

WEDNESDAY

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CSU professor wins top philosophy prize

By **RAHAF KALAAJI**

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Who is Holmes Rolston III? That question doesn't need to be asked in philosophy circles. Rolston, a University Distinguished Professor at Colorado State University, is recognized as the founder of environmental ethics; a prolific thinker who brought science, religion and nature together in unprecedented ways.

His international stature was cemented when Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, pre-

sented him with the Templeton Prize, philosophy's equivalent of the Nobel Prize, which came with a check for about \$1.2 million. Rolston received the honor last week at a private ceremony at Buckingham Palace.

"It's one of life's surprises to be at a place like CSU and end up with an invitation to receive a (\$1.2) million prize from Prince Philip," Rolston said this week after returning from England. "It's kind of a funny feeling because you know you're not a great celebrity."

Rolston, 70, also was honored by CSU President Albert Yates at an invitation dinner Tuesday night. The Templeton Prize, given annually for research or discoveries that advance the understanding of spiritual issues, is perhaps the greatest honor a CSU faculty member has ever received.

Rolston used the entire award to establish an endowed chair in science and religion at his alma mater, Davidson College in

See **PROFESSOR**/Page A2**PROFESSOR
HONORED:**

CSU professor Holmes Rolston III, left, is congratulated by Prince Philip, the Duke of Edinburgh, after receiving the 2003 Templeton Prize on May 7 at Buckingham Palace in London.

Courtesy
Rowland Barran

Bombings tied

Building still

Professor

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North Carolina, something he wanted to do to create a lasting impact. Hours after receiving the check, he presented it to a Davidson vice president.

"Now I'm prepared to claim that I was a millionaire for six hours," joked Rolston.

After presenting him with the award, Prince Philip chatted with Rolston for about 20 minutes. The two men share an interest in conservation, which has been the focus of Rolston's career for five decades, including 35 years at CSU.

Jane Compson, a graduate student finishing a master's degree in philosophy, said Rolston was one of the main reasons she chose to leave England and attend CSU.

"In his classes, he works us very hard, and we feel that we are training from the master," Compson said. "But at the same time, he's very approachable. He doesn't have all the airs and graces that you would expect from someone of his status."

Rolston established the journal *Environmental Ethics* in 1979 and wrote groundbreaking books "Science and Religion — A Critical Study" in 1986 and "Environmental Ethics" in 1987. The entertainment center and coffee table in his living room are overflowing with dozens of books to which he has contributed.

In 1997-98, Rolston was selected to deliver the world-famous Gifford Lectures at the Universi-

ty of Edinburgh. His lectures, published in 1999 as "Genes, Genesis and God," further substantiated his position as one of the world's leading philosophers.

"We can name Holmes' world-famous achievements, but that leaves out the daily duties that lead to those achievements," said Rolston's friend and philosophy department chairman Ron Williams. "He's quiet and efficient and very intelligent. And as you would expect for someone who has won such a prestigious prize, he's a hard worker."

Rolston said he works seven days a week, 365 days a year. But he can't distinguish between work and play because he enjoys teaching and he enjoys studying and learning from nature. His wife of 47 years, Jane, sometimes accompanies him on hikes and camping trips.

The son and grandson of clergymen, Rolston also is a Presbyterian pastor. As a philosopher, he encourages respecting nature. As a theologian, Rolston advocates revering it.

"Things in nature — the animals, the plants — have value in themselves," he said. "They have value independent of human beings. ... When humans put that value in jeopardy, we have a duty and an obligation to take it into account."

His love of nature is intertwined with his religious background and his interest in science.

"There's a lot of material in the

Bible that supports a sacred nature, that supports a good creation," Rolston said. "Science plays into this in that science enriches our capacity to appreciate biodiversity."

Rolston has sat in on dozens of science classes at CSU. His interests, including the aesthetic appeal of nature, environmental ethics, biodiversity and endangered species conservation, have been expanded by being in Colorado's scenic environment.

"I had a good academic and institutional environment to match the natural environment," Rolston said. "I guess when you put a philosopher in a stimulating natural environment and a stimulating intellectual environment, you produce a prize-winner."

Williams said he is impressed with how Rolston balances life as an internationally renowned scholar with that of a professor at CSU. Rolston plans to continue teaching for a few years.

"Many students come here because they've heard of (Rolston)," Williams said. "He's one of those professors that you remember from your school days, that spoke with authority because he invented part of the field."

Compson turned to Rolston for advice and tips when she got a job teaching environmental ethics at the University of Central Florida.

"He just gives the impression of enjoying teaching. He loves his students," she said. "It's been a great privilege to work with him and learn from him."