

WE HEAR THAT

The City University of New York has named **Allen Lee Sessoms** president of Queens College, effective 1 August 1995. Sessoms, who holds a PhD in particle physics from Yale University, is currently executive vice president and vice president for academic affairs of the University of Massachusetts system.

Carl H. Poppe, a senior physicist at Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, has been named to a new position within the University of California system: associate vice provost for research and laboratory programs. His job will be to oversee activities related to the university's academic and programmatic relationship with Lawrence Livermore, Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory and Los Alamos National Laboratory.

Mark Ketchen has been named director of physical science at IBM's Thomas J. Watson Research Center, in Yorktown Heights, New York. He replaces **Theoren P. Smith III**, who has become executive assistant to an IBM senior vice president responsible for the IBM personal computer company, printing systems company and power personal systems division.

The National Science Foundation has given its Alan T. Waterman Award to **Matthew Fisher** of the Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of California, Santa Barbara. NSF commended Fisher as "an outstanding condensed matter theorist who predicted a new state of superconductive matter, the 'vortex glass' phase," which was subsequently confirmed by experiment.

Norman Ramsey, Higgins Professor of Physics Emeritus at Harvard University, has been chosen to receive the Vannevar Bush Award of the National Science Board. At the awards ceremony in May, Ramsey was praised for setting "an extraordinary standard, with a great breadth of contribution to research across many disciplines, as well as to education and public service."

Mark D. Fairchild of the Chester F. Carlson Center for Imaging Science at the Rochester Institute of Technology has been given the C. James Bartleson Award. The award is administered jointly by the department of optometry and visual science of the City University, London, and the Colour Group of Great Britain.

OBITUARIES

Paul Urban

Paul Urban died on 14 February, having nearly reached the age of 90 years. For 28 years he was the head of the Institute for Theoretical Physics at the University of Graz, Austria. After the Second World War, Urban rebuilt the institute and made it into the fine department that it is today.

Urban first studied electrical engineering and received his *Diploma Ingenieur* degree in 1928, but his real interests motivated him to study physics on the side. In 1935 he received his PhD in theoretical physics from the University of Vienna by writing a thesis on eigenvalue problems, under the supervision of Hans Thirring. When the Nazis occupied Austria in 1938, he lost his job with the Austrian railroads because of his lack of fealty to the new regime. After a short compulsory stay in the Austrian army (1939–40), he taught physics at the Universities of Vienna and Innsbruck. In 1947 he joined the faculty of the University of Graz, and the following year he became a full professor and head of the Institute for Theoretical Physics.

Urban's greatest contribution was as a teacher. Among his very successful ventures was the founding in 1961 of a winter school for theoretical physics, which has been a yearly event ever since. The lectures are published as separate volumes in the journal *Physica Austriaca*, of which

he was editor for many years. Urban became professor emeritus in 1975.

Urban was not only a physicist, teacher and researcher; he was also a warm and caring human being. For example, during the war he took dangerous train rides to Poland to help destitute Jewish physicists, and he tried after the war to keep former Nazis from regaining important positions. Urban loved music, and at parties he would entertain his guests by playing the piano. Characteristically, he willed his estate to finance the Paul Urban Stipend for qualified young scientists of his institute to study abroad. In many ways he set an example for all of us.

FRITZ ROHRlich
Syracuse University

Seymour Vosko

Professor emeritus Seymour Vosko of the department of physics of the University of Toronto died on 21 December 1994, at the age of 65.

A native of Montreal, Vosko obtained his first degree in engineering physics at McGill University in 1951, a master's degree in physics at McGill under the supervision of J. David Jackson in 1952, and a doctorate degree at the Carnegie Institute of Technology under the supervision of Gian-Carlo Wick in 1957. Vosko was a professor of physics at McMaster University from 1960 to 1964 and a research scientist at the Westinghouse Research Laboratories in Pitts-

burgh from 1964 until his arrival at the University of Toronto in 1970. During his career at Toronto, he taught at Erindale and Scarborough Colleges and on the St George Campus.

Beginning with his pioneering work in 1959 on the spatial oscillations of the electron charge density close to a positive-ion impurity in a metal, Vosko and his collaborators made a series of major contributions to the theory of metals, atoms and, most recently, ions. In the mid-1970s he developed a spin density functional formalism that he applied with great success to the quantitative determination of the effect of the electron-electron interaction on the spin susceptibility of metals, the spin-wave stiffness constant of ferromagnets and the Knight shift. Essential to this work were his fundamental improvements in the method of parametrization of the exchange-correlation energy functional, which is the central quantity of the spin density functional formalism.

In the 1980s Vosko began a program of using density functional theory to study the stability of negative ions. This work predicted the stability of the negative calcium ion, previously thought to be unstable but subsequently found by experiment to be stable.

Sy Vosko was a good friend to many of his colleagues. He was a person whose integrity, in his scholarship and in his dealings with his co-workers, and concern for the progress