JOHN VINCENT ATANASOFF –

HIS PLACE IN THE HISTORY
OF COMPUTER LOGIC AND TECHNOLOGY

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John Vincent Atanasoff died of a stroke at his home in Frederick, Maryland on 15 June 1995 following a prolonged illness. He was survived by his second wife, three children, and ten grandchildren. Obituaries appeared in *The New York Times* [Baranger *1995*], and several newspapers in the Ames, Iowa area where he carried out this work (see [Bruner *1995*], [Grause *1995*]), as well as in the *History of Logic Newsletter* [Editor *1995*] and *Modern Logic* [Editor *1995*].

John Vincent Atanasoff was born near Hamilton, New York on 4 October 1903. In the first months of 1937 that he conceived the idea of combining electronics, binary arithmetic, and Boolean algebra to build an electronic digital computer, using binary arithmetic for computation, Boolean switching-relay circuitry for machine logic, and electrical and electronic components for machine hardware.

His father John was born Ivan Atanasov in Bulgaria in 1876 and emigrated to the United States in 1889. In 1900 he received a bachelors degree from Colgate University and worked as an electrical engineer. He died in 1956. In 1900 he married the New Yorker Iva Lucena Purdy, a descendant of revolutionary war general and associate of George Washington, Jeremiah Purdy. Born in 1881, she was an elementary school mathematics teacher, and died in 1983. It was from a recollection of reading one of her eight grade arithmetic textbooks which included a discussion on binary arithmetic that he first conceived the idea of using binary arithmetic for computation in his computer.

Atanasoff became interested in mathematics in 1913, working with his father's sliderule and seeking to understand the mathematical principles

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