

Reminiscences about John from Mary Jo Nye (Oregon State University, Emerita)

In the 1970s, my husband Bob and I began a thirty-year pattern of spending part of the summers or longer in the Bay area. John had recently organized the Office for History of Science and Technology in Stephens Hall, and he generously added us to the list of visitors with full library privileges, which was invaluable for our summer research when we weren't in France or elsewhere. We got to know the local and international Berkeley network of historians and met many of this session's participants in Berkeley. I remember dinner evenings, post-colloquium pub outings, and lots of good talk, including the 1985 meeting in Berkeley of the International Congress for the History of Science.

When John began editing *Historical Studies in the Physical Sciences*, I submitted a long essay on the discovery of N-rays for John's first issue of *HSPS* in 1980. I then had the experience that Cathryn Carson describes elsewhere, when she recalls that scholars often gasped at how vigorously John "would cut into, rearrange and rewrite their prose." John lit into my draft, even substituting some of his own witty and tart prose. Ten years later, I remember experiencing John's critical skills when I was one of the speakers invited to Uppsala for the International Summer School established by John with Tore Frängsmyr and Giuliano Pancaldi. I found that I had no special status when John launched into analysis of my discussion of the formation of scientific

disciplines and the history of theoretical chemistry. No holds barred, but a cheerful round of drinks and dinner afterwards.

John was a consummate scholar with extraordinary range chronologically, linguistically, and topically. He placed the same high demands on himself that he required of other scholars. He was a terrific lecturer who combined seriousness with wit and entertainment. His books and articles pioneered new ground and developed novel insights, among these his probing and poignant account of the moral dilemmas of Max Planck in Berlin. This book was a mainstay in my classroom course on science and politics. There were always lively conversations when John and Alison were hosting or traveling. But I liked the fact that John never left behind his Bay area roots. If you offered him fresh Dungeness crab at your dining table, you needed to make sure that the San Francisco-style Crab Louis sauce was ready to be served alongside.