Reminiscences of an Editor 1959–1969

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For almost all of the 10 year span, 1959–1969, the editorship of The Journal of Nutrition was a true partnership. In fact, as will soon be made clear, this was really a four-party partnership. But let me start at the beginning and in some semblance of order, I will explain how it came to be not one, but four editors of The Journal of Nutrition during this period.

It all began on a nice fall day in 1958. My family and I had moved to Ithaca where I had become Dean of The Graduate School of Nutrition at Cornell University. We were now in the process of building a new home. Two good friends from Rochester, New York, Sig Nasset and Philip Harris, had just driven to Ithaca to see me. To my surprise and consternation, they had come to convince me that I should become the next Editor of The Journal of Nutrition. Dr. Cowgill had already announced his intention to retire. Needless to say, I accepted, but believe me, not without a struggle. Actually, I recognized the great honor they were paying me. At the same time, I realized that as head of a small School of Nutrition, I had many resources that could be routed into the Journal activities and would lighten the load considerably. In addition, Cornell had many outstanding nutritional scientists who probably could be called upon to help on different jobs at different times. However, of most immediate importance, a professional nutritionist who also was an excellent writer and manuscript editor was a staff member of my new school. Undoubtedly, it was the availability of this person, Mrs. Kathleen Berresford, that convinced me, if approved by AIN, I should take on the editorship job.

Before I officially assumed this office, I had the privilege of becoming well acquainted with my predecessor, Dr. George R. Cowgill. It was easy to see why he had become recognized as one of the great nutritional scientists of his time and in addition he had a wonderful sense of humor. I developed a great admiration and fondness for him. Parenthetically, I might add that his wife at that time, the former Mrs. Harry Deuel, and I had known each other years before in California. Together with my wife, Marjorie, we had a number of good times together.

Dr. Cowgill’s assistant, Dr. Hubbell, and Kathleen Berresford immediately began work on the 1949–1959 decennial index of The Journal. Dr. Hubbell had already started the necessary card indexing, but there was much more work to be done before this index could be published. Another urgent job that had to be handled without delay was to redesign The Journal format. This meant having the new format and also the edited manuscripts in the hands of Wistar Press of Philadelphia by July 1959 to be available for the September 1959 issue. Together with Mrs. Berresford and with numerous contacts with Wistar, we made this deadline. When I officially became Editor and manuscripts were routed to me, Mrs. Berresford set up a filing system so that each manuscript could be followed through its perilous journey to reviewers, back to the Editor’s desk, and frequently back to the authors for revision. What a remarkably able assistant she was in handling these sometimes complicated details and then, finally, the big job of copyediting the corrected and approved manuscript.

It was my understanding that Dr. Cowgill did a great deal of the editing of manuscripts, but believe me, it was a good thing for all concerned that I did not have to assume this very difficult and tedious

job. My talents along these lines had been sadly neglected.

At this point, the fledgling editorial office had two editors. However, with more and more manuscripts, it soon became apparent that either I had to stay in Ithaca more of the time, or I would have to have an associate who could make decisions concerning members of the Editorial Board or others who would be competent to review a given manuscript. Furthermore, decisions had to be made concerning the adequacy of an author's revision, and finally, the acceptability of a manuscript for publication. This was accomplished by establishing an Associate Editor position, and the first Associate Editor to be so named was Cornell Professor of Radiation Biology, Cyril L. Comar. Unfortunately, Dr. Comar found himself confronted with the same heavy load of on-campus and off-campus obligations that I was having. In 1963 he resigned from this position. Again the good fortune of being surrounded on the Cornell Campus by highly competent nutrition scientists paid off, and I was able to convince Harold H. Williams, Professor of Biochemistry, to assume the responsibilities of Associate Editor.

Both former editors of The Journal, Dr. Murlin and Dr. Cowgill, had persons they designated as Assistant to the Editor, and Dr. Mitchell served as Associate Editor with Dr. Cowgill. In each instance they were residents of an institution some distance away from the Editor's office. My system of having an Associate Editor based at the same institution as the Editor proved to be highly satisfactory. Both of us worked out of one editorial office which made it possible to use the same office staff with a single set of working files. I am sure this system has made it much easier and less confusing for an Associate Editor to substitute for the Editor. I have noted that Dr. Hill has continued this same principle in appointing an Associate Editor.

With the continued growth and complexity of The Journal of Nutrition, and the need to provide the Editor with more time free from Journal affairs, came another important editorial appointment, the establishment of a Biographical Editor. The biographical sketches in The Journal of Nutrition were begun in 1944 by Dr. Cowgill, not only in his capacity as Editor, but also as the first author of one of the sketches. However, with my limited knowledge of the history of nutrition, I found it necessary to write numerous letters and make many telephone calls trying to line up authors and subjects to meet necessary deadlines for printing of these sketches. It was a lucky day for me when I asked Dr. E. Neige Todhunter, then Dean of the School of Home Economics at the University of Alabama, to take over the responsibility for the sketches and she accepted. For the next eleven years, 1963 to 1974, she held the title of Biographical Editor, serving with two Editors of The Journal, myself and beginning in 1969 with Dr. Fredric W. Hill. Her interest and knowledge of the history of nutrition has added greatly to the prestige and value of these biographical sketches.

So, with Kathleen Berresford, Harold Williams, and Neige Todhunter, this Editor spent a relaxing and rewarding 10 years with The Journal of Nutrition. We did have one very large job to do before everyone could relax, and that was the completion of the decennial index covering 1949 to 1959, as was mentioned earlier, and then setting up an improved system for cumulative indexing the next 10 years. Again Mrs. Berresford came through with flying colors and it wasn't long before the indexing job became routine month by month.

The years 1959 to 1969 have a special significance in the history of The Journal of Nutrition. In 1958, a committee was appointed to evaluate The Journal and to look into its relationship with the American Institute of Nutrition and the Wistar Institute, who owned The Journal and had been its publisher. This committee made a number of recommendations that have greatly improved The Journal. However, I want to comment on just one of these
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recommendations that brought about a most interesting experience for me. It was recommended the American Institute of Nutrition recover ownership of The Journal of Nutrition and publish it as its official journal. Although necessary negotiations were definitely outside the realm of my responsibilities, there were a number of details related to the timing of manuscripts, copyediting and marking of manuscripts for typesetters that I had to work out with Wistar. This gave me a most fascinating insight into the printing and publishing business.

The Wistar Press has long been recognized for its excellence in printing and especially for the high quality of its halftone reproductions of anatomical and morphological photographs. They printed color as well as black and white reproductions. However, the preparation of color plates was farmed out to others while black and white engravings were done in their own shops. This was their specialty and the printed black and white reproductions were claimed to be as good as those produced by any printers in the world. Of course, The Journal of Nutrition has relatively few photomicrographs, but the great majority of Wistar publications, principally journals dealing with anatomic and morphologic subject matter, do utilize these techniques of reproduction extensively.

Transfer of ownership from Wistar to the American Institute of Nutrition took place over a period of several years. In a way, the first step occurred in 1962 when a two year contract was established with Wistar which, among other items, called for Wistar to underwrite the expenses of the editorial office. In addition, AIN was to set page charges and to collect such charges from authors. Furthermore, subscription income was to be divided equally between Wistar and AIN. A number of other important details were included which have been described in Harold Williams’ excellent history of The American Institute of Nutrition upon which I have depended for much of the factual information that is presented in this paper.

The first page charge to authors was set at $20 per page. However, if the author did not have the necessary funds, no charge was to be made. Somewhat later the method of charging authors for part of the costs of publication was changed to our present procedure which is based upon reprint charges.

Early in 1968 negotiations with Wistar were completed and The Journal of Nutrition became the property of the American Institute of Nutrition with the Wistar Press continuing as printer of The Journal. Actually the changes in management of The Journal that have been cited above did in part involve this Editor, although only in an advisory capacity. A very dedicated and active Publication Management Committee carried the responsibility for all negotiations and changes in financial policy.

One very sad event, and the only occurrence that marred an otherwise pleasant 10 years in office, was the death of Dr. William N. Pearson. Dr. Pearson, Professor and Associate Director of the Division of Nutrition at Vanderbilt University had been named to succeed me as Editor, January 1, 1969. On Thanksgiving Day, November 28, 1968, he and his 12 year old son were killed in an automobile accident. His death was a great loss, not only to his family, but also to many professional associates and friends. We had worked together, traveled together and had enjoyed each other as friends and associates in many projects over a period of years.

In closing I would like to clarify minor inaccuracies in AIN records defining my term of office as Editor of The Journal of Nutrition. These are of little importance and I would never have realized they existed if it were not for some library checking in preparation of this manuscript.

Following completion of the Editor’s term of office, it had been a custom to present a resolution to the members of AIN at their annual meeting for their action, thanking the Editor of The Journal of Nu-
nutrition for his past services. In my case, this was done at the 1969 annual meeting and the resolution stated that my services covered the period from September 1959 to July 1969. Actually my term covered the period of July 1959 to July 1969. The reason for the 1959 error was undoubtedly due to the three months delay from submission of manuscripts to Wistar and their final printing. In fact, Mrs. Berresford and I were hard at work long before July 1959, for much had to be done in addition to the processing of new manuscripts. However, the first recognition of the new Editor occurred in the September 1959 issue.

The July 1969 termination of my Editorship is correct, although on at least one document the year is given as 1968. The date was originally supposed to have been January 1969, but due to the death of Bill Pearson, I remained Editor for an additional six months. During this extension a new replacement was being named and he was to have time to work out some of the complexities of starting a new job. Actually, since the new Editor was Professor Fredric Hill at the University of California, Davis, this move went very smoothly. Dr. Hill and I were colleagues at Cornell University and had been close friends for a number of years.

I have many pleasant memories of this ten year period of my life, mostly of the wonderful people with whom I worked; Harold Williams, Kathleen Berresford and other close editorial associates, including 52, yes 52, members of the Editorial Board, that served either full or part terms with me. Particularly pleasant have been my years of association with Lee Kline and Gilda Knight of the AIN staff.

The American Institute of Nutrition is truly a quality organization and it was an honor to have served its membership.