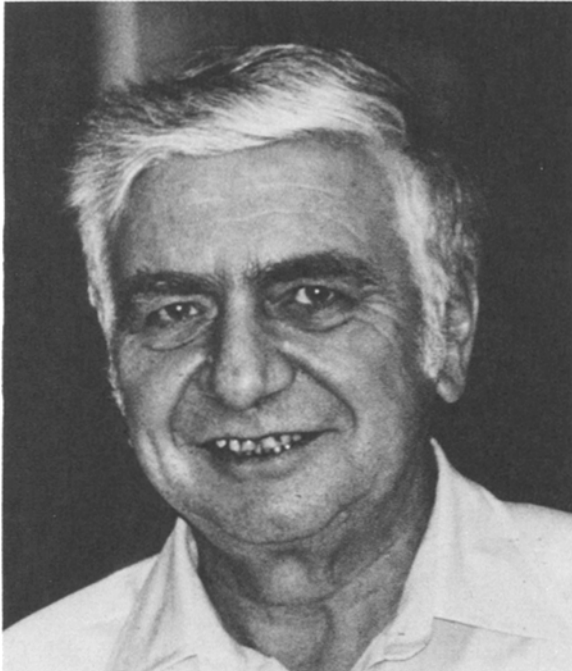


*In Memoriam*

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**Alfred Schild**  
**1921-1977**



Alfred Schild of The University of Texas at Austin died on May 24, 1977 at the age of 55. At the time, he and his wife Winnie were living in Illinois, where he was Argonne Universities Association Distinguished Appointee for 1976-1977.

Alfred was born in 1921 in Istanbul, Turkey. In World War II he was studying in England when he was interned because of his German passport and was sent to Canada, where he completed his education, receiving B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. degrees from the University of Toronto. There he worked with Leopold Infeld, with whom he maintained a lifelong relationship. In 1946 Alfred joined the faculty of the Carnegie Institute of Technology. He arrived at Texas in 1957 as a professor of mathematics and in 1963 was named Ashbel Smith Professor of Physics. He founded the Center for Relativity Theory at Texas in 1962, was cofounder (with Ivor Robinson and Engelbert Schucking) of the Texas Sym-

posia on Relativistic Astrophysics, and from 1965 to 1974 was a member of the International Committee on General Relativity and Gravitation.

Even in his earliest papers one can see the geometrical viewpoint which characterized Alfred's work. In his discussions of the foundations of relativity, in particular in his treatment of the equivalence principle, appears the well-known "Schild's Ladder." This diagram, more concretely than any formula, portrays the role of particle and light paths in determining the curved geometry of space-time. Alfred's best-known works, on foundations of relativity, on conformal techniques, on quantization, on algebraically special solutions, all demonstrate his physical-geometrical insight. His expository papers, his lectures on general relativity, the *Tensor Calculus* book written with J. L. Synge, his more popular papers on time and the twin paradox, the paper on lattice space-time, all are deservedly popular with students. His last works, on Fokker action principles and string models of particles, also bring a powerful and provocative geometrical viewpoint to physical problems.

Alfred's goal was to explain nature. The mathematics used and the geometrical intuition developed were for that purpose, not for purposes of elegance or even consistency. In his review of J. L. Synge's *Relativity: The General Theory*, Alfred wrote, "To the physicist logical consistency, as such, is no virtue. He is groping along a dark road towards a theory which will explain all of nature . . . inconsistency is merely one of many indications that he is still . . . far from his destination. A theory which explains a large region of experimental and observational facts, even though it is inconsistent on the blurred boundary of the region, tells him that he is on the right road. It is this road which is the physicist's truth; to him the great sin is to be lured away from it towards bright and beautiful mirages on either side."

Alfred was outspoken in favor of peace, against injustice, in support of the young and of freedom of expression. As a member of the GRG Committee he played a sober and decent role but not a conspicuous part. He was a promoter of the GRG Organization, yet he also supported André Mercier against the criticism of Mercier's refusal to attend the 1968 meeting at Tbilisi. In all his battles Alfred was ever courteous. Most of his opponents admired him, and his friends were a beautiful mixture of people.

Alfred's health had deteriorated these past couple of years. His appointment at Argonne allowed him to rest from teaching duties, and he did look much better this past spring, though he was working harder than ever on research and was looking forward to a lecture tour in early summer. But early in the morning of Tuesday, May 24, he awoke with an apparent attack of indigestion. Shortly thereafter, he died of a massive heart attack.

The loss of a friend is a shock, particularly when it happens with so little warning. Alfred was more than a friend. He was one whose insight into physics, academic life, politics, personal matters, could always be trusted: a guide and leader. We need people like him.

*Lawrence Shepley*