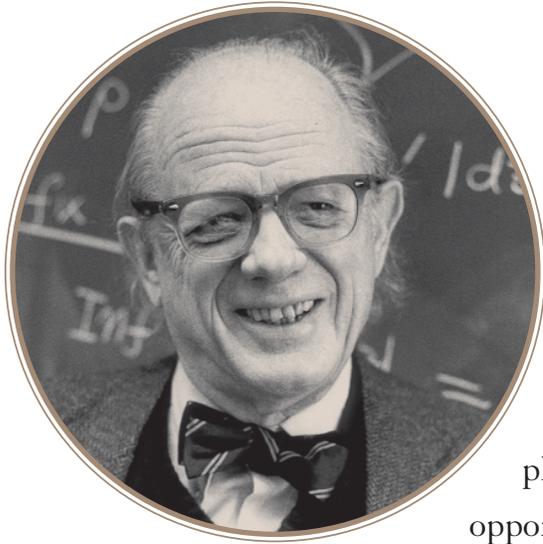


In Remembrance

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Renowned nuclear physicist Feshbach, Institute Professor Emeritus, dies at 83

Institute Professor Emeritus Herman Feshbach of Cambridge, a renowned nuclear physicist and champion of equal opportunity at MIT and around the world, died December 22 [2000] of congestive

heart failure at Youville Hospital in Cambridge. He was 83.

Professor Feshbach served on the faculty of the Department of Physics for more than 50 years and was department chairman for 10 years beginning in 1973. He also directed the Center for Theoretical Physics (which he helped create) from 1967-73. He won many awards, including the National Medal of Science in 1986.

Professor Feshbach worked to open communications between western and Soviet scientists during the height of the Cold War and championed the cause of “refuseniks” including physicist Andrei Sakharov. He first met Sakharov in the mid-1970s and wrote a piece in *Physics Today* about visiting him in Moscow after Sakharov’s return from exile in Gorky in 1987. Professor Feshbach was also active in the antinuclear movement and helped found the Union of Concerned Scientists, serving as its first chairman.

A native of New York, NY, Professor Feshbach received the BS from the City College of New York in 1937 and then came to MIT for graduate study, subsequently remaining here for his entire career. He became an instructor in physics in 1941 and received the PhD in 1942. He was appointed to the faculty as an assistant professor in 1945, later becoming an associate professor in 1947 and full professor in 1955. Professor Feshbach was named an Institute Professor, MIT’s

highest faculty honor, in 1983. He retired in 1987.

Colleagues called Professor Feshbach one of the world's greatest theoretical nuclear physicists. He led the development of nuclear reaction theory and contributed significantly to the statistical description of nuclear states and reactions, as well as contributing to the understanding of the structure of nuclei, which was important for many applications including nuclear medicine and nuclear power. He co-authored two seminal textbooks, *Methods of Theoretical Physics* (1953) with Phillip M. Morse and *Theoretical Nuclear Physics* with Amos deShalit.

Professor Feshbach was also a vigorous advocate of scientific freedom and opportunity. "He was profoundly disturbed by the military application of nuclear physics and worked to rein in the darker side of scientific research," said Professor of Physics Robert L. Jaffe. He took part in a 1969 protest of military research at MIT, and in 1992, an ad hoc committee studying the "Military Impact on Campus Research" chaired by Professor Feshbach submitted a report saying that a "policy of openness" should govern research at MIT.

Professor Feshbach strove to increase the number of women and minority faculty members at MIT. He chaired the faculty's Equal Opportunity Committee, which made recommendations in 1991 for recruiting more women faculty members.

"He was an extremely smart, very friendly man, but he also had a toughness about him. He helped many of us start our careers, and was always straightforward and very thoughtful," Professor Marc A. Kastner, head of the physics department, told the *Boston Globe*.

As head of the physics department, "Herman was as dogged in his defense of fundamental physics as he was kind in his mentoring of younger colleagues," said Professor Jaffe. "The corridors of Building 6 resonated to his laughter and his animated defense of principles of physics or politics for nearly 60 years."

The Department of Physics inaugurated the annual Herman Feshbach Lectures in 1984, honoring him for his distinguished career and service to the department. The Herman Feshbach Professorship was created in 1999 to support theoretical physicists [currently held by Frank Wilczek].

Professor Feshbach was a member of the National Academy of Sciences since 1969 and headed the physics section of the American Association for the Advancement of Science in 1987. He was president of the American Physical Society from 1980-81 and of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences from 1982-86. Professor Feshbach served on several government and professional committees and was a consultant to the Brookhaven, Los Alamos and Argonne National Laboratories, as well as the Lawrence Berkeley Laboratory. He was also the longtime editor of the journal *Annals of Physics*.

Professor Feshbach leaves his wife, Sylvia (Harris); a daughter, Carolyn of Lexington; two sons, Theodore of Hopedale and Mark of Minneapolis; a sister, Florence Nadelman of Cranford, NJ; two brothers, Bernard of Palo Alto, CA and Sidney of Amherst; and two grandchildren. ●