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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The lanky frame of Professor William P. Allis riding his bicycle down Massachusetts Avenue, will still appear regularly, even though he officially retires as professor of physics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the end of this week. He will continue to teach on a part-time basis after becoming professor emeritus. During the coming academic year, he will be at M.I.T. for the fall semester and at Oxford University in the spring.

His retirement formally punctuates a 47-year association with M.I.T. which began with his enrollment as a freshman in 1920. In attending M.I.T., Professor Allis went to school for the first time in his life. He was born of American parents in Menton, France, and had completed his elementary and secondary education at home with a tutor.

But formal schooling agreed with Professor Allis and he completed requirements for the S.B. degree only three years later in 1923, and received the S.M. degree the following year. Then he returned to France, where his D.Sc. degree was awarded by the University of Nancy in 1925. Appointed a research associate at M.I.T. in 1925, Dr. Allis became an instructor in physics in 1931 following two more years of study at Princeton, Munich and Cambridge (England). He was appointed assistant professor in 1934, associate professor in 1940 and professor in 1950.

Professor Allis was one of few M.I.T. faculty members who actually got into uniform during the second World War, though most of the faculty was engaged in war research. After working in the M.I.T. Radiation Laboratory for a year and a half, Professor Allis was commissioned a major in the U.S. Army. He served in the Liaison Office of the National Defense Research Committee, which was largely responsible for maintaining the productive cooperation between military and civilian scientists engaged in the war effort. In the latter days of the war, Professor Allis worked with the New Developments Division toward establishing a peacetime research agency which resulted in the National Research Foundation.

In 1945 Professor Allis was decommissioned as a lieutenant colonel and received the Legion of Merit Award for " ... outstanding contribution to the War Department and the Nation ..."

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After the war, Professor Allis returned to M.I.T., where his research has been primarily concerned with electrical discharges in gases, or plasmas. Project Ashby, of which he was director, was designed to determine the feasibility of building a fusion engine which would use the sun's hydrogen reaction to produce power. Much basic research remains to be done, but such an engine could provide, for example, enough economical power for all six New England states. This research has been supported by the National Science Foundation and also involved Professor Allis as a consultant to the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Professor Allis again took leave of his post at M.I.T. in 1962 to bec ome assistant secretary general for scientific affairs for the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. In this capacity he served as advisor to the NATO secretary general on scientific matters, was in charge of making research grants to the fourteen NATO countries and directed the NATO advanced study institutes. He returned once more to M.I.T. in 1964.

Though a theoretical physicist primarily engaged in basic research, Professor Allis has always maintained warm -- and witty -- contact with both his own students and many of those of his colleagues. An annual Christmas party at the Allis' home in Cambridge is a high-light for students who must remain in town during the holidays. Similarly, summertime picnics are held at the Allis' vacation retreat near Mt. Monadnock in New Hampshire where Professor Allis can depart from physics and teach his students the pleasures of mountain climbing and canoeing.

A retirement party held for Professor Allis last month was highlighted by presentation of a surprise gift, publication by the M.I.T. Press of "Electrons, Ions and Waves," consisting of selected papers by Professor Allis. The book was edited by Professor Sanborn C. Brown, a former graduate student of Professor Allis who is now professor of physics and associate dean of the M.I.T. Graduate School. In the preface, Professor Brown clearly delineates the character of Professor Allis' career. "Throughout the thirty-five years of his association with the Institute as a teacher, his contribution to the intellectual growth and stimulation of hundreds of young physicists has in no way been restricted to his own group of graduate students at M.I.T., but rather in breaking trail for the solid theoretical developments in plasma physics since the 1930s, he has succeeded in leading a whole generation of physicists with such a timeless approach that this volume should be considered not as a look backward but as compilation of fundamental insights upon which to build future progress."

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