid-state physics. Many if not most of these articles were written in collaboration, several of them with Karl F. Herzfeld and a much quoted one on the excited states of the benzene molecule in collaboration with A. L. Sklar. The fine book on statistical mechanics, written by the Mayer couple, also originated in this period.

Because of the secrecy surrounding the work on nuclear energy, very little was published during the period of her work at Columbia and the SAM laboratories. In Chicago, Mayer's interest soon turned to nuclear physics; her first article on the subject, in collaboration with Robert G. Sachs, is on a subject that remains puzzling to this day—the binding energy of H_3. Her attention soon focused, however, on heavier nuclei, and she proposed the spin-orbit coupling shell model which brought her, in 1963, the Nobel Prize. Her work, however, continued unabated after this discovery, and she wrote more than a dozen articles on nuclear physics—mostly on problems of shell theory and of beta decay. Throughout the years she was also an avid gardener, and her collection of orchids won much admiration.

Maria G. Mayer was the recipient of many honors. In addition to the Nobel Prize mentioned before, she had half a dozen honorary degrees, was a member of the National Academy of Sciences, the Academy of Heidelberg, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and was also, of course, a fellow of the American Physical Society. I had the impression, nevertheless, that she treasured most the friendship of her colleagues, associates and other physicists.

EUGENE P. WIGNER
Louisiana State University

William Lynch

William Lynch, professor emeritus of Fordham University, died on 15 February at the age of 79.

An authority on deep-focus earthquakes and the analysis of earthquake waves, Lynch was associated with Fordham from 1937 until his retirement in 1961. At Fordham he also served as assistant director of the seismological laboratory. After his retirement he taught at Mount St. Vincent College for six years. Before coming to Fordham, Lynch had taught at New York University, from which he had received his BA, MS and PhD degrees: □