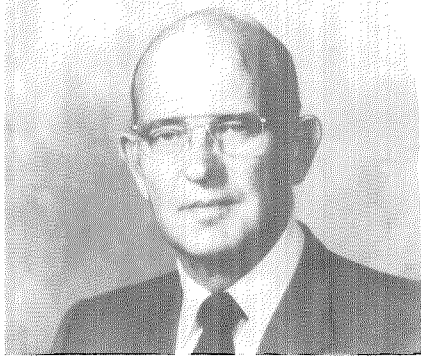


Random Walk

New Director



ON OCTOBER 1, Lew Allen Jr. will take office as a Caltech vice president and director of the Jet Propulsion Laboratory. He replaces Bruce Murray, who resigned as director as of June 30. Murray is professor of planetary science at the Institute.

Until his retirement on June 30, Allen held the rank of general and was chief of staff of the U.S. Air Force and a member of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

His formal training includes graduation from the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1946 and graduate work in physics at the University of Illinois, where he received an MS in 1952 and a PhD in 1956. He was then assigned as a research physicist to the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory and in 1957 became science adviser to the physics division of the Air Force Special Weapons Center.

Allen has had extensive experience in space technology programs, having served in the Space Technology Office of the Office of the Secretary of Defense and from 1965 to 1973 in the Office of the Secretary of the Air Force, first as deputy director of space systems and then as director of special projects. In 1971 he became director, with additional duty as deputy commander for satellite programs, in the Space and Missile Systems Organization. For four years he served in various capacities in the security services of the United States, and in 1977 he was named commander of the Air Force Systems Command. He was promoted to general in 1977 and has been Air Force chief of staff since 1978.

He is a member of the National Academy of Engineering, American Geophysical Union, American Physical Society, and the Council on Foreign Relations. He is also the recipient of numerous military decorations and awards.

Humming Along

THE Division of the Humanities and Social Sciences is offering two new groups of courses this year: Humanities, and Performance and Activities. The three Humanities courses — Hum/Lit 11, Hum/H 12, and Hum/PI 13 — are titled “Introduction to Humanities” and then further broken down into a term each that stresses literature, history, or philosophy. Each will be taught by Jerome McGann, Dreyfuss Professor of Humanities, as “practical courses in the basic disciplines of the humanities, with emphasis on reading, thinking, and writing.”

McGann sees the courses as chiefly for freshmen, and lots of reading in the classics will be required, plus lots of writing. Each of the three major writing assign-

ments each term must be done in the style of whatever author the class has been reading. If it has been *Walden Pond*, for example, students must compose their manuscripts in the style of Henry Thoreau; if they're working on the *Republic*, their essays are supposed to resemble Plato's.

The eight Performance and Activities courses are for what have previously been considered extracurricular activities. Now, for the first time ever at Caltech, units will be given for participation in the instructional aspects of such subjects as choral music, various instrumental music activities, and theater arts. Also included in this category will be the journalism course offered in connection with student publications and the restoration of course work in forensics.

Oppenheimer Revisited

THE American Playhouse production of *Oppenheimer* was shown on many Public Broadcasting System stations for seven Tuesday nights last May and June. And that fact kept a lot of Caltech people tethered to their TV sets for the appropriate seven hours. It also led to a lot of informal reviews of the previous night's episode on Wednesdays. All of which was understandable. J. Robert Oppenheimer was a part-time member of the Caltech faculty from 1928 to 1947. More importantly, he was a distinguished, charismatic, and controversial man and scientist. How well did television portray him, his achievements, his problems, and the events of that piece of history in which he played so large a part — the development of the atomic bomb?

There aren't any official TV critics at the Institute, but there are five professors who were at Los Alamos with Oppenheimer — physicists Robert Bacher, Robert Christy, Richard Feynman, and Robert Walker, and materials scientist David Wood. We asked some of them for comments, which are summarized below.

Most of them felt that on the whole the show was quite well done. Particularly remarkable was the “excellent job of capturing the atmosphere and the general feelings. . . . The thrust of what was happening during those days was very well portrayed.” One felt, however, that there was too little said about how Los Alamos worked as a lab.

The characterization of Robert Oppen-

heimer was much praised — “startlingly true to life . . . he looks, speaks, and moves the way I remember . . . the actor had a remarkable ability to capture Oppy's mannerisms.” On the rather harsh portrayal of Oppenheimer's wife, Kitty, most agreed that she could be “pretty rough on people,” but they also claimed that she was always nice to them personally.

Some other characterizations came in for more criticism, in particular those of Hans Bethe and of General Leslie Groves, who was “a lot sharper and more capable than the TV made him seem.”

The security hearings in 1954 that resulted in Oppenheimer's loss of clearance are still troubling. “The real tragedy was that essentially nothing new was presented in the hearings. It had all been known and cleared before. But that was the McCarthy era, and things were different in the country then.”



Robert Oppenheimer on a visit to Caltech in 1955. With him is Robert Bacher.