

TRACY Y. THOMAS

Tracy Yerkes Thomas began his college studies at Rice University, where he received his A.B. in 1921. His A.M. and PhD were received in 1922 and 1923 respectively from Princeton University, where his dissertation was prepared under the direction of the famous geometer, Professor Veblen. He spent a year as a National Research Fellow in Physics at the University of Chicago, followed by a year in Zurich, Switzerland, and a year at Harvard and Princeton Universities. He was on the faculty of Princeton University from 1926 to 1938, professor of Mathematics at the University of California, Los Angeles campus from 1938 until 1944 when he came to IU as Chairman of the Department of Mathematics.

In his twenty-five years at Indiana University, Tracy contributed significantly to the distinguished reputation of the Department of Mathematics. It was he, as Chairman, who brought together some of the world's outstanding mathematicians and set the pattern for the future development of the Department in research and advanced studies in mathematics.

In order to create a better atmosphere for research and to attract outstanding faculty members, Tracy established in 1950 and headed until 1956 the Graduate Institute for Applied Mathematics which evolved into the Graduate Institute of Mathematics and Mechanics. In 1952, he helped found the Journal of Rational Mechanics and Analysis which later became the Indiana University Mathematics Journal. As an editor of the Journal, he maintained its high standards through the years. From 1956-69, Tracy Thomas held the title of Distinguished Professor of Mathematics.

His talents and contributions to science were recognized early, and he received one of this country's highest honors when he was elected



to the National Academy of Sciences in 1941. He was Vice President of the American Mathematical Society from 1940 to 1942 as well as a Fellow of the Royal Astronomical Society and the Indiana Academy of Science.

In addition to many books, the best known of which are, *The Differential Invariants of Generalized Spaces* and *Plastic Flow and Fracture in Solids*, Tracy wrote 172 research articles in such varied fields as the theory of relativity, plasticity, shock waves, tensors and differential geometry, the extended theory of condition for discontinuities over moving surfaces, and cosmology. He inspired many students in applied mathematics while at Indiana University and produced many outstanding PhD students.

Born: Alton, Illinois January 8, 1899
Died: Santa Monica, California March 23, 1983
Years at IU: 1944-1969