

Gart Westerhout

At Leiden University in Holland in late 1961 I received among others an offer out of the blue of a full professorship to start an Astronomy Program at Maryland. Maryland? I enquired with my Physics colleagues at Leiden. "A football college," said some. Until I was told in no uncertain terms that Maryland was no longer a football college and that John Toll was building one of the best Physics Departments in the US.

So Judith and I and family arrived in April 1962. Johnnie Toll's kindness, warmth and enthusiasm made it clear from the start that we had made the right choice. Johnnie, and Howie Laster, made our transfer seamless. We started looking for a rental house, and within a month stumbled on a great big house for sale (where we lived for the next 25 years) but which was much too expensive. Johnnie Toll gave us a loan (which we paid off in 5 years) to make it possible. Imagine a big loan to a complete newcomer!

I was not familiar with Johnnie's Physics; our contacts were close but mostly social. He of course very much encouraged the new Astronomy Program, showed a great deal of interest in it and often dropped by. We visited him in his house on Newlands Street a number of times, and of course he regaled the house parties we gave for visiting faculty and colleagues from abroad.

Later, when he was President at Stony Brook, I attended a 2-week "summer school" and stayed at his wonderful old house there with several other prominent astronomers, where he cooked the breakfasts!

Such are my memories of Johnnie Toll!!! A marvelous fellow!