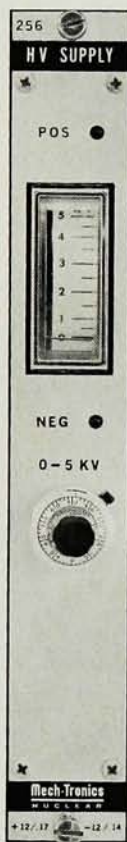
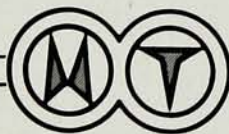


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partment of the University of Iowa as an assistant professor of physics. His research is in experimental intermediate- and high-energy physics.

**W. Arthur Porter**, director of Texas A&M's Texas Engineering Experiment Station, became the president of the Houston Area Research Center on 1 January 1985. He succeeds **David Gottlieb** of the University of Houston, who had been serving as interim president of the Center.

West Georgia College has made the following appointments to its physics department: **Jacobson A. Petterson**, formerly assistant professor of physics at the New Mexico Institute of Technology, has been appointed associate professor and chairman of the department;

**Roger D. Chelf**, formerly assistant professor at the University of North Alabama, has been appointed assistant professor.

**Nader C. Dutta**, formerly a research physicist with Shell Development Company in Houston, has joined ARCO Resources Technology in Plano, Texas, as research director of the geoseismic interpretation group.

The UCLA physics department has made the following appointments: **Sergio Ferrara**, formerly of the theory division at CERN, will join the department; and **John Wheatley**, of Los Alamos National Laboratory, has been named a University of California-Los Alamos Fellow, associated with the Center for Material Science and the physics division at Los Alamos.

## obituaries

### William Weber Buechner

William Weber Buechner, professor emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, died on 12 March 1985 after a long illness.

Buechner was born in Vallejo, California in 1914 and received his BSc in 1935 and his PhD in 1939, both from MIT. He worked with the later Robert J. Van de Graaff in the 1930s on the development of the first large Van de Graaff generator at the Round Hill Estate in South Dartmouth, Massachusetts. In 1937 this machine was moved to MIT, where it remained in service until 1951. It was moved in 1955 to Boston's Museum of Science, where it is now the centerpiece of lightning displays.

In the late 1930s, the goal of the Van de Graaff group was to study nuclear reactions and to construct precision equipment for this purpose. However, when World War II began, this work was set aside. The High Voltage Laboratory then, in an all-out effort, developed high-voltage x-ray generators for the US Navy. In 1942, Buechner was appointed associate director of the Laboratory, under Van de Graaff.

After the war, the Laboratory turned back to the work for which it was constructed, nuclear physics. Originally under Van de Graaff's directorship, and later under Buechner's, the Laboratory pioneered precision nuclear-energy-level measurements, using the Van de Graaff generator and the magnetic spectrometer. At the time, most nuclear-physics laboratories favored the cyclotron, which could produce higher energies than the Van de Graaff generator. The tables began to turn, however, as physicists recognized the



**BUECHNER**

need for the precision measurements only the Van de Graaff could provide. The work coming from Buechner's group contributed in a substantial way to this change in attitude.

Buechner had a large number of scientific contacts around the world and he attracted a large number of people from foreign lands to the High Voltage Laboratory. These visitors were welcomed to the Lab and very gracefully received at Buechner's home in Arlington, where he and his wife, Christina, gave many parties. A large number of the foreign visitors—and for that matter, American visitors—went back to their home institutions and started new groups to study nuclear energy levels. Many of them also made repeat visits to the group at MIT.

Buechner was a true cosmopolitan, and so is Christina Buechner. They have traveled extensively: They spent three months in India, where Buechner

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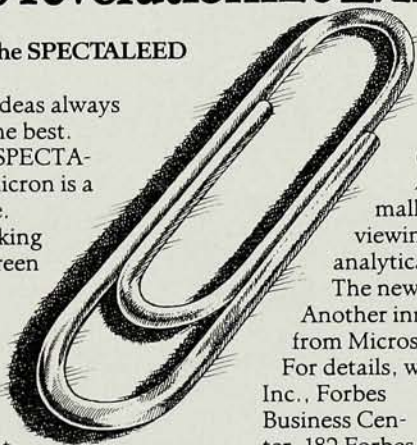
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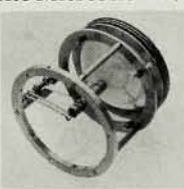
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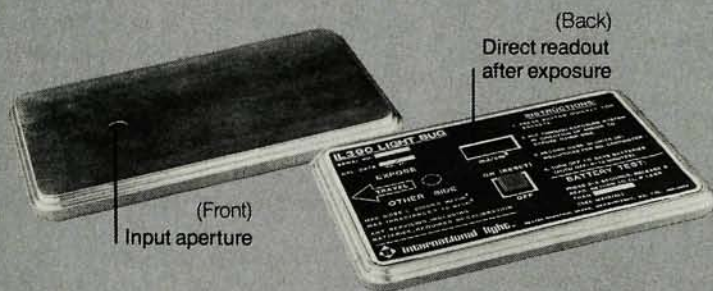
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followed a grueling schedule, giving  
talks in a new place almost every day.  
For work in Mexico, Buechner was  
given the title Professor Extraordin-  
ario for Life at the University of Mexico  
and, later, an honorary PhD from the  
same institution. In academic proces-  
sions at MIT he proudly wore his  
Mexican attire.

When the High Voltage Engineering  
Corporation was formed, originally for  
the purpose of developing tools for  
radiation therapy, Buechner was in-  
volved from the beginning as an ad-  
viser. As it turned out, other tools for  
radiation therapy became popular, but  
the further development of the Van de  
Graaff generator at High Voltage had  
an enormous impact on nuclear phys-  
ics. Buechner was a director of High  
Voltage from 1954 until his death.

When I think of Buechner the group  
leader, one characteristic stands out:  
enthusiasm. Many times I have  
walked into his office to discuss some  
idea, sound or not, and have always  
been received with enthusiasm. I think  
I speak for all who worked for him  
when I say that Buechner gave us room  
to run. When we produced a piece of  
work, it was ours; he only wanted to  
share the honor or the authorship if he  
had contributed directly.

Buechner was a superb teacher and  
will be remembered as such by a large  
number of readers of PHYSICS TODAY.  
There were no frills about his teaching.  
He was direct and concise and knew  
exactly how to present the matter to  
make it as easy as possible for the  
students to absorb it. He hated sloppi-  
ness, and his own work was a model in  
neatness.

Buechner was a member of the Com-  
mittee on Nuclear Masses of the Union  
of Pure and Applied Physics. He was  
chairman of the physics department at  
MIT from 1961 to 1967. He retired  
from MIT in 1978.

HARALD A. ENGE

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

## James Welles Shearer

James W. Shearer, senior physicist of  
the Magnetic Fusion Energy Program  
of Lawrence Livermore National Labo-  
ratory, died on 9 October 1984, in  
Livermore, California. He was 60  
years old.

Before coming to Livermore, Shearer  
was a senior physicist at Tracer Lab Inc  
in Waltham, Massachusetts, from  
1951-57, and a teaching fellow in phys-  
ics at MIT from 1945-49. He received  
his PhD in physics from MIT in 1950.

Shearer began his employment at  
Lawrence Livermore Lab in October  
1957 in the experimental-physics de-  
partment. From the start, he demon-  
strated an unusual blend of theoretical