

## *Alex Dragt, Professor Emeritus of Physics*

While I did meet Toll in 1962, I only saw him through the eyes of a somewhat distracted graduate student visiting from a different university. I do recall that he was well regarded by graduate students in the department, that he was always ready to talk with graduate students, and that he had a memorable Christmas party for graduate students in his home. But I have nothing else to add beyond the observation that I believe the fine collegiality of our department dates back to the tone originally set by him as he built the department almost from scratch.

## *Raymond Elton, IREAP/UMD*

Perhaps few people know what an excellent teacher he was. As a second-year graduate student in the summer of 1956 I was encouraged to take a course in Methods of Theoretical Physics taught by John Toll over the summer using Volume 1 of Morse and Feshbach as a text (which set me back a precious \$35 at the time). Prof. Toll managed to cover the entire book, somewhat selectively I'm sure. He made it very understandable, even to an experimentalist, and was very patient.

His usual enthusiasm was most inspiring. I am thankful to have had the opportunity to remember this with Johnny in a visit with him last year.

## *Barbara Glover, Longtime Friend*

One of the last memories Rolfe and I had of Johnny was a visit we had with him when he was at Washington College.

Taking some "French medicine", Rolfe and I visited Johnny at Washington College following his heart surgery. Sitting in a very regal office dominated by a gigantic portrait of George Washington, Johnny described with great enthusiasm new buildings and programs at the college. We invited him to lunch, but he insisted we join him in the college cafeteria. While there, he continued to discuss plans and challenges at the college. At one point in the conversation, Johnny said that the college's board thought he should consider retiring following his surgery. He thought he would give them a couple of years to find his replacement and then he'd leave. But then he said " I guess I will have to look for another job!" I asked him if he didn't think it was time for him to rest on his laurels and really retire. His look of total disbelief at such an idea said it all.

I think that personifies Johnny...never stopping, always ready to climb the next mountain and meet a new challenge which he did so many times in his life with such amazing success.

## *Hans R. Griem, Professor Emeritus of Physics*

As a testament to John Toll's kindness, I recall arriving at the University of Maryland from Kiel, Germany as a 25-year old postdoc in August 1954, somewhat unsure of my language abilities and without a car,

and being given a second floor non-air-conditioned room above the Rossborough Inn, where I sweltered for several days. When Johnny learned of my plight he immediately took me into his parents' home in Chevy Chase for two weeks and helped me become oriented, even though he was not my official sponsor.

I shall never forget his generosity and compassion.

Later when our plans for establishing an Institute for Plasmas Research stalled and Johnny learned of it, he immediately stepped in and broke the administrative log-jam. He was indeed a true friend to me and countless other lives he touched in the Physics Department and the University.

### *David Inouye, UMD Professor of Biology*

I took a 2-year (1988-90) leave from campus to direct the University of Colorado's Mountain Research Station. Somehow I heard that the Toll family had close ties to the area near the research station, so I wrote to John. He wrote back to say that there is a peak named after his family, Mount Toll, and my recollection is that he said he had climbed it.

### *Tosh Keune, UMD Alumnus*

I have a different sort of recollection of Dr. Toll. I was a Greek (Phi Kappa Tau) back when Dr. Toll was the President and we lived in a small house back on Hopkins Ave that looked straight out of Animal House.

My Junior Year or so (as an Engineer I was drafted several times to oversee building our floats so homecoming was a blur for me) but someone in our house got the idea of extending an invitation to Dr. Toll to join us for Homecoming at the Potomac Sheraton off Shady Grove Road in Gaithersburg. To everyone's surprise, he accepted our invitation and one of our more out-going Little Sisters was assigned as his "date" for the evening.

As I recall Dr. Toll had a blast enjoying group and individual dances to bands like Wild Cherry (Brick house) and seeming to enjoy being out among the students and alumni for an evening of good spirited Terp fun. I am saddened to hear that he passed away.

### *Arthur L. Licht, Collaborator*

I've been looking at the paper Toll and I wrote together. It's a proof of the theorem that if the commutator  $[\phi(x), \phi(y)] = D(x-y)$ , then  $D$  must be a c-number and  $\phi(x)$  must be a generalized free field. I had worked out a complicated proof based on the fourier transform of the field  $\phi$ , I showed it to John and then he found a much simpler proof based on locality.

I recall a course he gave on the then new field of axiomatic quantum field theory. He maintained that the theory of functions of several complex variables was essential to understanding the properties of Wightman functions. Shortly after taking the course I came across a book entitled "Several Complex Variables", by Bochner and Martin, which I was enthusiastic enough to buy. Perhaps I may be able to finish it before the end of this new century.

Sheila and I visited John once when he was running Washington College. I remember the building he lived in had floor coverings made from the sails of old sailing ships.

### *Howard Reiss, Student of John Toll*

John Toll was described in a recent e-mail as a "brilliant, kind, and energetic man". I was a PhD student of John Toll, finishing in the summer of 1958, and I was in a position to fully appreciate his brilliance, kindness, and energy.

Despite his always busy schedule, John Toll regarded it as his responsibility to make regular appointments to see me, and to be punctual about those appointments. When the summer of 1958 arrived, with the prospect of his absence for a sabbatical year commencing that fall, he understood my desire to finish before he left and he made himself available when necessary.

Perhaps most important from my point of view is the problem he proposed for my dissertation, and his suggestion for an approach to it. The problem was fundamental and the approach was inspired. A paper of mine from 1962, based upon the 1958 dissertation, is now regarded as a cornerstone of "Strong-Field Quantum Electrodynamics". At a recent conference in Germany, I was flattered to see my picture displayed next to that of the renowned Julian Schwinger as cofounders of vacuum electrodynamics.

Much more has occurred in the years since my PhD, and several of my publications are widely cited. I have often had occasion to reflect on how all of this started: Toll's suggestions and guidance were fundamental to much of what was accomplished after the fondly-remembered years when it was my privilege to be the student of John Toll.

### *Vigdor Teplitz, UMD Ph.D*

Doris and I each met Toll when we began grad school at Maryland in 1958. Two years further on, we married. We have always considered John as our own personal Cupid.

We were very pleased, a few years past my degree, after not having seen him for some time, to receive an invitation to attend his inauguration as President of Stony Brook. On our way there from Boston, we wondered whether he had changed much. At Maryland we recalled that, in seminars, he would help people in front of him get their coats off; our thinking was that he must have gotten beyond that kind of worrying about people's individual problems when he made it to the presidency. Of course we were wrong: Stony Brook had lots of construction obstacles, there was confusion, competition and cacophony in the overflowing parking lots, and there was Toll in the middle - helping his guests find suitable spaces.

We continued to see him from time to time. In 1990, when he was president of URA and I had just become chair at SMU, I had the problem that the physics Ph.D. program had been "suspended" ten years earlier because of lack of grad students, and chemistry was slated to be the next science to get a Ph.D. program. I called Toll and asked if he would chair a committee to review our Physics Ph.D. plans and write a report we could show the administration. He took two days out of what must have been a very busy schedule, came to Dallas, chaired a committee, and wrote a short, persuasive report. A month later physics had a Ph.D. program again.

In the mid-1990's, we found that every New Year's Eve, he and Debbie would be at the Cosmos Club for the annual Egg Nog Party. It gave us a chance to catch up with him. Half the room had the same idea; he looked just like a one man receiving line, giving each person, in turn, his full attention.

John Toll was creative and courtly. He was a wonderful person -- we will miss him greatly.

### *Virginia Trimble, Visiting Professor of Astronomy, 1972-2003*

My late husband, Joe Weber, who came to the University of Maryland as Professor of Electrical Engineering in 1949, was part of the committee who asked John Toll (with his then still very fresh PhD) to come to Maryland to take over the then small and not very high profile physics department. (Probably only Ralph Myers was at all well known outside College Park). Joe always thought that this had been one of his most important contributions to the University, and I completely agree!

We also concurred in regarding both John and Deborah as very good friends, however widely they, and we, wandered.

I have only one Toll quote - "there are so many more interesting things to do in life than diet."

### *Guarang Yodh, Recruit of John Toll*

Johnny picked me up at the airport, when I came in for an interview for a position in the high energy physics group, headed by George Snow, and took me to his Chevy Chase home. Next morning he made breakfast for me and then drove me to Maryland Campus in his classic 60s convertible with the top down ! He was special. He was helpful when one had problems to cope with, he gave valuable advice, he had weekly lunches with the faculty (it was small in the 60s) in a steak restaurant in Beltsville. In 1961 he came to our house for dinner and to meet my wife's father. He chose to sit on one of the smallest stools in our living room - we had very little furniture at that time - and kept up a lively conversation.