MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

LEONARD I. SCHIFF
(1915 – 1971)

No memorial resolution can express even approximately what Stanford University lost when Leonard I. Schiff died on January 19, 1971. The customary phrases - distinguished scientist, inspired teacher, fair and conscientious department head, faithful faculty spokesman, sympathetic colleague, affectionate friend - are all true of Leonard, and yet applied to him they have the hollow sound of cliché. They do not do him justice. Quite simply, we have lost the best man among us, the sanest, the soundest, the most universally respected.

As a theoretical physicist he was known around the world, and he was a true physicist, holding fast to the conviction that there is only one physis, which means nature. He was one of a very few who mastered the whole field. His more than one hundred research papers cover almost the entire range of known physical phenomena, but he gained his widest influence through his book Quantum Mechanics, a work that could only have been produced by a great scholar, and that since its first edition in 1949 has helped to train a whole generation of physicists in the United States, Asia, and Europe.

Professor Schiff received his B.S. and M.S. degrees from Ohio State University, his Ph.D. from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1937, at the age of 22. From 1938 to 1940 he was Research Associate in Physics at the University of California and the California Institute of Technology. Beginning as Instructor of Physics at the University of Pennsylvania in 1940, he was Associate Professor and Acting Chairman of the department when he left there in 1945 to become a staff member at Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory. He came to Stanford in 1947, and served as Chairman of the Physics Department from 1948 to 1966, having an important part in the building up of the department as well as in the creation of SLAC.

He was a member of many learned societies, and served as fellow or officer in several, including the American Association for the Advancement of Science, the American Physical Society, the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, and the National Academy of Sciences, in which he was Chairman of the Physics Section at the time of his death.

The full combination of great scientist and great teacher is seldom achieved. Leonard Schiff achieved it. Not only did he encourage the practice of having full professors teach the large introductory courses in the Stanford Physics Department, he taught them himself, in his turn. It was entirely fitting that in 1966 he received not only the Oersted Medal of the American Association of Physics Teachers, but Stanford's Dinkelspiel Award for distinguished service to undergraduate education.

He served teaching as faithfully and imaginatively as he served science, and he served the university as well as either. His committee duties throughout his twenty-six years at Stanford were long and arduous. He was a member of the Advisory Board, and from 1968 to 1969, a year of extraordinary and violent disruption, he was on the firing line as the first Chairman of the Senate of the Academic Council, giving of his time, his wisdom, and his sanity to bring the

university through that crisis. More than one of us, in the month since his death, has wished bitterly that he was still here to give his counsel and support.

Such enumeration catalogues a few of the highlights of a distinguished career. But it says nothing of how whole a man Leonard Schiff was, how varied were his interests, how consistent was that natural grace that led him to be interested in everyone he met, helpful to everyone who needed help. It says nothing of how steady his mind was, as steady as his conscience, and how scrupulous his consideration for others. It says nothing of how he continually grew, yet grew on all sides, never one-sidedly; how universal a man, yet how truly all of a piece. He said once that he spoke only three languages fluently - English, Physics, and music. It should be said of him, and it will be attested by hundreds of his colleagues, that he also spoke fluently the language of the university and the language of humanity.

Felix Bloch
Robert Hofstadter
Wallace Stegner