ELSEVIER

Physics Reports 341 (2001) 5–6

PHYSICS REPORTS

www.elsevier.com/locate/physrep

# Obituary

With the untimely death of Louis Michel on December 30, 1999, the world Physics community has lost one of its prominent members. Louis was born in 1923, in Roanne, France and graduated from Ecole Polytechnique, where he later founded the Center for Theoretical Physics. Louis has been a Member of the French Academy of Science since 1979, and is a recipient of the Wigner Medal (1984). In 1962, Louis was appointed as Professor of Physics at l'Institut des Hautes Etudes Scientifiques (IHES), where he worked until his death.

Among his scientific achievements Louis is best known for the "Michel parameter," in the muon decay into an electron and two neutrinos. In the field of lepton polarisation Louis is very well known for the discovery of "Isotopic parity" (later known as "*G*-parity"). Louis is also coauthor of the Bargmann–Michel–Telegdi Equation for the description of the relativistic spin precession. The "Michel parameter" which was introduced by Louis in 1953 has been widely used in the interpretation of experiments until today. During his recent visit to Canada, in November 1999, Louis was invited to the Triumf Cyclotron facility at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, Canada, where experimental work was in progress utilizing the "Michel parameter."

In the later years of his career, Louis has worked in applications of symmetry and topology in condensed matter physics, in mathematical crystallography and in various other fields. Louis liked collaborating with people and to share his almost unlimited knowledge, and it was a great privilege to work with him. In collaboration with a long list of researchers, Louis had contributions of great importance to a broad variety of fields, including Landau theory of second-order phase transitions, topological classification of defects, invariant polynomials of crystallographic groups, van Hove singularities, geometry of lattices, band representations of space groups, Rydberg series for atoms and molecules and others. In all these fields of research, Louis was playing a leading role. For example, the work in this Volume of Physics Reports is a product of Louis' initiative, his guidance and his unlimited enthusiasm for teaching future generations.

Louis' research activities were not limited to IHES, he liked to travel and also to invite people to his home institution. Accompanied by his wife Therese, Louis has visited many institutes in more than 30 countries all over the world for different lengths of time, and in the earlier days they spent a number of years in the most prestigious centers for Theoretical Physics, the Niels Bohr Institute in Copenhagen (1950–1953) and The Institute of Advanced Studies in Princeton (1953–1955) were among them.

Louis was not only an eminent scientist, he was also very well known for his active involvement with people and events on an international scale. Being famous as he was, Louis had his heart and door open not only for well-established scientists but also for students in the beginning of their career, and he was very warm and considerate with practically everybody around him. With Louis'

0370-1573/01/$ - see front matter 
PII: S0370-1573(00)00086-7

death, we lost a very good friend, a coworker of many years and a great teacher. Louis is survived by his wife Therese, by six children and eleven grandchildren.

Jai Sam Kim
Josuah Zak
Boris Zhilinskii