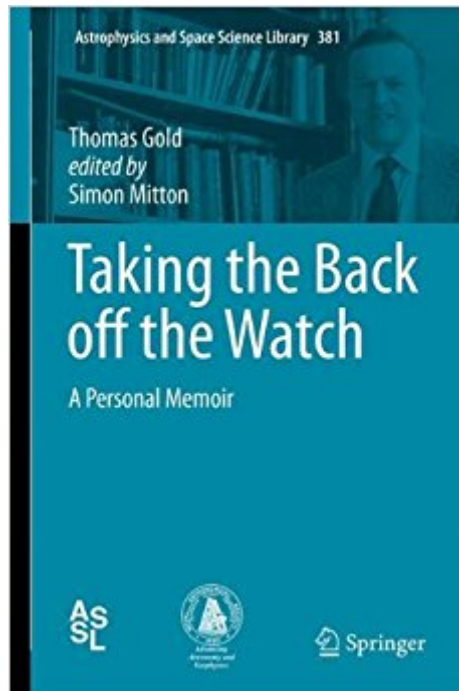


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Taking The Back Off The Watch: A Personal Memoir (Astrophysics And Space Science Library)



Synopsis

Thomas Gold (1920-2004) had a curious mind that liked to solve problems. He was one of the most remarkable astrophysicists in the second half of the twentieth century, and he attracted controversy throughout his career. Based on a full-length autobiography left behind by Thomas Gold, this book was edited by the astrophysicist and historian of science, Simon Mitton (University of Cambridge). The book is a retrospective on Gold's remarkable life. He fled from Vienna in 1933, eventually settling in England and completing an engineering degree at Trinity College in Cambridge. During the war, he worked on naval radar research alongside Fred Hoyle and Hermann Bondi – which, in an unlikely chain of events, eventually led to his working with them on steady-state cosmology. In 1968, shortly after their discovery, he provided the explanation of pulsars as rotating neutron stars. In his final position at Cornell, he and his colleagues persuaded the US Defense Department to fund the conversion of the giant radio telescope at Arecibo in Puerto Rico into a superb instrument for radio astronomy. Gold's interests covered physiology, astronomy, cosmology, geophysics, and engineering. Written in an intriguing style and with an equally intriguing foreword by Freeman Dyson, this book constitutes an important historical document, made accessible to all those interested in the history of science.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Tommy Gold was a friend and neighbor of myself and my wife. I first met him in 1971, and he was

quick to point out that, like myself, he was an electrical engineer. Actually, he had so very many talents didn't he? My wife did sewing alterations for him, but volunteered the comment "You know, he sews pretty good". He only brings me the stuff he can't do. (Another talent who would have guessed!) Once when he asked her to put in a lining, he instructed her that it needed to be done in such-and-such a way (too subtle for me) and she smiled "yes she knew that. He smiled (apologetically) and replied that yes of course she did " that was her expertise. Why am I telling you this? Well, after all, nowhere in the book does it say he had figured out how to sew! It is clearly consistent with the other narratives in the book that he was "pretty good" at figuring out matters (as distinct from merely learning) of great diversity. The book first of all offers us more about his scientific work, not to mention very interesting details of his life. We are likely familiar with his great explanations (pulsars = neutron stars), his less successful work (steady-state universe) and highly intriguing " and likely correct - ongoing ideas (abiogenic fossil fuels). These are important, but a much fuller picture of "lesser" (lesser - if you are Tommy Gold!) achievements are related. Such things as explaining the "double boom" or a sonic-boom, the eel in a glass helix (fun!), his active-feedback in hearing, moon-dust generated by the Earth's magnetic shadow at full-moon, any one of which would have made most of us proud if we had thought them through ourselves. How did he get his mind around to those? For his history, he is a good story teller.

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