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An M.I.T. graduate student, James R. Slagle, will fly to Washington this week to receive a \$500 award from President Eisenhower. Jim is one of four blind college students in the country who are being honored for their "outstanding scholastic achievement" as part of Education for the Blind Week (May 16-22). The President will present the awards at a White House ceremony Tuesday morning (May 19), on behalf of Recording for the Blind, Inc. of New York.

Jim Slagle, who expects to receive the Ph.D. degree later this year, is now in the final stages of his thesis project--"teaching" a computer to solve calculus problems. Under the direction of Professor Marvin Minsky, a specialist in the field of artificial intelligence, he is programming M.I.T.'s I.B.M. 704 computer in such a way that the "mechanical brain" can solve problems which challenge first-year college students. He is one of a group at M.I.T. who are developing a more simple, concise mathematical language for computer programming--work in which his blindness has been more of a stimulus to creativity than a hindrance. Because the field is so new, creative ability is all-important.

A graduate of St. John's University in Brooklyn, Jim came to M.I.T. in 1955 as a mathematics graduate student and staff member of Lincoln Laboratory. He received a master's degree from M.I.T. in 1957, while working on the development of Lincoln Laboratory's SAGE system for nationwide air defense. Though he must depend on readers, braille texts or recordings for study, he still plays the double role of student and Lincoln Lab staff associate.

(more)

Slagle
blind
stu.
award

Somehow he has found time for other activities--ice skating and swimming, active membership in the Technology Catholic Club, and serving as chairman of the Graduate House executive committee. However, he didn't complete his full term of office in the men's dormitory, because last November he married Frances Galassi of West Roxbury. Mrs. Slagle, who will fly to Washington with her husband for the award ceremony, is a registered nurse now working toward a bachelor's degree at Boston College.

The Slagles live in M.I.T.'s Bexley Hall, 46 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge.

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