

Kenneth Atkins

Kenneth R. Atkins, a professor of physics at the University of Pennsylvania for 40 years, died on 12 November 1995 at the age of 75.

Born in Wolverhampton, England, Kenneth R. Atkins was educated at the University of Cambridge's Trinity College, Cambridge, where he received his PhD in 1948 and then served as a postdoc until 1951. During World War II, he worked on vacuum tubes for radar jamming and antijamming. He came to North America by way of Canada, where he was appointed associate professor at the University of Toronto in 1951. He joined the Penn faculty in 1954.

Atkins worked for many years on what was then called low-temperature physics, measuring the properties of liquid helium. He was particularly interested in detecting second, third and fourth sound. He published the book *Liquid Helium* (Cambridge U. P.) in 1959, and a widely used text, *Physics, Once Over Lightly* (Wiley) in 1972. He served as associate editor of the *Physical Review* from 1962 to 1964.

Atkins was beloved by many Penn undergraduates as a marvelous teacher and mentor. He taught a generation of students electricity and magnetism. Many of us can still hear his voice explaining how to solve a particular problem in electricity and magnetism, and those of us now teaching E&M ourselves are greatly indebted to him. He also taught a popular nonmajor course in physics.

Late in his career, he became interested in cosmology and, acting as mentor, supervised research projects for several undergraduates who went on to be professional astronomers. He always remained interested in the careers and general well-being of these and other students in their post-Penn years.

Atkins was a British gentleman from the old school. He would discuss his fondness for wine and cheese with his students, and on occasion we would partake in his office. His warm and sunny manner earned him the nickname "Dr. Lovely," and he truly was a lovely human being. Those who knew him will miss him, but also remember him with great fondness.

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