

Page, Thornton L., Papers

Thornton L. Page Papers

1936-1983



Title Statement

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Profile Description

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Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

Ms.1983.002

Unit Date

1936-1983

Language

The materials in the collection are in English.

Abstract

This collection consists of the papers of astronomer Thornton L. Page, including biographical material, drafts and published versions of papers, and texts of speeches.

Creator

Page, Thornton L., 1913-1996

Extent

0.7 Cubic Feet 2 boxes

Repository

Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech

Administrative Information

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The collection is open for research.

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Source of Acquisition

The Thornton L. Page Papers were donated to Special Collections in 1983.

Processing Information

The processing, arrangement, and description of the Thornton L. Page Papers commenced and was completed in June 2013.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: [identification of item], [box], [folder], Thornton L. Page Papers, Ms1983-002, Special Collections and University Archives, Virginia Tech, Blacksburg, Va.

Biographical Note

Thornton Leigh Page, son of Leigh and Mary Thornton Page, was born in New Haven, Connecticut on August 13, 1913. The younger Page attended school in New Haven (where his father served on the faculty of Yale University) before earning a bachelor's degree in physics from Yale in 1934, and being named a Rhodes Scholar. Page studied astrophysics at Oxford and completed a thesis on the spectra of planetary nebulae. He was elected to fellowship by the Royal Astronomical Society and was awarded a Ph.D. in 1938. That same year, Page married Helen Ashbee in Kent, England; the couple soon moved to Chicago, where Page had been hired as an instructor in astronomy. The Pages would have one child before divorcing in 1945.

Just prior to World War II, Page joined the Naval Ordnance Lab in Washington, DC, working on magnetic mines and countermeasures. He was later transferred to London and Hawaii, where he was working during the attack on Pearl Harbor. Page was enrolled as a lieutenant (junior grade) in the U. S. Naval Reserves and assigned to Pearl Harbor, serving in the minelaying operations-research group. Following the war, he was assigned to mine removal in the Inland Sea.

Page returned to the University of Chicago in 1946 and married Lou Williams, a geologist, in 1948. The couple would have two children. Page worked in the McDonald Observatory, obtaining spectra of double galaxies. The results of his work contributed to early theories of dark matter. Page was promoted to assistant professor in 1947, but left the University of Chicago to accept appointment as deputy director of the U. S. Army's Operations Research Office. In 1958, he became head of Wesleyan University's astronomy department.

A 1961 automobile accident left Page blinded in one eye and led to a five-month hospital recovery. The Pages took extended leave and moved to California, where they co-edited the eight-volume *Sky and Telescope Library of Astronomy*. Page worked on a number of projects in the following years: working on the space-tracking program at Harvard-Smithsonian Observatory, upgrading the reflector of Argentina's Cordoba Observatory, and lecturing to astronauts on astronomy at NASA's Manned Spacecraft Center. He served as co-investigator of Apollo XVI's S201 experiment on far-ultraviolet observations.

Page resigned from Wesleyan in 1971, remaining in Houston to work in the Naval Research Laboratory. He retired in 1976 but continued to work, completing various public information works for NASA, teaching astronomy at the University of Houston-Clear Lake, and organizing a long-running Brown Bag Seminar at Johnston Space Center. Thornton L. Page died in Houston, Texas on January 2, 1996.

Scope and Content

This collection contains the papers of astronomer Thornton L. Page. Included in a biographical file is an autobiographical sketch; a memoir from a 1983 Rhodes Scholar Reunion in Oxford, England; a letter to *The New Yorker*; and a photograph of Page. The greater part of the collection is comprised of published versions (in the form of offprints and detachments) of various articles authored or co-authored by Page, relating to astronomy and general science topics, particularly education in the sciences. The collection also contains typescript drafts of several articles by Page and the texts of a few of his speeches.

Separated Materials

The following monographs were removed from the collection to be added to the Rare Book Collection:

Page, Lou Williams and Thornton Page. *Biology in Zero-G*. Apollo-Soyuz Pamphlet 7. Washington, DC: NASA, 1977. (Call number: SCUA Large TI788.4 P34.)

---. *Cosmic Ray Dosage*. Apollo-Soyuz Pamphlet 6. Washington, DC: NASA, 1977. (Call number: SCUA Large TI788.4 P34.)

---. *The Flight*. Apollo-Soyuz Pamphlet 1. Washington, DC: NASA, 1977. (Call number: SCUA Large TI788.4 P34.)

---. *Gravitational Field*. Apollo-Soyuz Pamphlet 4. Washington, DC: NASA, 1977. (Call number: SCUA Large TI788.4 P34.)

---. *Sun, Stars, In Between*. Apollo-Soyuz Pamphlet 3. Washington, DC: NASA, 1977. (Call number: SCUA Large TI788.4 P34.)

---. *X-Rays, Gamma-Rays*. Apollo-Soyuz Pamphlet 2. Washington, DC: NASA, 1977. (Call number: SCUA Large TI788.4 P34.)

---. *Zero-G Technology*. Apollo-Soyuz Pamphlet 8. Washington, DC: NASA, 1977. (Call number: SCUA Large TI788.4 P34.)

Page, Thornton and Lou Williams Page, eds. *The Origin of the Solar System: Genesis of the Sun and Planets, and Life on Other Worlds*. Macmillan Sky and Telescope Library of Astronomy 3. New York: Macmillan, 1966. (Call number: SCUA Large QB501 S56.)

---. *Space Science and Astronomy: Escape from Earth*. Macmillan Sky and Telescope Library of Astronomy 9. New York: Macmillan, 1976. (Call number: SCUA Large QB51 S68.)

---. *Stars and Clouds of the Milky Way Galaxy: the Structure and Motion of Our Galaxy*. Macmillan Sky and Telescope Library of Astronomy 7. New York: Macmillan, 1968. (Call number: SCUA Large QB819 P27.)

Keywords

Archives of American Aerospace Exploration (AAAE)

Astronomers

Astronomy

Science and Technology

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Description of Subordinate Components

Biographical material and photograph

Unit Date 1980-1983

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 1 (folder)

Printed material

Unit Date 1936-1983

box-folder 1 (box)

Container 2-10 (folder)

Drafts

Unit Date 1958-1983

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 1-4 (folder)

Speech texts

Unit Date 1950-1981

box-folder 2 (box)

Container 5 (folder)