

# AMERICAN JOURNAL *of* PHYSICS

*A Journal Devoted to the Instructional and Cultural Aspects of Physical Science*

VOLUME 30, NUMBER 6

JUNE 1962

## Francis Weston Sears : Oersted Medalist for 1961

LEONARD O. OLSEN  
*Chairman, AAPT Committee on Awards*

Remarks made by the Chairman of the Committee on Awards for 1962 during the presentation ceremony of the Oersted Medal to Francis Weston Sears in recognition of his notable contributions to the teaching of physics.

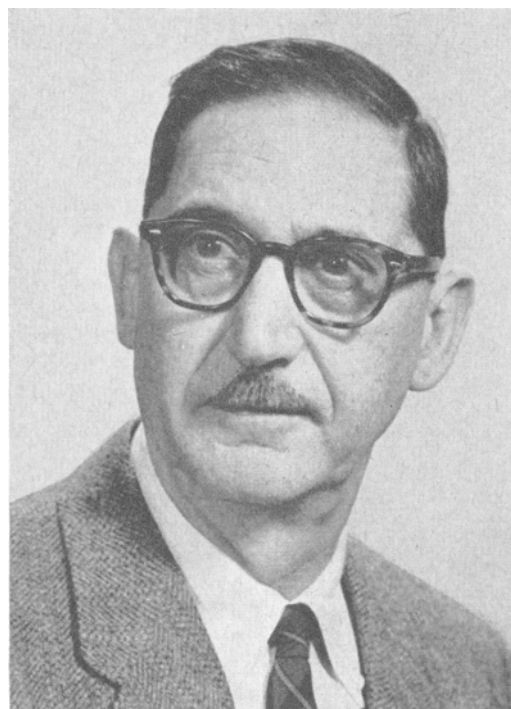
### Recipient of the 1961 Oersted Medal for Notable Contribution to the Teaching of Physics

*The American Association of Physics Teachers has conferred upon Francis Weston Sears, Dartmouth College, the twenty-sixth of its annual awards for notable contributions to the teaching of physics. The address of recommendation printed below was made by Leonard O. Olsen, Chairman of the Committee on Awards, and the presentation was made by Malcolm Correll, President of the Association, at a ceremony in Manhattan Center, New York, on January 25, during the thirty-first annual meeting.*

THE Awards Committee of the American Association of Physics Teachers found its assignment most pleasant and its task exceptionally light. At our summer meeting, I reported to the Committee that an unusual number of our members had written to urge the nomination of Francis Sears. We have ignored the protests of our fellow committeeman, Professor Sears, and the rest of us thus unanimously present Dr. Francis Weston Sears for the Oersted Medal, the highest award of the American Association of Physics Teachers.

Professor Sears was born in Plymouth, Massachusetts, and secured his education in physics at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He remained at MIT and climbed the academic ladder, becoming a full professor in 1943. In 1956

he accepted a visiting professorship at Dartmouth and after experiencing the joys of being a "Frontiersman" (pre-Kennedy, that is), he found it difficult to leave this more rugged and challeng-



Francis Weston Sears, Oersted Medalist for 1961.

ing climate. His Dartmouth colleagues have since persuaded him to accept the chairmanship of their department.

It is impossible and inappropriate to recite all the individual contributions of this versatile scholar to the growth of physics. In the area of research we wish to remind you that his name is associated with that of another great physicist, Peter Debye, with whom he collaborated in the discovery of what is now called the Debye-Sears effect.

Physics education flowers under Professor Sears' "green thumb." Students didn't "cut" his lectures at MIT, and at Dartmouth physics enrollments increase much faster than the national average as a result of his elegant general physics lectures. In honoring him today we pay tribute to a great teacher.

We also pay tribute to an inspired and devoted leader of the American Association of Physics Teachers. He served with distinction as treasurer for a six-year period and currently serves as a member of the Executive Committee of the Board of Governors of the American Institute of Physics. During his term as president of AAPT a number of very important forward strides were taken. For example, Professor Sears deserves major credit for the successful establishment of

the AAPT's Commission on College Physics, an effort which is beginning to produce significant improvements in physics education on a national scale.

Important as these numerous contributions are, they pale into insignificance when compared with the outstanding accomplishments of Francis Sears as an author of physics textbooks. His three-volume *Principles of Physics* set new higher standards for college general physics courses. The abridgements of these texts, accomplished with the assistance of another Oersted Medalist, Mark Zemansky, successfully retained the rigor and clarity of the original *Principles*. Last year I was privileged to aid his publisher in recognizing the sale of the one millionth copy of a Sears authored book. Today I am told that over 1 150 000 copies of his books have been sold; this includes versions printed in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, Hebrew, Serbo-Croatian, Korean, and Arabic, and does not include pirated editions in Chinese and English available in Taiwan.

Contemplate the impact of this achievement on physics education!

Mr. President, it is with great personal pride and pleasure that I have the privilege of presenting to you and this audience the Oersted Medalist for 1961, Francis Weston Sears.