

among the twenty-four attendees—helped solidify his position among the leaders in his field. Feynman's papers on quantum electrodynamics, the work that eventually won him the Nobel Prize, also date back to this period.

In 1950 he accepted a position at Caltech—spending his first year on sabbatical in Brazil. Much of the correspondence from the following years revolves around purely professional concerns: asking for help in finding errors in an academic paper and sending his regrets when asked to return to Los Alamos. His efforts and achievements were recognized with the Albert Einstein Award in 1954. The arrival of Murray Gell-Mann at Caltech soon thereafter subsequently generated a fruitful—and now legendary—collaboration and rivalry.

In 1958, my mother, Gweneth Howarth, came to America at my father's urging. Unfortunately, little of the correspondence between them has survived, though it is clear from his letter of May 29 of that year that Gweneth was an adventurous woman—daring enough to move across the Atlantic to be his housekeeper after the briefest of relationships.

#### RICHARD P. FEYNMAN TO R. C. GIBBS, OCTOBER 24, 1945

Prof. R. C. Gibbs  
Department of Physics  
Cornell University  
Ithaca, New York

Dear Professor Gibbs:

When I heard, a few weeks ago, that Mr. Bethe had nearly decided to go to Columbia, I was very disturbed and did my best to try to get him to stay at Cornell. The reason I chose to go to Cornell a year ago was that I wanted to go to a school where there was an active experimental group doing research in nuclear physics. Only in this way could I keep abreast of progress by means of the theoretical problems and questions which could arise in connection with the experimental works. At that time, I was looking forward to working with Dr. Bethe and having an experimental group of such men as Bacher, Rossi, Parratt, Greisen and we were thinking of McDaniel and Baker also. If, however, Dr. Bethe did not go to Cornell then Bacher and Greisen would not go (Rossi had already decided not to

return) and I didn't see how we could attract other young men with so little to offer. I decided to come on November first as planned anyhow because the date was so late and you had been counting on it. But I did intend to tell you that I wanted to stay as short a time as possible.

I know many young men here whom we should want at Cornell and have spoken to them about the situation. I have had very little success when it was assigned that neither Dr. Bethe, Bacher nor Greisen would be there. On the other hand, if we assumed that these men would be there and described the program we had in mind, they were very interested. Unfortunately, they also have other offers and are being pressed so that they are impatient with the uncertainty at Cornell. We have already lost one very good electronics man in this way.

So it seems to me there are just two possibilities. Either Dr. Bethe (and therefore, Bacher, Greisen and other young men) go to Cornell, and the department is one of the best in the country, or else the Physics Department will find itself in such a poor state as to be unable to attract the abler of the young physicists who are now being released from war work.

I am, therefore, in favor of anything which will result in the first alternative. This means, I believe, that Professor Bethe would be chairman of the department after your retirement. From the point of view of administration of the department and the control of policy, I think this would be a very good thing. Dr. Bethe has done a wonderful job as leader of the Theoretical Division here. He managed this with remarkable facility. Everyone felt free to work on whatever he wished, yet all the work was coordinated and the job was done. And you can understand that the policy of the entire project very often depended on Theoretical conclusions. There should be absolutely no doubt as to his abilities as an administrator.

On the other hand, it would be unfortunate for physics, indeed, if he were to spend a very large fraction of his time away from research. Therefore, I think he should have a vice-chairman who could take up as much as possible of the purely administrative duties.

I do hope that you can find some such arrangement which is satisfactory to all. It is important that this be done as quickly as possible. I am looking forward to becoming an active member of an active Physics Department.

Sincerely,  
R. P. Feynman