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Commentary

Two Men Who Loved Science

Until his death on Oct. 20 (SN: 10/27/84, p. 263), P.A.M. Dirac was, arguably, the last of the living theoretical giants whose ideas — along with those of Newton, Einstein, Planck, Heisenberg, Schrödinger, Maxwell and Fermi — formed the foundation of what is perceived as modern science. Contributor Michael A. Guillen and Senior Editor Dietrick E. Thomsen wrote eloquently about the man and the scientist (SN: 6/20/81, p. 394), and I recommend their writings highly to those subscribers who save their back copies.

What emerges from those articles, perhaps more than any other characteristic, is a portrait of a man who loved

science. Dirac often spoke of the "beauty" of physics and mathematics in a way in which he might have been speaking of his wife. He was, in fact, married to science as well as to Margit Wigner.

While Dirac was unique in his genius, we who write about science and you, the readers, all shared with him this loving curiosity about what happens in our universe and why it happens. We know, from our correspondence with SCIENCE NEWS subscribers over the years, that those of you who read our magazine are true lovers of science.

One such person was Thomas Hagelthorn of Dearborn, Mich. Mr. Hagelthorn, who died Sept. 16 at the age of 30, was not

a scientist by profession. He did hold a degree in mathematics and was described by those who knew him as "a phenomenal mathematician, an avid fisherman, and he loved gardening." Along with this description, his father, Richard L. Hagelthorn, wrote to SCIENCE NEWS: "Tom was an avid reader of SCIENCE NEWS and kept all his copies. They were all neatly stacked, and every one of them was thoroughly read... Tom had a brilliant mind in a frail body. Your magazine gave him great pleasure."

P.A.M. Dirac and Thomas Hagelthorn never met. But to the rest of us who love science as they did, they both will be missed.
—Joel Greenberg

This Week

- 276 Baboon-to-Human Transplant Draws Mixed Reviews
- 276 Ovary transplant restores fertility
- 277 A message from the heliopause?
- 277 Substance P proposed as arthritis factor
- 278 Lasing plasma makes 'soft' X-rays
- 278 Interspecies gene-transfer ban rejected
- 279 Aerial wolf hunts resume in Alaska
- 279 Sister star scenario: Sound or shot?
- 287 Hepatitis: No more guilt by exclusion?

Research Notes

- 280 Earth Sciences
- 280 Space Sciences
- 281 Biology

Articles

- 282 Calendric Reform in Yucatán
- 284 Shadows from a Higher Dimension

Cover: Edwin A. Abbott (1838-1926), a headmaster at the City of London School, wrote *Flatland* in 1884. His enduring tale, which recounts the adventures of "A Square" as he probes the nature of higher dimensions, has inspired many mathematicians, writers and artists and recently was the subject of a symposium on visualizing higher dimensions. (Photo provided by Thomas F. Banchoff/Brown University)



Departments

- 275 Commentary

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