
On the Presentation of the Proctor Medal of the
Association for Research in Ophthalmology

to

Antoinette Pirie

The Proctor Award was established in 1947 in memory of Dr. Francis I. Proctor, a Boston ophthalmologist. After his retirement, Dr. Proctor settled in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and became interested in the health problems of the American Indians. He was particularly interested in trachoma and initiated a research program to learn more about this disease. Through this experience, he began to appreciate the important role investigative work could play in ophthalmology. In view of Dr. Proctor's intense interest in promoting basic research in ophthalmology, upon his death, Mrs. Proctor founded this award in his name. The Award is presented annually to an individual for distinguished contributions to ophthalmology. The list of the Proctor Medal Awardees reads like the "Who's Who" in Ophthalmology. Infrequently this Award goes to an ophthalmic scientist or ophthalmologist who lives abroad. Included in this group are Dr. Norman Ashton, Sir Stewart Duke-Elder, and Dr. Hans Goldman. Tonight we are, indeed, honored to add to this select group Dr. Antoinette Pirie, The Margaret Ogilvie's Reader in Ophthalmology, and a Professorial Fellow of Somerville College of Oxford University.

Dr. Pirie was born in London and lived on its outskirts until she went to Cambridge. Her father was a pharmacist and botanist. She went to a large boarding

school for girls where she met two outstanding teachers who influenced Tony greatly. One was a poetry mistress, who used to weep with excitement over Keats and Shelley, and the other, obviously, was the chemistry mistress, who allowed her to camp in the laboratory all night if necessary. Probably Tony's later enthusiasms can be traced to these two imaginative teachers.

When Tony was at Cambridge University, she married a fellow graduate student, Bill Pirie, and after a few years they both gained their Ph.D. on the same day. This was a first for Cambridge to have a husband and wife receive their doctorates simultaneously. Another prize the Pories received at about the same time was in the form of their baby son, John.

Early in her postgraduate period, Tony did a considerable amount of work on viruses. She became interested in bacteriophage and found that one of its actions simulated the effect of lysozyme on mucopolysaccharide. Her studies interested Dr. Karl Meyer and resulted in an invitation to work in New York. Tony was so excited about continuing her phage work in New York that she took little note of the fact that she was working in the Department of Ophthalmology. The War came, she returned to England, and teamed up with Dr. Ida Mann, a well-known ophthalmologist. Tony became the bio-

chemist on a team that was studying the effect of war gases on the eye. In 1942, Dr. Mann went to Oxford to open the Nuffield Laboratory of Ophthalmology. It was during this time that Tony's horizons were broadened by being in contact with Dr. Mann, and by the many fascinating problems in ophthalmology. Tony acquired the foundation and interest in all the eye tissues—not only their biochemistry but also the details of cellular structure from the point of view of their embryology, development, and pathology. This was an invaluable period in which she began as a biochemist and emerged as an ophthalmic scientist. Since that time she has put to good use the unusual ability to consider a tissue as a whole, correlating biochemistry with form, function, and disease.

Dr. Mann left in 1949 and Tony was appointed head of the laboratory. Under her care the laboratory has flourished. There has been an increase in space and in research activities. They now have four senior staff members, 3 postgraduate, 5 graduate student, 6 technicians, and a fluctuating population of experimental animals. She has assembled an outstanding

group which has contributed tremendously to our knowledge of eye biochemistry.

Dr. Pirie's personal research has covered the biochemistry, morphology, and pathology of all ocular tissues. However, her main concentration has been on the lens and cataracts. She and her colleague, Dr. Ruth van Heyningen, have made the most significant contributions to understanding the underlying mechanisms in the development of experimental cataracts.

Ophthalmology is indeed fortunate to have a leader like Tony Pirie who, although trained as a biochemist, is also well versed in ophthalmology. This blend allows her to know how the special talents of a biochemist can best be directed in studying blinding eye diseases. It is due time that her invaluable contributions to ophthalmology be formally recognized. And so tonight it is my happy chore, in behalf of the Association for Research in Ophthalmology, to present this prestigious award, the Proctor Medal, to an outstanding scientist and a most gracious person, Dr. Antoinette Pirie.

Jin H. Kinoshita