Physics Awards Ceremony

April 26, 2001

Created by Debbie Cruise
Virginia Tech Physics Department
The Jamie Dunn Award
Thomas Bullard ~ Hanover, New Hampshire

An endowed cash award was established in 1982 in the memory of Jamie Dunn, who was a graduate student in the Physics Department. Dunn did much early work in developing a very difficult experiment on electron energy loss spectroscopy. Sadly, a tragic motorcycle accident claimed his life in 1981; he is well loved and very much missed by everyone who knew him. The Jamie Dunn Award is made to a graduate student who demonstrates some of Jamie’s endearing qualities: good will toward all, enthusiasm for physics, and determination to overcome adversity and succeed.

Tom is in his second year of graduate study in the Physics Department. He came to Virginia Tech with a Master’s degree from Miami University. Tom has successfully completed all requirements and is concentrating on his Ph.D. research in computational physics. He is currently serving as the department’s physics graduate student representative.

The Ray F. Tipsword Graduate Scholarship
Robert Astalos ~ Atlanta, Georgia

Following his retirement in 1992 from a career in both general and condensed matter physics, friends and family members of Prof. Ray Tipsword instituted a scholarship in his name. The Tipsword Scholarship, first awarded in 1995, is directed to go to a promising graduate student working in the area of condensed matter physics, statistical physics, or optics.

Robert came to Virginia Tech after having worked in a variety of fields. He held positions as programmer and systems engineer for IMB/Loral/Lockheed Martin, as a full-time flight instructor, and as a consultant. He also served as the department’s physics graduate student representative for a year. Robert will graduate with his Ph.D. in physics this May 2001. He has just accepted a job offer from Feather River College in Quincy, California, beginning in the Fall. Robert and his wife Coleen are expecting the birth of their first son in about a month.
C. H. Wan Scholarship
Anubav Vasudevan ~ Bluefield West Virginia

Had physics been a topic available to Chinese girls in the early 1900s, C.H. Wan would have become a physicist. Instead, she channeled her creative talents into literature and poetry, as well as a career in teaching. As a teacher, she provided much inspiration and encouragement to many youngsters who aspired to become physicists. Established by Prof. R.K.P. Zia in 1991, the C. H. Wan Scholarships are awarded to rising seniors and/or Ph.D. students who demonstrate both academic excellence in physics and research accomplishments in stochastic processes.

Beyond his interests in physics and astronomy, Anubav studies philosophy, which might become a second major. He loves science fiction, plays the trombone for the Marching Virginians and is exploring an undergraduate research project on nonequilibrium statistical mechanics.

Alice Estes Martin Scholarship
Alma Robinson ~ Springfield, Virginia

This scholarship provides incentive and support to a physics major of high academic achievement who is committed to teaching physics in secondary school. Professor Dale Long initiated this endowed scholarship in 1991 and named it in honor of Alice Estes Martin, an inspirational former teacher in Louisa County High School (Virginia). Family members and other students of Mrs. Martin, as well as friends of the Physics Department, have also contributed to the endowment.

A desire to help others understand physics and appreciate the excitement she feels about it seems inherent in Alma Robinson’s makeup. She has been passing along that excitement at least since her time at West Springfield High School, when she was one of the few students in her class to earn her honor society service points by tutoring. She currently tutors students in their introductory physics courses here at Virginia Tech. Alma’s teaching ability continues to be evident as she works with the Physics Department outreach program for high school students. Alma presently holds the position of vice president of the Society of Physics Students (SPS) and will serve as SPS president next year. Her academic success, her personality, and her teaching skills will surely serve her well when she achieves her goal of teaching high school physics.

Webster & Sara Schoene Richardson Memorial Scholarship
Christopher Graziul ~ Glen Rock, Pennsylvania

Both Web and Sara Richardson taught in the Virginia Tech Physics Department for several decades. In addition to their work with the introductory courses, where they were known for their exacting standards, Sara developed a course called “household physics.” While Web developed an x-ray laboratory where he constructed extensive apparatus of which he was justly proud and which was used by many of the first graduate students in physics at Virginia Tech. The scholarship was established in 1998 by family members.

Christopher grew up just north of the Mason-Dixon line in Glen Rock, Pennsylvania. There he attended school at Susquehannock High School. His career goals are to obtain a doctorate in physics and contribute significantly to the study of alternative energy, quantum computing or theoretical physics. His goals are geared to the betterment of the human condition or the collective knowledge of humanity. Chris enjoys philosophical debate and frisbee.

Hugh D. Ussery Scholarship
Larry Cook ~ Princeton, West Virginia

When the family of the late Hugh D. Ussery endowed a scholarship in his name in 1984, they established the first such award for the Virginia Tech Physics Department. Prof. Ussery joined the faculty of the physics department in 1934 and remained at VPI for nearly 40 years. During his tenure, he developed a laboratory in optical spectroscopic analysis of which he was very proud. The Ussery Scholarships are awarded each year to one or more rising juniors who have been deemed to show great promise for a career in physics.

Larry comes to Virginia Tech from Princeton, West Virginia. He graduated from Princeton Senior High as Salutatorian. He is a member of the First United Methodist Church in Princeton where he is active in church handbells and band. Larry’s career goal is to do research in areas of physics.
Theodore E. Leinhardt Scholarship
Zachary Lewis ~ Huntington, West Virginia

Before coming to Virginia Tech, Professor Leinhardt made measurements on electrons in strong magnetic fields that were critical to later experiments on the quantized Hall effect. In the early 1960s, Leinhardt created a research program in low temperature physics at Tech as the school made its transition to a research university. The scholarship was established in 1990 in Leinhardt’s memory. The student who receives the honor has exhibited both high scholarship and service within the department.

Zachary was born in Huntington, West Virginia, where he graduated from Spring Valley High School. In the future he hopes to conduct research in quantum gravity or a related field. Currently, Zachary is an officer of the Society of Physics Students (SPS), member of the Cooperative Computing Consortium, and a performer with the University Percussion and Marimba Ensembles.

Frank Leigh Robeson Scholarship
James Roberts ~ Chantilly, Virginia
Seth Smith ~ Huntington, West Virginia

Early leadership in the development of the Virginia Tech Physics Department was due in part to one man – Dr. Frank Robeson, after whom the physics building is now named. Robeson was the first doctorate level physicist at VPI and was the author of a widely adopted textbook in the 1940s. In 1995 the Robeson family endowed a scholarship in his honor and memory. The scholarship goes to a student who has demonstrated academic achievement, personal integrity, extracurricular leadership, community service, and an appreciation of physics.

James was born in Ann Arbor, Michigan, but has lived in Chantilly, Virginia since he was 5 years old. He graduated from the Thomas Jefferson High School for Science and Technology in 1996. James came to Virginia Tech for engineering, but was quickly converted into the pure sciences. His extracurricular activities include the Science Fiction and Fantasy Club, the Tae Kwon Do Club, the Astronomy Club, and the Society of Physics (SPS). He is a member of the American Geophysical Union, and the American Astronomical Society. James will be graduating in May with a BS in Physics and a BS in Geological Sciences. He will be starting graduate school at the Univ. of Colorado in Astrophysical and Planetary Sciences.

Seth comes from Huntington, WV where he graduated from Vinson High School. At Virginia Tech, Seth is a double degree student in Physics and Math. Studying under the tutelage of the professors in the condensed matter theory group, Seth has consistently shown a very deep understanding and enthusiasm for the study of complex physics. Seth is currently the president of the Society of Physics Students (SPS) and has been a member for past 3 years. He has also been a member of Classics Honorary for the past 2 years. Seth will be graduating this May and plans to pursue a PhD in medical biophysics at Johns Hopkins University in the Fall. His ultimate goal is to teach in that field and to develop medical technology.

Daniel C. & Delia F. Grant Scholarship
Anubav Vasudevan ~ Bluefield, West Virginia
Jerome Mettetal II ~ Piney Flats, Tennessee

In 1990 two new and substantial scholarships were endowed in the names of Daniel C. and Delia F. Grant, the parents of Dr. Frederick C. Grant, a former Virginia Tech doctoral student. These coveted scholarships are designated for entering National Merit Scholars. The recipients may retain the scholarships if they meet high academic standards.

Beyond his interests in physics and astronomy, Anubav studies philosophy, which might become a second major. He loves science fiction, plays the trombone for the Marching Virginians and is exploring an undergraduate research project on nonequilibrium statistical mechanics.

Jerome came to Virginia Tech in 1998. A National Merit Scholar, he is a member of the University Honors Program and is a double-major in physics and mathematics, and is currently a sophomore. His passion is research, and after completing several projects in biology and chemistry as a high school student, he is now seriously involved in an undergraduate research project with the condensed matter theory group.
Col. Nelson Carey Brown Memorial Scholarship

Jennifer Beard ~ Wichita, Kansas

This scholarship was endowed by Dr. Nancy Brown in memory of her late brother, Col. Nelson Carey Brown, Virginia Tech Class of 1965. Col. Brown felt that both his education in physics and the leadership skills he learned in the Corps of Cadets were critical to his professional success. The scholarship is awarded to an entering freshman majoring in physics, who demonstrates academic ability and financial need. The award can be retained for up to four years as long as the student maintains a GPA of 3.0 or higher and remains a physics major.

Jennifer is a member of the University Honors Program, plays the flute and enjoys science fiction. She is interested in astronomy and is planning an undergraduate research project on extreme weather statistics.

The Robert C. Richardson Scholarship

Rafael Hipolito ~ Richmond, Virginia

Through a generous gift by an anonymous donor, a scholarship has been established in honor of Dr. Robert C. Richardson, a professor of physics at Cornell University. Richardson, who earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in physics at Virginia Tech, was the co-recipient of the 1996 Nobel Prize for physics. This scholarship is awarded to an undergraduate physics major deemed especially deserving. This scholarship rewards academic talent, responsibility, and industry.

Rafael Hipolito, originally from Brazil, has been living in Richmond, Virginia for the past 11 years or so. He graduated from J.R. Tucker High School in 1997. For as long as Rafael can remember, he has always been interested in physics, curious to know how and why things are the way they are. Right now what interests him most is string theory. He is also interested in working with elementary particles, theoretically or experimentally, but preferably theoretically. Rafael enjoys Tae Kwon Do and holds a ninth degree black belt. Upon coming to Virginia Tech, Rafael founded his own club, called Dong’s Tae Kwon Do Club, where he teaches other people who are interested in the sport.

Robert P. Hamilton Prize

Beth Reid ~ Chester, Virginia

The Hamilton Prize is named in honor of Dr. Robert Preston Hamilton, who received his bachelor’s degree from Virginia Tech in 1975. Led by Tech professor Dr. David Jenkins, several generous donors, including Hamilton’s classmates, professors, and especially his family, established the Robert P. Hamilton Prize in 1991, two years after his untimely death from cancer. As a prolific researcher in the field of experimental elementary particle physics, Hamilton established a notable record in the 14 years he lived after receiving his Ph.D. from Berkeley. The prize is awarded to a student who has exhibited both career promise and the very high scholastic standards for which Hamilton was known.

Beth comes from Chester, Virginia. She graduated from the Chesterfield County Math and Science High School in 1999. At Virginia Tech she is double majoring in physics and math and was named a 2001 Goldwater Scholar. Beth was recently inducted into Pi Mu Epsilon and Phi Beta Kappa. She is involved in the Society of Physics Students (SPS) and New Life Campus Fellowship. Beth plans to attend graduate school in physics. Her hobbies include playing the piano and the guitar and participating in anything taking place outdoors - such as the YMCA Project Home Repair.

The H. Y. Loh Award

Joshua King ~ Colonial Heights, Virginia

The H. Y. Loh Award, a cash prize awarded upon graduation, became the very first award or scholarship dedicated to our physics majors. As a token of the high esteem in which Prof. Loh was regarded by his colleagues, Dr. Ray Lipsaw approached colleagues to create the endowed award, which was first given in 1977. Loh retired in 1976, and at the time was the only member of the Physics Department to have been awarded the W. E. Wine award for Excellence in Teaching. The H. Y. Loh Award is made each spring to the graduating physics major who best exemplifies Dr. Loh’s high academic and personal standards.

Josh hails from Colonial Heights, Virginia. A member of the University Honors Program, he also participates in the Society of Physics Students (SPS), Sigma Pi Sigma, and Phi Beta Kappa. He has served as Resident Advisor and as a Resident Coordinator, and is currently working as the Head Resident Advisor for Barringer Hall. Josh has participated in summer research at Montana State University and Brookhaven National Lab. He hopes to continue his education beyond May commencement, followed by a career with NASA. Josh is eternally grateful to the department for its continued financial and moral support of his education.
Dr. Terrence Lagerlund

Dr. Lagerlund is Associate Professor of Neurology at Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota. He completed his Ph.D. in Physics at Virginia Tech in 1975 under the direction of Dr. Marvin Blecher. At age 21, he holds the record as the youngest person to ever complete a Ph.D. in the Virginia Tech Physics Department. In 1975, Dr. Lagerlund began a postdoctoral appointment under the direction of Dr. Samuel Ting of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and did research in high energy particle physics at CERN, Switzerland. Upon completion of his postdoctoral appointment he entered an accelerated medical school program for Ph.D. recipients and became a medical doctor, with an appointment to the faculty of the Mayo Clinic. At the Mayo Clinic he has done specialized research in epilepsy and tomographic encephalography.