

search Laboratory at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland. There he developed the interest in celestial mechanics that was to form the foundation of his greatest achievements. At Aberdeen Vinti also began what became a close professional relationship with John von Neumann and Maria Goeppert-Mayer. He was initially concerned with research on projectile dynamics for military purposes, but with the development of the US space program his interests evolved toward missile technology and then satellite astronomy. Vinti's work on the orbits of satellites about an oblate Earth has yet to be fully acknowledged.

In 1957 Vinti moved to the National Bureau of Standards in Washington, DC. In 1959 he produced the first in a series of papers predicting the motion of a near-Earth, drag-free satellite by means of separable Hamiltonian. By introducing a gravitational potential in oblate spheroidal coordinates, Vinti was able simultaneously to satisfy Laplace's equation and to separate the Hamilton-Jacobi equation. Since the assumed potential is very close to that of the Earth, the resulting equations of motion are of closed form and yield very accurate and rapid results. Scientists and engineers at NASA and in the Soviet space community were quick to recognize this work and adapt it to their needs.

Lecture notes that Vinti first used in a course given at the Catholic University of America in 1966, and which he refined for a similar course he later taught at MIT, became the nucleus of a textbook on celestial mechanics, now being prepared for publication. As a teacher, Vinti always put his students' concerns above all else. His teaching method was unique in that he made his students lecture to him from the blackboard. Invariably, they said that his courses were among the most valuable they had taken.

John Vinti was one of the few surviving figures from the golden age of American science that began in the latter part of the Depression. Those who knew him respected him not only as a scientist or teacher but also as a humanitarian. Vinti was truly a great man. We will miss him very much.

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## Clicerio Avilez Valdez

Clicerio Avilez Valdez, the director of the Instituto de Fisica at the Universidad de Guanajuato, Mexico, died suddenly of a massive cerebral hemorrhage on 10 May 1991. He was 45.

Avilez believed that Latin American participation in the high-technology and frontier research of elementary-particle physics was important to foster the growth of science, engineering and graduate education in Mexico and other Latin American countries. He devoted his career to the pursuit of that goal.

Avilez received his doctorate in 1973 from the Instituto de Fisica at the Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico and joined the faculty there. He spent a postdoctoral year in the theoretical group at DESY in Hamburg, Germany, in 1975. As a measure of the international regard in which he was held, he was awarded major fellowships from the US, Germany and Mexico—a rare accomplishment for a Mexican scientist.

In 1980 Avilez decided to become an experimenter in high-energy physics and spent a year at Nevis Laboratories at Columbia University. With the support of Jorge Flores, the director of the Instituto de Fisica at UNAM, he then joined with colleagues from Columbia and the University of Massachusetts in experiments at both Brookhaven and Fermilab. He was spokesperson of an experiment at Brookhaven that studied the hadronic production of strange particles. His efforts were instrumental in starting Fermilab experiment E690, which explores the hadronic production of strange, charm and bottom particles.

In 1986 Avilez went to the Universidad de Guanajuato and became the director of the Instituto de Fisica. The institute not only was involved in experiments at Brookhaven and Fermilab but joined in a detector proposal for the Superconducting Super Collider, collaborated with the Texas Accelerator Center on SSC accelerator components and developed nmr magnet and rf technology for Mexican industry.

Avilez organized several important conferences to encourage interactions between Latin American scientists

and the world scientific community. He and Leon Lederman ran the Pan-American Symposium on High-Energy Physics and Technology in Cooyoc, Mexico, in 1982. This meeting sparked the birth of many research groups throughout Latin America. His most recent effort was the first US-Latin American Symposium on Physics, Technology and Experiments at the SSC, held in Guanajuato in December 1990.

Avilez worked tirelessly to further the development of high-technology endeavors in Mexico and elsewhere. His energy, enthusiasm and leadership will be missed by his colleagues and students.

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## Eugen Strauss

Eugen Strauss died on 17 February 1991 following a six-month struggle with cancer and only a short year after he had joined the physics faculty at the University of Georgia as an associate professor. He was 45 and was just nearing the peak of his professional career.

Eugen was born in Greglingen, Germany, and received his baccalaureate at the University of Frankfurt in 1969. He was among the first group of graduate students to matriculate at the University of Regensburg. He obtained his doctorate in 1977; his thesis, done under the direction of Wolfgang Gebhardt, established the importance of Jahn-Teller processes in perovskite antiferromagnets. He served as a research associate at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, from 1977 to 1980, after which he accepted a faculty position at the University of Oldenburg. During his ten-year tenure there he established an outstanding research group in photothermal spectroscopy; the impact of his highly original contributions still awaits full assessment.

Eugen was also a very good teacher and a thoughtful and compassionate person. His untimely passing is a loss to the many in the profession who knew him as a friend, coworker and teacher. He will be remembered with admiration and affection.

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