

Portable Planetarium, which brings the night sky to an estimated 12 million children annually.

IN BRIEF

Ralph Eichler took over the directorship of the Swiss-based Paul Scherrer Institute in July, succeeding **Meinrad K. Eberle**, who retired after 10 years in that position. Eichler previously was the deputy director and head of the particles and matter division of the institute. He will remain a part-time professor of particle physics at ETH Zürich.

Next month, **Peter Main** will become the director of physics education for the UK's Institute of Physics, succeeding **Peter Cooper**, who will be leaving to join the London Mathematical Society. Main heads the school of physics and astronomy at the University of Nottingham in the UK.

Since 1992, the Alvin Van Valkenburg Award has been presented at the meetings of the Gordon Research Conference on Research at High Pressure, held biannually in Meriden, New Hampshire. The award is given

in recognition of a promising young scientist in this field. This year's award, given in June, went to **Yong-jae Lee**, a postdoctoral fellow in the physics department at Brookhaven National Laboratory, for his work on pressure-induced swelling of zeolites, using the diamond anvil cell of which Van Valkenburg was a coinventor.

Mark A. Kasevich will join the faculty of Stanford University this month as a professor of physics. He previously was a professor of physics at Yale University.

In a ceremony in Vienna next month, the general assembly of the Austrian Research Institute for Chemistry and Technology will bestow its 2002 Herman F. Mark Medal on **Koichi Hatada**, **Frank E. Karasz**, and **Franz Sommer** for their work on polymers. Hatada retired in 1998 after serving as Osaka University's vice president. Karasz is the Silvio O. Conte Distinguished Professor of Polymer Science and Engineering at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Sommer recently retired as the managing director of technology and head of R&D at Semperit Technical Products in Wimpassing, Austria.

OBITUARIES

André Blanc-Lapierre

André Blanc-Lapierre, one of the most distinguished members of the French scientific community, died from a stroke on 14 December 2001 in Châtenay-Malabry, France.

Blanc-Lapierre was born on 7 July 1915 in Lavaur, France. After graduating from the Ecole Normale Supérieure, he joined the physics laboratory of that institution in 1940 to prepare a thesis under Georges Bruhat's supervision. His doctoral dissertation, completed in 1944, was devoted to the study of the shot noise and its influence on the measurement and amplification of very small photocurrents.

In the 1940s, the origin of the shot noise and its theoretical description were not at all understood. Blanc-Lapierre was the first to realize that proceeding beyond a qualitative description of random phenomena required the tools provided by probability theory. Although the theoretical foundations of probability theory were known, the concept of stochastic processes—fundamental for describing physical phenomena—was not. Blanc-Lapierre analyzed this concept



ANDRÉ BLANC-LAPIERRE

in another thesis defended in mathematics in 1945. It is exceptional in France for anyone to have doctorates in two different fields. The work done for those two doctorates was the starting point of a series of papers devoted to stochastic processes applied to var-