
Tribute

Paul Eston Lacy, MD, PhD

It was a wonderful birthday celebration. Because Paul Eston Lacy would turn 80 on 7 February 2005, luminaries in the field of islet transplantation from around the world came to honor him in Philadelphia on 1 December 2004. Lee Ducat of NDRI (National Disease Research Interchange) carefully selected the speakers and artfully managed the affair. Pictures of Paul holding his signature pipe seemed to be everywhere. So did Paul, grinning graciously, enthusiastically greeting his many friends and admirers. The large audience heard scientific presentations, sharp questions, circumspect answers (and a few edgy ones), and enjoyed interactive meals. His old-time friends presented him with a bound volume of personal letters of tribute. The first Paul E. Lacy Medal was awarded to James Shapiro of Edmonton. Paul himself spoke effortlessly and knowingly of the history of islet transplantation and made predictions for the future. His life-long passion and dedication to curing patients of diabetes was never more evident. He was his usual robust, folksy, confident, and humble self. One could not have suspected, nor did many know, that he had pulmonary fibrosis. He did reach his 80th birthday, but died 8 days later. His death surprised many, but as grief abated, everyone knew this was a storybook ending to a full and creative life of a scientific colossus, a caring human, and a vintage scholar and gentleman.

Many tributes have already been written for Paul (1–5). What more is to be said? These tributes have told sweet stories about a sweet man. They have provided testimonies about his dedication as a founder of NDRI and the Juvenile Diabetes Foundation, as well as his pioneering work in islet transplantation. However, little has been made of his meteoric rise and distinction in academic medicine. He received a Bachelor of Arts (cum laude) from Ohio State University in 1945 and a Doctorate of Medicine (cum laude) from OSU in 1948. Next, he was an intern at White Cross Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, for 1 year, followed by 2 years in the U.S. Army as a medical ward officer. He then journeyed northward to specialize in pathology and receive a Doctorate of Philosophy from the Mayo Foundation and the University of Minnesota. His first academic position was as Instructor in Pathology at Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis in 1955, and he very soon was appointed as Assistant Professor and Assistant Dean in 1957. Remarkably, he was Associate Professor for less than a year, and was appointed as the Mallinckrodt Professor and Chairman of the Department, as well as Pathologist-in-Chief at Barnes Hospital, in 1961. He held these posts until 1985, when he



was named the Robert L. Kroc Professor of Pathology and retired as Professor Emeritus in 1995.

In previous tributes, insufficient emphasis was given to the awards Paul received during his academic journey. They were numerous and prestigious. Among them were election to membership in Phi Beta Kappa and Alpha Omega Alpha. He was awarded the British Diabetes Association's Banting Award in 1963, the American Diabetes Association's Banting Award in 1970, and an honorary Doctorate in Medicine by Uppsala University in 1977. The U.S. National Academy of Sciences, the most prestigious scientific society in this country, elected him to membership in 1983. He was President of the American Association of Pathologists in 1983. Washington University established the Paul and Ellen Lacy Professorship in Pathology in 1999 and appointed Paul as the first recipient.

Full examination of Paul's curriculum vitae reveals that

his publication record is broad and long, but it too has received insufficient attention. To put the record straight, he had 335 full publications and 149 scientific abstracts. The majority of these publications record his scientific contributions to islet transplantation. He contributed importantly to the techniques of islet isolation, but more importantly he gets full credit for critical firsts in islet transplantation. He was the first person to cure a diabetic rodent with transplanted islets, as reported in the celebrated paper written by W.F. Ballinger and Paul in *Surgery* (6). He was senior author on the first reports of an automated method to isolate islets (7) and on the first islet transplant in a human diabetic patient (8), thereby establishing freedom from exogenous insulin treatment. However, it also needs to be emphasized that during his long investigative career, he published in other scientific areas: islet biochemistry, immune mechanisms for transplant rejection, electron microscopy of the islet, mechanisms of insulin secretion, and encapsulation of islets for transplantation. A major gem in his crown is the large number of young people who flocked to Paul's lab for training. Here they encountered wise mentorship and generosity in sharing of credit of the first order; doubtlessly, these were major factors in the fame many of them would later achieve.

Paul will be long remembered for all these things and more. These memories will bring a smile to the faces of his colleagues and warmth to those within his large family (10 grandchildren!) who loved him dearly. No man had a more excellent career, and none managed it with more intelligence, grace, wisdom, and generosity.

R. Paul Robertson, MD

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