

# Goodbody Gazette

Department of History and Philosophy of Science at Indiana University

No. 2

College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Association

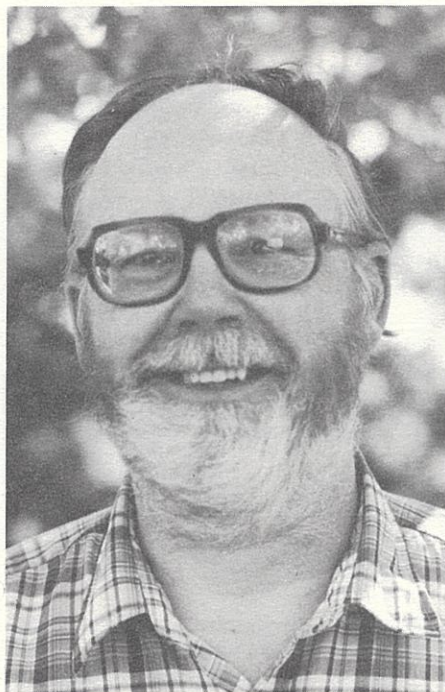
Fall 1991

## Victor E. Thoren: 1935 - 1991

Victor E. Thoren died in Los Angeles, Calif., on March 9, 1991. Born in Minneapolis, Minn., on May 13, 1935, Thoren—Vic to everyone who knew him—served in the U.S. Army from 1954 to 1956, then attended the University of California in Los Angeles, earning his bachelor of arts degree from UCLA in 1960. He proceeded on to graduate study in the history of science under Rupert and Marie Boas Hall and followed them to Indiana University when they moved here in 1961. I inherited Vic from the Halls, in the academic sense of that word, when I was appointed to the Department of the History and Philosophy of Science at Indiana in 1963. I had the privilege of directing his dissertation, the beginning of a professional relationship in that department that continued unbroken until his untimely death.

What matters is that the dissertation was the beginning of Vic's life-long commitment to the history of astronomy. It was a study of Tycho's lunar theory, and when it began Vic regarded it as the first installment of a history of lunar theory. Before it was done, Vic had recognized the opportunity and the need for a new study of Tycho in every dimension. No doubt the fact that Vic's ancestry was Scandinavian enhanced the attraction such study held for him personally. From that moment, a biography of Tycho was the focus of his scholarly activity, and the ultimate subject of his numerous articles.

We at Indiana, closely acquainted with Vic, knew that Tycho and the history of astronomy were not the sum of his existence. As an academic, he taught vigorously, not only the history of astronomy, but on occasion the introduction to astronomy, as well as the history of technology and the history of the



Vic Thoren

physical sciences in the 18th and 19th centuries. He served as chairman of our department, and he served the broader University in many capacities. Outside of academia, he was a devoted husband and the father of four daughters. He was a passionate and expert bridge player who attained the status of Life Master. If volleyball recognized life masters, he would have held that rank also.

Vic's book *The Lord of Uraniborg: A Biography of Tycho Brahe* appeared this year. At this point, before the scholarly community has had time to review the book, it is no doubt rash to comment on its success. Nevertheless, those like me who were familiar with the intensity of Vic's work feel confident in asserting that it will remain the definitive source

on Tycho, on his life and especially on his achievement in astronomy, which Vic reinterprets fundamentally, for the foreseeable future.

On the day before Vic set out on the fatal trip that would see him stricken so suddenly, a copy of the book arrived in Bloomington. His colleagues derive some small satisfaction that he was at least able to reenact the famous deathbed scene of Copernicus, but it does not greatly diminish our sense of loss.

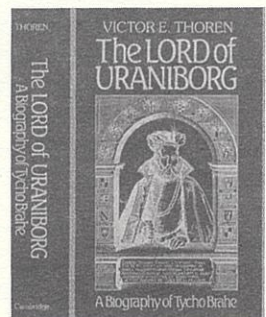
—Richard S. Westfall

### *The Lord of Uraniborg: A Biography of Tycho Brahe*

I am confident *The Lord of Uraniborg* is an important scientific biography. Thoren is the first to use Tycho's observational logs systematically and has settled

hitherto unanswered questions of chronology and clarified the history of Tycho's instruments and their use. Drawing from his own earlier studies, Thoren gives an account of the Tychonic lunar theory never before presented. He has done an admirable job in painting Tycho's Paracelsian beliefs, and the Vitruvian and Palladian background for the design of Uraniborg. The book positions Tycho squarely in the context of his times and at the same time shows how Tycho's achievements emerged from within that context.

—Curtis Wilson



# Student Tributes

As news of Vic's death spread, we received messages from HPS alumni all over the world—from Melbourne, Istanbul, and Calgary. Here are excerpts from those letters:

• I received your letter last week, and it was a complete shock to me. First Professor Coffa, then Professor Thoren within a relatively short period and at a time when they could be very productive. I do not know what to say, except that since I still feel part of HPS, part of me is gone too. —*Gürol Irzik*

• At the very moment that I had been sitting at my wordprocessor making some changes to my Cambridge book on the Milky Way Galaxy, which began as a dissertation under Vic's supervision, I received a call informing me of his death. I received your letter today with the details. I am stunned—simply stunned! On receiving this tragic news, one of my first thoughts turned to Copernicus, who not unlike Vic received

his first copy (in galley) of his great book at the very end of his life.

Bear with me as I share a few brief thoughts. Vic was unselfishly helpful during my five years at HPS as I struggled to learn what it means to be an historian of science. He gave his time and efforts without reluctance. We laughed together. He made me think—not only about historical matters, but just about everything else.

—*Bob Paul*

• Greetings and best wishes to you, friends and colleagues, on this bitter-sweet occasion. While I cannot be there in person, I dearly want to be a part of remembering and celebrating Victor E. Thoren.

Like many of you here today in person or in spirit, I was Vic's student. Most of what I know about the history of astronomy I learned either directly from him or by being led to sources by him. It comes out when I find myself lecturing and using Vic's very words: On Kepler and the orbit of Mars, 'You've just ploughed through 260 pages of bad Latin, step by step, and then Kepler tells you he's blown it.' On Neugebauer's deciphering cuneiform astronomical texts, 'You have to be

impressed by the dedication and sagacity it takes to figure this out based on nothing but bricks covered with these turkey-tracks.'

I can still see Vic standing in front of class, explaining the spheres of Eudoxus by analogy to a (I swear this is true) volley ball. My History of Astronomy and 18th-/19th-Century Science notebooks are densely packed with information that Vic communicated, and most important, with his fabulously intelligible summarizing statements. For these seemingly flippant comments were really syntheses, based on mastery of a large amount of detailed material. —*Joe Tatarewicz*

• I am, of course, greatly saddened about this news. At least Vic had the satisfaction of completing his life work: seeing Zandra through her illness, raising his daughters, and finishing the Tycho book. He also "raised" a number of us in HPS. It's too bad his children didn't get to grow old with either of their parents still around, and it's especially sad for Judy Thoren. I never met her, but had heard that she made him very happy. Could you pass my condolences on to [Vic's daughters]? I remember very fondly visiting Vic and Zandra and seeing them bring up the girls in a way in which I wish I could have been as good. —*Ron Overmann*

## Chair's Corner

It was a very different HPS department that convened last August: four younger colleagues and the empty chairs of three retirees. With new members come new opportunities, new energies, and new approaches to old problems. During the fall semester, we completely revamped our undergraduate offerings—with one eye, to be sure, cocked at the possible adoption of a College core curriculum requirement for all IU undergraduates. We hope such a requirement will provide new teaching opportunities for our graduate students.

In the spring, the department won an \$11,000 development grant from the University for a series of mini-symposia on critical issues in the history and philosophy of science.

Now on to the fall of 1991! We have a full roster of students and a commitment to examine in detail the graduate curriculum. Suggestions and comments from alumni on the structure of our long-established program will be welcomed and carefully considered. Finally, I draw your attention to the Victor E. Thoren Graduate Student Research Fellowship described in this newsletter.

—*Fred Churchill*

## Goodbody Gazette

The *Goodbody Gazette* is published by the Indiana University Alumni Association, in cooperation with the Department of History and Philosophy of Science and the College of Arts and Sciences Alumni Association, to encourage alumni interest in and support for Indiana University.

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## Thoren Memorial Fund Established

Through the generosity of Vic's friends, students, and colleagues, the department has received more than \$4,000 for a graduate student research fund in Vic's name.

Judy Mann Thoren and Vic's four daughters have just announced an additional \$6,000 challenge to match future donations. The goal is to establish a \$15,000 fund that will provide a \$750 research fellowship for an advanced graduate student at the dissertation writing stage.

Please send donations to the IU Foundation, S.R. 46 Bypass, Bloomington, IN 47405, specifying the Victor E. Thoren Graduate Student Research Fellowship. A copy of your letter should also be sent to the chair at HPS.

# Faculty News

Edward Grant has now completed Chapter 19 of *Planets, Orbs, and Spheres* (also known as *Much Ado About Everything: Cosmic Visions*). His history of medieval cosmology from 1200 to 1687 has now crept onto a second hard disk, and we are suggesting he publish it on CD-ROM. Ed was in Paris for a conference on Jesuit science.

John Winnie thinks about minds, brains and computers, even when his body is in Montana. He continues to work on fractals and chaos theory (watch for his paper on computable chaos in *Philosophy of Science*) and talks about puzzles and paradoxes involving probability during lunch at Bear's.

ence and American science are adding valuable new dimensions to our graduate offerings. He spent the summer doing research on the institutional aspects of American psychology and experimenting with ways to keep deer out of his vegetable garden. (Irish Spring soap did not work, but raising zinnias instead was very successful.)

Richard Sorrenson instituted an exciting new course on voyages of scientific discovery just in time for the Columbus celebrations! He gave talks in Windsor, England (no, SHE wasn't there) and at the HSS meeting in Seattle. Richard and Helen have a brand new baby whom they introduced to relatives in New Zealand this summer.

relatives in New Zealand this summer.

Zeno Swijtink revitalized our visiting speakers program this year. He and Richard organized brown bag lunches and panel discussions and corraled a number of visitors who were in the vicinity or flying by. *The Empire of Chance*, which he co-authored, is

now out in paperback. Zeno spent the summer in the Netherlands and attended the International Congress in Upsala.

Linda Wessels completed her work as program chair for the 1990 PSA meeting, and the second volume of the proceedings should appear soon. She taught a seminar on probabilistic causality, including a paper by Gürol Irzik.

Alberto Coffa's book, *The Semantic Tradition from Kant to Carnap: To the Vienna Station*, finally arrived from Cambridge University Press this summer. As Linda, who prepared it for publication, can testify, it's a whopper—more than 400 pages. Michael Friedman describes it as "an indispensable basis for all future research in the area."

Noretta Koertge spent a week at the

Van Leer Institute in Jerusalem and gave a talk on normative sociology of science. En route, she visited old buddies at Chelsea (King's) and the LSE, which is eagerly awaiting Nancy Cartwright's arrival. Noretta is teaching courses for the graduate minor in human sexuality.

Fred Churchill completed in August 1990 a whirlwind tour of Indian centers for science, where he presented a series of lectures on the history of 19th- and early 20th-century biology. On his return, he became acting chair and in July accepted a four year stint as chair: "a burden at best and a necessary evil under any circumstance."

Stephen Kellert contributed a seminar on chaos theory to the HPS curriculum. (We already had the practice, but were lacking the theory!) Stephen has made good contacts with people interested in literary theory here at IU and read a paper at a literature and science conference. This summer, he went to Kenya.

Roger Buck and Lib were cruising the Nile during the Gulf crisis. Later, Roger visited with Michael Scriven in San Francisco.

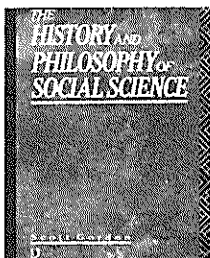


"Eppur si muove!"

Sam Westfall spent the year as a visiting professor at Harvard. He is working on a descriptive social history of the scientific community of the 16th and 17th centuries, a project that he expects will "keep [him] off the streets" now that he's retired.

Scott Gordon celebrated his first year of retirement by completing his magnum opus, *The History and Philosophy of Social Science*. It weighs in at 690 pages and is published by Routledge. Mark Blang describes it as "a work of rare authority. . . a riveting and beautifully written [book that] is at once scholarly and popular." The really big news is that Barb and Scott have bought a classic boat—a 1964 25-foot Lyman mahogany inboard.

Jim Capshew's courses on big sci-



J. ALBERTO COFFA

## Where in the world are you?

The Department of History and Philosophy of Science and the IU Alumni Association are always pleased to hear from alumni. Please send your news to *Goodbody Gazette*, Alumni Publications, IU Alumni Association, P.O. Box 4822, Bloomington, IN 47402-4822.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Degree/Date \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Your news: \_\_\_\_\_

(Please attach your news.)

**Tattler Talkback:** Is your address current? Any suggestions for the *Gazette*? Please send us conjectures (and refutations) for our Tattler column!

# HPS Tattler

David Lindberg ('65) was elected a fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences.

Awards for the most beautiful view go to Anita Guerrini ('83) who will be teaching at UC-Santa Barbara, Joia Lewis ('89) who has moved to the U. of San Diego, and David Grandy who will be teaching history of science at the Brigham Young University campus in Hawaii.

Ivan Amato ('86) is editor of the Chemistry/Materials section of *Science News*. Watch for his byline!

Ron Rainger's book on American vertebrate paleontology is due out this year. Rainger ('81), Jane Maienschein ('78), and Keith Benson have edited two books of essays on American biology. Jane Maienschein is now president of the International Society for the History, Philosophy, and Social Studies of Biology. David Hull ('64) is president-elect.

Robert Reichert ('80) is in law practice in Hartford, and his wife, Beth, teaches at St. Joseph College.

Tom McMullen ('89) has a tenure-track job at Georgia Southern University in Statesboro.

Eric Barnes ('90) spent the summer in Paul Humphrey's NEH seminar on Explanation. He is now wrestling with flagpole shadows and a paper by Evan Jobe ('73) on that topic.

Tom Oberdan's ('89) philosophy of science courses at Clemson are so popular he may give up Business Ethics (likely story!). Greg Robischon and Susie have a baby.

Ken Waters ('85) is going to Minnesota where he will be a colleague of John Beatty ('79). Margaret Schabas

('77) is moving to York University in Toronto.

Peter Sobol ('84) has organized a special session for the 1991 HSS meeting, titled "Much Ado About Medieval and Early Modern Cosmology: A Session in Honor of Edward Grant."

Philip Kitcher gave the Coffa lecture this year. Paul Farber ('70) gave the Westfall lecture. Farber has recently switched from being chair of the general science department to chairing the history department at Oregon.

Ana Estany ('85) has passed the exams that were the last step in the process required to become a professor at the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

Michael L. Cohen ('75) recently completed his degree in HPS at the University of Maryland and is employed as a policy analyst/system engineer at the Mitre Corp., a federal contract research center, McLean, Va.

Susan Mills Finsen ('82) teaches in the philosophy department at California State—San Bernardino and has just completed *The Animal Rights Movement*, a book co-authored with her husband.

Gordon R. Steinhoff ('87) is employed at Utah State University, Logan.

Donald T. Smith ('88) of Bloomington, became the father of a new son, Andrew, in June 1990 and has begun a second major for his PhD, now history and higher education administration.

Joe Tatarewicz ('84) is now at the Center for the History of Electrical Engineering, which has recently become affiliated with Rutgers.

Oswaldo Pessoa defended his dissertation on the measurement problem in

quantum mechanics. He is now back in Brazil.

Mark Kalthoff is teaching at Hillsdale College in Michigan.

Natasha Jacobs ran for mayor in the Bloomington primary.

Peter Ramberg will be at the Deutsches Museum in Munich on a Fulbright finishing a dissertation on stereochemistry. He reported on his research at the Midwest Junto where Bill McKinney gave a talk on scientific plausibility and the cold-fusion experiments.

Wini Warren presented a paper on Anne Conway and the Cambridge Platonists at the SWIP conference in Minneapolis.

Kevin Korb, who is back in Bloomington completing his dissertation after dropping out of industry, presented a critique of John Searle at an AI conference in SUNY-Binghamton.

Karen Blaisdell spent last summer in Greenland and this summer is trekking through the Soviet Union. We hope she doesn't lose her passport because Angie Monts will soon be going on maternity leave with the adoption of her first child, due in late October.

**Reading Room:** For the first time, and we hope, the last time, HPS is offering the Latebody Award for the most overdue book. Please send your entries to the attention of Alice Dreger at Goodbody 130. In the event of a tie, the better excuse wins.

We are also asking for donations of books to add to the Reading Room collection or for sale at our fund-raising book auction. This year's auction raised \$700, so clean your shelves of duplicates and send them our way. We would also appreciate a copy of books you have authored or edited to add to our permanent collection.

Tax-deductible contributions to the HPS account at the IU Foundation support the Reading Room and student travel to conferences.

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## Please note. . . .

The IUAA has moved from the Indiana Memorial Union to Fountain Square, on the south side of the Courthouse Square. The new address is IU Alumni Association, Fountain Square, Suite 219, P.O. Box 4822, Bloomington, IN 47402-4822. Phone 812/855-4822. The IUAA expects to be in these temporary quarters for about three years.