Edward L. Tatum was the only person I have known to be granted three degrees by the University of Wisconsin—Madison: B.A., 1931; M.D., 1932; Ph.D. (Biochemistry, Bacteriology) 1937; D.Sc. (Honorary) 1959. He was also the first B.A. graduate to win a Nobel Prize (medicine and physiology, with Beadle and Lederberg) 1958.

Dr. Tatum worked under direction of T. B. Fried and the late W. H. Petersen to identify optical isomers of lactose and other products of fermentation caused by these bacteria. He found the work to be unsatisfying and too routine for his liking, and as a result, became one of the first laboratory "drop-outs." His these consisted of old behalve trousers or shorts, depending on the season; tennis shoes or boots, again dictated by the weather; and a T-shirt or sweat shirt. He would not listen to the "tubes."
tennis, swim, or go canoeing. His behavior in the laboratory was casual, and it upset both his major professors and his parents. This seemed to give him pleasure because he was, in fact, one of the first of the free spirits in those days when they were rare indeed. But he got the job done, and went on to do postdoctoral work in Holland.

Later, working with George Beadle, and then with Joshua Lederberg, he found that which he truly wanted to do: pioneering studies in molecular genetics.