HAIL AND FAREWELL

For most people, libraries are likely to be fairly grim caves defended by watchdog librarians to whom the lending of a book is far less desirable than its return.

One library, however, our own, has constantly violated this concept without sacrificing efficiency. Indeed, no library has been so warmly willing to grant a request, so warmly apologetic to recall a book because it was needed elsewhere.

The person almost totally responsible for this library is, as almost everyone in NIH and PHS knows, Miss Margaret Doonan. And it is now, to the certain sadness of both her friends and colleagues, that we unwillingly announce her retirement after thirty years in the Public Health Service.

The NIH-PHS library had a long history before it moved to Bethesda in 1942. That history goes back to the time in 1920 when Miss Doonan began the library in the filing room of PHS’s old Butler Building, now torn down. The library then, Miss Doonan recalls, consisted of several hundred books scattered far and wide through PHS offices. Miss Doonan collected them, put them in the only places available - on desks or in filing cabinets - and then settled down to work.

Today, the NIH-PHS library numbers 60,000 carefully classified volumes, including the most complete collection of State Health Board publications in America. Where in the early days the library employed a staff of three, sixteen employees now work under Miss Doonan’s wing.

Their tasks are many and complex - further complicated by the fact that the library serves not only NIH but Public Health Service workers both in Washington and in the field. Some 150 book requests daily are handled by Miss Doonan’s staff. And this service is specially geared for busy scientists; the NIH library is one of few which both delivers and calls for books.

Miss Doonan’s work, however, will not cease with her retirement. At the end of June she plans a month abroad. And on her return to her home in Washington, she will then “be housekeeper, seamstress, cook and secretary for my sister.”

To everyone Miss Doonan sends this goodbye: “Life has been very good in allowing me to be associated for so long with the Public Health Service.”

NIH ADVANCES

COSMIC RAY STUDY

A fundamental advance in the photographic method of detecting cosmic ray particle tracks was recently made by Dr. Herman Yagoda of the Experimental Biology and Medicine Institute, NIH, and described at the Washington meeting of the American Physical Society.

Commercial photographic plates used to record these tracks have a very thin coating of emulsion - too thin to show the tracks in their entire range.

Thick plates are needed to slow down the particles, and these are provided by the new method of Dr. Yagoda.

The method is to melt a silver bromide and gelatin mixture, and to cast it into blocks of emulsion two inches in diameter and a quarter of an inch thick. All water is removed from the block before exposure, at which time the sensitive emulsion is about two millimeters thick. This is sufficient to give greatly improved pictures of such nuclear events as the double nuclear evaporation process.

This process consists of the formation of “stars,” a cataclysmic nuclear event in which a group of densely ionized tracks radiates from a common center. These stars show the tracks of the charged fragments of a nucleus that has disintegrated with explosive violence.

HOW DOES YOUR GARDEN GROW?

If you were to drive by Building T-6 any one of these Saturday or Sunday afternoons, you would see whole families busy at work on the NIH garden plots. Mother and father are weeding and digging, while the small fry run shrieking up and down the hills, sometimes aiding, sometimes defeating the general effort.

According to Mr. May’s office, the Building’s Management Branch, all 90 plots (35 x 40 feet) are under active cultivation. Though the land has been fertilized, graded, marked off and numbered for some time now, Mr. May’s office still receives calls from green-thumbed stragglers who wish they had signed up for their God’s little acre a month ago.

At this pre-publication moment, the green is beginning to dominate the brown. According to the latest information, the sowers are already reaping their lettuce and onions; the peas are in bloom, lima beans and string beans are six inches high; and the beets have just broken earth.

Other vegetable births are expected soon - carrots, corn, tomatoes - and it may be that June and July will even see a riot of phlox, sweet peas, and zinnias.
SNAIL KILLING DRUGS
EFFECTIVE IN FIELD

A group of chemicals capable of killing the snail that serves as the intermediate host of Schistosoma mansoni, cause of schistosomiasis in man, was recently tested in Puerto Rico by Dr. Elmer G. Berry of the Laboratory of Tropical Diseases, Microbiological Institute.

The chemicals were used in sprays, as a powder, and in solution. Even in minute quantities, they were highly effective.

In Puerto Rico, schistosomiasis is prevalent and constitutes a major public health problem.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Seminar: Drs. Paul D. Altland and Benjamin Highman of the Physical Biology Lab, EBMI, will speak on "The Effects of Exposure to High Altitude and Studies on Experimental Endocarditis" at Top Cottage on Thursday, June 8th at 4:00 P.M.

Lecture: Dr. L. C. Dunn of Columbia University was guest speaker for the Biology Discussion Group, NCI, at Top Cottage on May 29. His subject, "Relation Between Mutations of the Mouse and Abnormal Development."

Honors: From the Societe Francaise de Mineralogie et de Cristallographie in France, comes word that Dr. Ralph W. G. Wyckoff, Scientist Director of the Laboratory of Physical Biology, EBMI, was unanimously elected an honorary member of the Societe at their General Assembly early this year.

At the U.S. Pharmacopoeial Convention in Washington recently, Medical Director William G. Workman was elected to the General Committee of Revision of the U.S. Pharmacopoeia. Dr. Workman is Chief of the Laboratory of Biologies Control, of the Microbiological Institute, NIH.

Without instruments to increase the range of man's senses, medical science might still be in the dark ages. New and better instruments have paved the way for the progress of medical research. Particularly is this true in the study of cardiovascular disorders.

The Technical Development Section of NIH, headed by Dr. Bert R. Boone, is helping to develop instrumentation for heart research. Associated with Dr. Boone are Dr. Robert L. Bowman, Dr. William F. Oliver, Mr. Frank Noble, and Mr. Arthur H. Aldrich.

Two instruments now being developed by the Section are the electrokymograph and the sphygmo-audiometer.

The electrokymograph records the motions of the chambers of the heart and blood vessels. X-rays passing through the patient produce a pulsating silhouette of his heart on a fluoroscopic screen. The image is picked up by the electrokymograph's photoelectric "eye," and pulsations are relayed to an electrocardiograph, which records them on a permanent graphic record called an electrokymogram.

It has been found that there are characteristic motions of the heart in health and characteristically altered ones in disease. The electrokymograph is being used and evaluated by research investigators in various parts of the country.

The sphygmo-audiometer is an instrument designed to facilitate the measurement of blood pressure in a limb. Progress to date against circulatory diseases of the lower extremities, such as gangrene and immersion foot, has been hindered by lack of accurate means for measuring blood pressure in this region.

The sphygmo-audiometer consists of two short-wave transmitters that operate at different frequencies. When the instrument is applied to the leg, a variable tone is heard with each heart beat, and characteristic variations in pitch indicate the local systolic pressure.
CALL EXTENSION 607

Since this issue marks the first anniversary of the NIH Record, we thought it as good a time as any to take stock and make some resolutions for the new year.

Glancing back at past issues, we thought that some things had turned out happily. The Record had come to have a good, crisp look about it, and generally it had managed to keep people informed about the doings of our scientists.

In some ways, however, we thought it had failed. In particular, the Record had not achieved that sense of domestic intimacy which characterizes the life of people who have worked together for a long time. While we spoke of scientific achievement, we did not speak of scientists; and too infrequently we did not speak of the vast numbers of NIH people who make scientific research possible.

This, more than anything else, we have decided to rectify. And in this issue we have added two new features to the Record which we hope will partially turn the trick. STAFF AND DISTAFF (p. 3) is the first of a series of profiles on just NIH people. HERE AND THERE (p. 4) is to be a regular column of commentary on various aspects of NIH life.

Both of these columns, of course, are not enough to cover the vast number of things which happen daily among 1,500 men and women. For these things, however, we need the help of those who have participated in or observed them. The new virus strain or filing system, the better mouse trap or tulip, are matters which too frequently develop and die behind our back. And too frequently these are matters of interest or amusement to everyone.

In this sense, the future of the NIH record - how readable it is, how representative of your interests and activities - depends on you. In short, whatever you conceive of as being a story should be passed on to us. Simply dial extension 607, and start talking.

NIH Record

Vol. II, No. 10 - 5 June 1950

Staff and Distaff

Edward Marcey

In the approximately 25 square miles of Loudon County, Virginia, the farmers have been long accustomed to seeing a spare, gray-haired man rambling through their yards and over their fields with a burlap bag in his hands. That man is Edward Marcey, Lab Technician to Dr. C. W. Emmons, Head of the Mycology Unit of the Laboratory of Infectious Diseases, NIH.

Since four persons died in Loudon County of a rare fungus infection called histoplasmosis, Dr. Emmons has been studying the means of its transmittal. Though Loudon County has not suffered from histoplasmosis for many years, its immediate area, so close to NIH makes it ideally convenient for NIH research purposes.

Loudon County, as a matter of fact, welcomes this investigation. For ever since Edward Marcey began his job of collecting animals five years ago in order to check them as hosts for histoplasmosis, Marcey's rat traps have meant tough going for grain-eating rodents. And during Marcey's tour of duty (from approximately 8 A.M. to 3 P.M., in heat, cold or rain), it is not infrequent that he receives an urgent message to take a dying cat or dog off a farmer's hands.

Marcey also traps possums, skunks and groundhogs, is proud of the fact that he doesn't use bait.

"You just have to know," he says, "that a rat isn't going to track across empty spaces. They run along the sides of barns and houses, and that's where they run into my traps." As for possums, skunks and groundhogs, Marcey knows the groundhog usually digs his "den," plus two or three escape hatches, in the open fields. "When the groundhog abandons this home," Marcey says, "it's then that the possums and skunks move in."

In his five years of trapping (Marcey has been at NIH for 33 years) he has caught some 3500 animals, for the most part, with few accidents. These include a few bites from both recalcitrant traps and rats, and just recently Marcey was victimized for the first time by an outraged skunk. "I sure was kidded in the laboratory," he says, "and I sure was glad when Dr. Emmons found a rare type of fungus in that animal."

Marcey's job, however, is no pastoral ramble. When he returns to NIH, somewhere around 3:30 P.M., he sets to work in Dr. Emmons' laboratory. He makes a notation on each animal - when caught and where. And then he goes to work making analyses and cultures of the liver, spleen, and adrenal glands of the day's catch. About 2 1/2 percent of the rats Marcey has collected have been infected with histoplasmosis.

Marcey also keeps an eye on Dr. Emmons' 1,000 odd fungus cultures, transfers old ones to new media when they show signs of dying.

But the part of his job that Marcey likes best is hunting. Marcey does just that in vacation time, too, and last year, on annual leave "came back" with a bag of game - including one wild turkey. To Marcey and the friendly farmers in the area, it seemed natural that he should play where he works - in Loudon County, Virginia.
HERE AND THERE

Like everyone else in NIH, we received a memorandum from the Chief of the Buildings Management Branch early this May informing us that C road was going to be closed for a period of approximately three weeks.

In paragraph 2 of this memorandum, we were informed exactly where C road was - a complicated description, which, incidentally, we were not able to read through. And from the complaints we’ve heard from car drivers stopped at C road these troubled mornings, no one else seems to have read it carefully either.

We’re not going to editorialize too much about road C. In passing, however, we should like to mention that where there is a road C, there must naturally be roads A and B. But then what of road D - and up to roads X, Y, and Z? With all the construction going on, we’re certain that these roads do or will exist...and, indeed, we’ve already heard the rumor of a scientist being impaled on the tines of a wandering steam shovel while working over a hot beaker. What road was that?

This is all not to the point, however. What really bothers us most of all is the memorandum itself. Why a memorandum, we ask, when the greatest nonscientific advance of this verbal century has been the road sign? What purity of style, we think, what dignity and sternness of purpose Mr. May would have revealed if he had planted his memorandum squarely in the center of the road and on it - nothing but the word STOP.

However, we sympathize with Mr. May, an extremely efficient Chief of Buildings Management. For STOP might well be our motto on those days when we have to sit down with a #2 Dixon and a yellow pad. It is then that our eyes dull, our breathing becomes labored, and we slowly entangle the prose that nobody wants to travel.

The Cafeteria

For some time now we’ve been bending an attentive ear to the usual grumblings sounded in NIH corridors. Since some of these complaints have concerned the cafeteria, we decided to speak to Mrs. Featherstonehaugh, the cafeteria’s manager for the past twelve years.

We found Mrs. Featherstonehaugh to be a pleasant, grey-haired woman who was glad to talk to us. Featherstonehaugh, we found out, is an old English name, and as far as this country is concerned, has come down from the Chief Surveyor of the Louisiana Purchase.

Bringing matters back to here and now, Mrs. Featherstonehaugh agreed that all was not quite the smooth dining it ought to be in the cafeteria. It was true, she said, that the sandwiches usually ran out sometime around noon and the desserts shortly after. In both these cases, it is not for want of either; and as for sandwiches, the remedy is clear— they will be made up on request. As for desserts... well, that would be a matter between Mrs. Featherstonehaugh and the attendants who should be keeping the shelves replenished. We wish Mrs. Featherstonehaugh and ourselves the best of luck.

Mrs. Featherstonehaugh, in return, made only one request. To insure that staples, especially meat, are always in good supply, she asks that anyone expecting a fair number of visiting firemen for lunch should inform her of that fact sometime in advance. Mrs. Featherstonehaugh’s position is that of a friendly and anxious hostess, and we feel her request is not unreasonable.