CHEMISTRY NOBEL PRIZE WINNER TO DISCUSS LIFE IN THE LABORATORY DURING TWO PENINSULA LECTURES

"Understanding Life in the Laboratory" has a double meaning for Dr. Sidney Altman, professor of biology at Yale University--molecular basis of life and the social interactions between workers in the laboratory. He will share these definitions during two lectures in Hampton Monday, May 4, 1992.

At 2 p.m., Altman will address NASA Langley Research Center employees, retirees and contractors during a colloquium in the H.J.E. Reid Conference Center, 11 Langley Boulevard.

At 7:30 that evening, Altman will speak at the Virginia Air and Space Center in Hampton as part of The Sigma Series. The Sigma Series is a series of free public lectures sponsored by the Virginia Air and Space Center, the Daily Press and NASA.

In his lectures, Altman will introduce the audience to the fundamentals of molecular biology. He also will look at the social framework within which scientific research is conducted and the ways in which scientific knowledge is assessed by scientists and by the general public.

Altman's most important contribution, for which he was co-recipient of the 1989 Nobel Prize in chemistry along with Thomas Cech of the University of Colorado, was the discovery that the RNA molecule, which had been considered as the mechanism for transfer of the hereditary
information in the DNA molecule to direct the production of proteins, was also indispensable for the chemical reaction to take place, and therefore, acted as an enzyme.

In addition to conducting his fundamental research in biochemistry, Altman served as chairman of the Biology Department at Yale and later, from 1985 to 1989, as dean of Yale College. During his deanship, the role of science in a liberal arts education was greatly increased by requiring that all students complete three science or engineering courses to qualify for graduation, including two courses in the natural sciences. In addition, increased emphasis was placed on languages and on interdisciplinary studies.

Altman received his bachelor of science degree in physics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1960 and his doctorate in biophysics from the University of Colorado in 1967. He has served as a research assistant in molecular biology at Vanderbilt University, a research fellow at Harvard and as a visiting research fellow at the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge, England.

NOTE TO EDITORS: A press briefing will be held Monday, May 4, at 1:15 p.m. in the H.J.E. Reid Conference Center, 11 Langley Boulevard. To participate in the briefing, please call the Office of Public Affairs, 864-6124, by noon that day.

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