

Jordan Goodman:

In the fall of 2000, our esteemed colleague Dick Ferrell came to me and suggested we name the Physics building for John Toll. I thought this was a truly wonderful idea. When I had become chair a year earlier, I cleared everything out of the chair's office except for the smiling picture of John Toll, which I put up over the door. He was the first person I met with for advice. Whenever anything good happened, I would get a handwritten note of congratulations from John. So I brought the idea of the naming to our faculty and the following resolution was passed unanimously:

*Dr. Toll--physicist, scholar, educator and entrepreneurial leader--exemplifies the interaction of science and the betterment of our social condition through education. He has left a legacy of greatness at the University of Maryland, and it is only fitting that the building that has housed our department since his arrival be named "The John S. Toll Physics Building" and that when the Department of Physics moves to its new home the Toll name will be carried to an appropriate facility in the Physical Sciences Complex.*

Naming a building, as it turns out, is more complicated than you might think. There are rules for naming buildings and they usually involve large sums of money (not that there is anything wrong with that and I would like to point out that we do have a new building rising up a few hundred meters from here that could really use a name), but this didn't conform.

Numerous people told me why we just couldn't do it. So I did what worked best - I asked myself what would Johnny do?

So I pushed relentlessly and eventually the barriers fell and with the full support of the entire campus administration including Dean Steve Halperin, Provost Greg Geoffroy, President Dan Mote and USM Chancellor Don Langenberg and finally the Board of Regents we did it. And I am proud every day to work in a building named for John Toll.

This fall when the campus held the memorial for John my students wanted to know why I was dressed up. (They usually assume that if I am dressed up I must be going to a funeral). Anyway, I was proud to take the opportunity to tell them all about the great man for whom the building they were in was named and who was my mentor, colleague and friend.

Yankee Stadium was rightly known as “The house that Ruth built.” In the same way our department and university should be known as the “The school that Toll built”! For truly Johnny Toll was the architect of greatness on this campus. As both Gert and Wally said he transformed a school known only for football into one where excellence in research and teaching are blended with collegiality and civility to create one of the great academic institutions in the country and for this legacy we are all truly grateful.