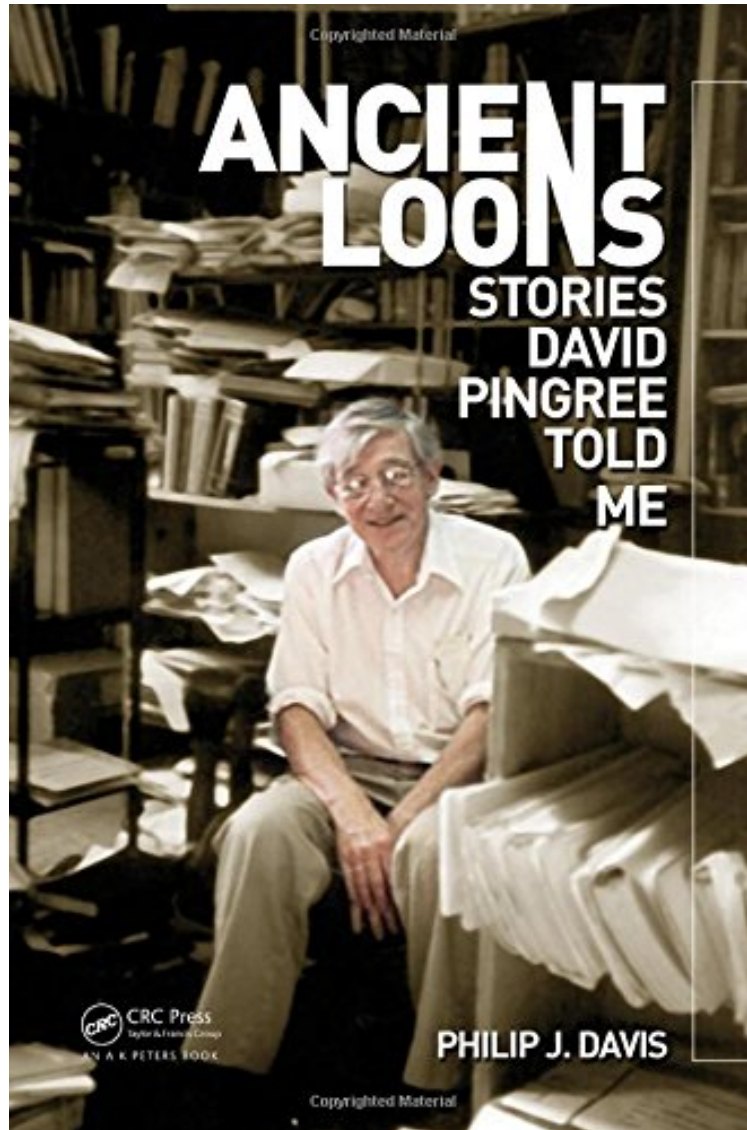


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Ancient Loons: Stories Pingree Told Me

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From A K Peters/CRC Press : Ancient Loons: Stories Pingree Told Me before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Ancient Loons: Stories Pingree Told Me:

"Ah, Im Pingree. We meet again. Splendid. Wont you sit down?"I looked around Davids room. Short of the library stacks, I had never seen so many books piled into a single room. Where could I sit down? Every square inch of

horizontal surface was covered. Books, papers, notes, manuscripts all congregated in random and chaotic disorder. This small encounter and the snapshot of the protagonist on the cover of this book introduce the reader to David E. Pingree, the eminent classicist, Orientalist, historian of ancient science, and member of the Department of the History of Mathematics at Brown University. This is a book of his stories, retold by Phil Davis, award-winning author and raconteur par excellence, who reconstructs them from letters and many conversations with his friend Pingree. The stories trace connections between ancient characters, historical and mythical, and recreate a world in which the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake leads to unexpected pleasures and associations. They capture a world best described by Saul Liebermans quip about Gershom Scholem's great work on the Kabala: "Trash is trash; but the study of trash is scholarship," and David Pingree's imagined response, "Yes, but there's always something of value to be learned." The book is dedicated to preserving and promoting the specialized knowledge and thoughts of David Pingree, a truly remarkable person and to inspire readers to follow academic tradition and at the same time explore unusual connections.

The book is a collection of short stories, small anecdotes in the life of some historical characters. More concretely, it focuses on the oddities and singularities of some well-known historical figures, not only in science, but also in arts, politics and social sciences. The book shows the fascination for ancient history, the treasures hidden in original sources and the importance of exploring unusual connections. Javier Martinez, The European Mathematical Society, January 2013 a rambling, illuminating and thoroughly enjoyable bio/autobiographical and historical sketch, setting Pingree's immense erudition in its professional and intellectual context. Besides a string of amusing and intriguing anecdotes plentifully sprinkled with photos and sketches, this small volume supplies a valuable reminder of how complex, surprising and just plain strange the history of the exact sciences can be. Kim Plofker, MAA s, October 2012