



Dr. Thomas Johns Hopkins

February 20, 2021

Dr. Thomas Johns (“Tom”) Hopkins, 90, of Lancaster, PA, passed away on Saturday, February 20, 2021 at Homestead Village in Lancaster where he had resided since 2006. He was born in Champaign, IL, and was the son of the late Sewell H. and Pauline (Cole) Hopkins.

He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Frances L. (Skinner) Hopkins; his children, Katherine M. Hopkins, Nicholas J. Hopkins (Anne), and Patrick S. Hopkins (Amy) all of Lancaster; his grandchildren, Jennifer Biryukov (Sergei), Sarah Perkins Hopkins (Cody), Christopher Hopkins, Duncan Hopkins, and Mia Hopkins; his great-grandchildren, Nikolai, Sofia, Ariana, Anna, and Henry; his brother, Nicholas A. Hopkins. Preceding him in death was his daughter, Susan L. Hopkins.

Tom graduated from Stephen F. Austin High School in Bryan, TX, in 1948. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in physics from The College of William and Mary and a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, both in 1953. He received a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Yale Divinity School in 1958, and a Doctor of Philosophy degree in comparative religions from Yale University in 1962. He taught Asian religions at Franklin and Marshall College, beginning in 1961, and he served as chairman of the Religious Studies department from 1973-1988 and 1990-1994. He retired from the position of Professor of Religious

Studies in 1996. From 1998-1999, Tom served as Academic Director of the Oxford Centre for Hindu Studies (OHCS) in Oxford, England, where he tutored and lectured graduate students on Hinduism. From 1999 until his passing, he remained a Senior Fellow at OHCS. He was also an active member of the American Academy of Religion (AAR), from its inception in 1963 and throughout his career.

Tom's publications included *The Hindu Religious Tradition* (textbook), which is still used today in many college and university religion and theology classrooms. Prior to the decline in his health, he worked for many years researching and writing a second edition of this book - a significant expansion and update, which is pending publication. He also wrote various articles, book chapters, and encyclopedia entries on Hinduism and Indian religious history, including a chapter entitled "The Social Teaching of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa," which was published in a landmark publication in its time, *Krishna: Myths, Rites, and Attitudes*. His unpublished doctoral dissertation is entitled *The Vaishnava Bhakti Movement in the Bhāgavata Purāṇa*.

Private memorial services will be at the convenience of the family.

Contributions in his name can be made to Reading is Fundamental (www.rif.org) or Doctors Without Borders (www.msf.org).

Tribute Wall



“ *Dr. Thomas Johns Hopkins*

October 22, 2023 at 11:34 PM



“ *I took a number of courses with Professor Hopkins at Franklin and Marshall College and was one of the students that went to India with him and his family in 1971.*

Any course taught by Prof. Hopkins was an adventure, often sailing into uncharted waters. I imagine he enjoyed the adventure as much as any student. Prof. Hopkins taught you how to learn. He mastered a grounded approach at MIT but, Yale Divinity School encouraged him to raise his sights to the heavens and beyond. In class you observed how he moved boldly, yet steadily forward. He tested every step taken, every hypothesis, every settled matter. His curiosity was a hunger to know more, look up and look out, to find one more door to open. It could be the swirl of Sufi mysticism, a Zen koan that is difficult to grasp even when you know what it means or a deeper inspection of Shiva's gaze into Shakti's eyes. Tat tvam asi, indeed.

My very, very deepest condolences to the family, to Fran, Katherine, Nick and Patrick. I often think of you as fellow crew members that first gathered to board an Air India flight to a very distant and foreign place. I appreciate the pictures above, with Prof. Hopkins and his grandchildren. I, also, play the role of Poppy. I understand that gleeful joy he had for the next generation. That joy, I am sure, is now firmly planted within them - just as it was firmly planted in so many others.

Tim Trexler (F&M '73) - February 28, 2021 at 01:48 PM

SH

“ 3 files added to the tribute wall



Sarah Hopkins - February 24, 2021 at 09:56 PM

FH

“ Patrick, I send my deepest sympathies to you and your family in your time of grief. Your father sounds like he lived a wonderful life. Wishing you peace. Fran Haldeman

Fran Haldeman - February 24, 2021 at 05:19 PM

EM

“ When a student at F&M, I took Professor Hopkins' seminar on the Bagavad Gita (about 1975). One day a student asked a question to which Professor Hopkins responded, not with an answer, but with a string of about 10 questions. I can't speak for that student nor the others, but he took me on a thoughtful journey and showed the way to finding answers for myself. It was a standout moment for me at F & M.

I mentioned this to him a few years ago when he was my neighbor. He said, "I must have been having a good day".

Indeed.

Ed Mummert - February 24, 2021 at 12:17 PM

KT

Back in the fall of 1982, I was a student in Religions of the Orient taught by Prof. Hopkins. I stuck around for a January term on Yoga and Meditation, a tutorial in my junior year, a semester abroad in Mysore, India, and an independent study my senior. Along the way, Prof. Hopkins agreed to be my advisor.

I can still recall lectures on Mahayana Buddhism, discussions on Sri Aurobindo's work Essays on the Gita, the smell of bidi cigarettes in his office in Dietz(?) Hall. Along the way, his help guiding me to take a semester abroad was priceless.

While coming the news of Prof. Hopkins' death late, I would like express my sympathies to the extend family. I had a fantastic experience as an undergraduate at F&M and Prof. Hopkins was a good part of that experience.

Kevin Tryon - April 11, 2021 at 02:12 PM

FC

Professor Hopkins was not only my favorite professor at F&M, he was my advisor and friend. As a premed student I went with the group to Mysore University in 1971 where I conducted an independent study of Ayurvedic medicine. We had a great group of students from four colleges and Professor Hopkins' family kept us grounded. I think of Professor Hopkins often and the back and forth banter in the classroom. He was a heck of a man and a great teacher. My best to his family and friends.

Frank Crump - August 27, 2025 at 08:34 AM