

Tracy M. Sonneborn

Tracy Sonneborn must be one of the best teachers Indiana University has ever had. Even when he gives the same course repeatedly, every lecture always gets hours of research and reading and planning. Every idea in every lecture is clear, to the point, up-to-date, and of fundamental importance. The students, both undergraduate and graduate, come in droves. The problem has always been to find a large enough room or to schedule enough sections. He received the Frederic Bachman Lieber Memorial Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1967, and in recent years, student evaluations, confirming the obvious, have been almost embarrassing in their praise and enthusiasm. He leaves a trail of enthusiastic students with new interests, new plans, and new majors. Graduate students have been known to bring the organisms being discussed in his lectures surreptitiously into their laboratories to work on them, instead of devoting full attention to their chosen thesis problems. Some have never returned to their original problems.

Were it not that Professor Sonneborn is going to continue to work at Indiana, his retirement would mean a substantial diminution in the scholarly reputation of Indiana University. Research today is often carried on by teams of workers with extensive facilities, devoting all their energies to one common problem, but on the other hand, an important function of the university is to foster the work of individuals who are the source of new ideas, new directions, unexpected discoveries, and new principles. Tracy Sonneborn, with his lifetime of startling discoveries made possible by his devotion to his favorite organism, *Paramecium*, is the ideal example of such an individual, and his vigor is such that his retirement will hardly be perceptible.

Tracy Sonneborn was born in Baltimore and received his training at The Johns Hopkins University. He was the only student of the illustrious Herbert S. Jennings, one of the foremost American biologists. He served for a short time on the faculty at Johns Hopkins and then was lured to Indiana University by Fernandus Payne and Herman Wells in 1939. The date marks the beginning of an exceptional time for genetics. At Indiana it was the period not only of Professor Sonneborn but also of Ralph E. Cleland in Botany, Salvatore E. Luria in Microbiology, and somewhat later, Hermann J. Muller in Zoology. Students at Indiana, including James Watson, who pro-

vided the key to the modern revolution in molecular biology, were fortunate indeed to be exposed to such teachers. Professor Sonneborn's work, published in over 200 papers, has brought him almost every recognition that can be given him by his peers. They include membership in the prestigious National Academy of Sciences, the American Philosophical Society, and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences. He is a Foreign Member of the Royal Society of London. He received the Newcomb Research Award of the AAAS, the Kimber Genetics Award of the National Academy of Sciences, and the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences Silver Medal for Contributions to Genetics. He has received honorary Sc.D. degrees from the Johns Hopkins University, Northwestern University, and the University of Geneva. He has served as president of the Genetics Society of America, the American Institute of Biological Sciences, the American Society of Zoologists, and the American Society of Naturalists.

Despite Professor Sonneborn's fame, his wife Ruth is as well known in the University as he is, and in Bloomington itself *everybody* knows Ruth Sonneborn. She is everybody's friend. Their two sons are both in the academic life; Lee is a mathematician and David is a biologist.

Although numerous universities have over the years attempted to steal Tracy Sonneborn away from us, he has always decided that Indiana University provides the optimum environment. We hope we can continue to convince him of that proposition.

John R. Preer, Jr.