Milton O. Lee
1901-1978

Milton O. Lee departed from the active scientific community on Sunday, November 19, in Sarasota, Florida, leaving a legacy of sound original contributions in endocrinology and inspirational service to the American Physiological Society and the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology resulting in the development of these societies to a peak of excellence unsurpassed by any other scientific organization.

Dr. Lee was born in Conneaut, Ohio, September 8, 1901, and received his A.B., A.M., and Ph.D. at Ohio State University. From 1926 to 1942 he was Research Physiologist and Deputy Director of the Neuro-Endocrine Research Foundation at the Harvard Medical School. In 1926 he was elected to membership in the American Physiological Society, beginning the many years of active and contributory service to the Society.

He served in the Army as Nutrition Consultant at the Fourth Service Command Headquarters in Atlanta, Georgia, from 1943 to 1945, and from 1945 to 1946 as Senior Military Government Officer for the island of Hokkaido, Japan, with the rank of Lt. Colonel.

He assumed the office of Executive Secretary of the American Physiological Society in 1947 and in the same year he became Executive Director of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology. Over the years his title with the Federation changed from Executive Director to Federation Secretary to Executive Officer. The American Physiological Society experienced a rapid growth in members and activities, and finally the combined responsibilities of serving both offices became so great that in 1966 he reluctantly had to relinquish some of his Physiological Society commitments to take on the greater task of integrating the growth of the Federation. However, he continued to serve the Society as Managing Editor of its journals until his retirement in 1966.

During the period of Dr. Lee’s administrative leadership, the Federation enjoyed rapid growth. In 1949 the six Societies comprising the Federation had a total membership of 3,448; today it numbers nearly 18,000. In April of his retirement year, 1965, the total registration at the Federation’s Annual Meeting was 18,957 and 3,430 papers were delivered, as compared with 3,157 registrants and 1,304 papers in 1949.

At the time of Dr. Lee’s initial appointment, the Federation had no home of its own; the National Academy of Sciences provided quarters for the FASEB staff of four people who also served the American Physiological Society. Today the Federation enjoys a beautiful headquarters at Beaumont, an 11-acre tract of land at 9650 Rockville Pike, on the outskirts of Bethesda near the National Institutes of Health, the National Naval Medical Center, and the National Library of Medicine. All six of the constituent Societies (American Physiological Society, American Society of Biological Chemists, American Society for Pharmacology and Experimental Therapeutics, American Association of Pathologists, American Institute of Nutrition, and American Association of Immunologists) maintain offices at Beaumont. In addition to the store house originally converted to offices when Beaumont was acquired in 1954, a new five-story office building had been constructed. Under Dr. Lee’s leadership, the number of employees comprising the FASEB staff grew from 4 to 91.

Among his other accomplishments, he has served as Executive Secretary for the Division of Biology and Agriculture, NAS-NRC; as Executive Secretary of the American Institute of Biological Sciences; President of the American Documentation Institute; Chairman of the Conference of Biological Editors; Treasurer of the International Federation of Documentation; Member of the Panel on Scientific Information of the President’s Science Advisory Committee; and as consultant for several documentation-communication groups, a field in which he long had had a deep interest and on which he left an impact that has led to the development of a full-fledged field of scientific inquiry.

He was one of three co-chairmen responsible for organizing the first International Conference on Scientific Information in 1956. He was a member of the Panel on Scientific Information of the President’s Science Advisory Committee from 1961 to 1966. He was one of the founders of the Conan Scientific Information of the President’s Science Advisory Committee from 1961 to 1966. He was one of the founders of the Conference of Managing Officers of Scientific Societies.

Although Milton Lee retired from active service, he continued his participation in the affairs of the societies with unstinted devotion. In 1966 he and his wife, Helen Maynew, whom he married in 1923, moved to Miami, Florida and in 1971 to Sarasota. He continued his interest in science by engaging in volunteer work at Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Lee’s contributions to the Federation were expressed in part by the tribute paid to him upon the occasion of his retirement in 1965 by Dr. Philip Handler, then President of the Federation: “In most such organizations it falls to the lot of one or two people to be the dreamers or schemers, to design that which they are to be. Most organizations find reason to object, protest, drag their feet, and that has been our role. You understood the Federation would grow, seemed to have understood what we as scientists would not quite understand. The words we used to describe ourselves -- biochemists, physiologists, immunologists, etc., would lose their meaning unless the Federation were really a mechanism of bringing together what is in effect today a single
discipline. You understood that the Federation could become a voice for experimental science in the United States, in a growing political arena. You foresaw the need for scientists to participate in a set of communications processes. I can remember many a long evening in which the Board said you nay. I never did quite understand how you got up with that. I thought that many times you must have gone home and had several drinks to quiet the anger which must certainly have welled up as your best-laid plans were put back in the ice box again. And most of those plans nevertheless, have become reality over the course of time. . . . The Federation is a tribute to you as a planner, dreamer, schemer, conviver and organizer.

Without question the vision and leadership of Milton C. Lee was the major contributing factor to the growth and influence of the Federation of American Societies for Experimental Biology and its rise to national eminence.

Milton Lee's contributions to the American Physiological Society were not unrecognized by its officers and members. Although no glowing statements were made at the time of his retirement, there was no question that he had developed a pattern for the growth of the American Physiological Society and on which his successors, Drs. Doggers and Reynolds, have so successfully built to make the American Physiological Society preeminent in the world of science.

During the years Dr. Lee was engaged in research his contributions appeared in many prestigious journals and he presented papers at meetings in this country and abroad. At this time he also was consciously struggling with the problems of effective communication by and with scientists. His first efforts in this area occurred when he became the Managing Editor of Endocrinology and the Journal of Clinical Endocrinology. During World War II his interest in communication was heightened by his experiences as Nutrition Officer. His decision after the end of the war to accept the position of Executive Secretary of the American Physiological Society came only after considerable soul-searching with his collaborator and mentor, Dr. R. Hoskins. It was a decision resulting from his conclusion that biological scientists had arrived at a critical point in that their activities were at a high level but that their ability to communicate with society would be in need of encouragement and assistance.

He was a quiet, unassuming man who led by example rather than by fiat. His kindness, generosity and concern for others are well known to those who were fortunate enough to have worked with or for him. He took stands on many controversial issues, but even on such occasions his opponents admired him for his honesty and integrity. As Dr. Handler had said, many of his original ideas and stands, being somewhat ahead of their time, were finally adopted to the benefit of the Society. Society membership increased rapidly during his tenure and with it came increasingly pressing problems related to the dissemination of increased research activity. His initial responsibility as Managing Editor of the American Journal of Physiology and Physiological Reviews expanded rapidly into including the Journal of Applied Physiology and the Journal of Neurophysiology. His attention in particular to the fledgling Journal of Applied Physiology illustrated most clearly his concern for advanced communications and his ability to perceive new ways in which to bring physiology into the main stream of research developments. The development of the outstanding Handbooks of Physiology were stimulated and fostered by his concern for communication. The growing pains of the Society led to many internal problems, which were diligently presented to the Council of the Society and to its membership.

Dr. Lee was the calm force behind the solutions to these problems leading to unification and coherence in the Society's actions and decisions.

The American Physiological Society owes a great debt of gratitude to Milton C. Lee. Its successful development during the turbulent post-war years was assisted and stimulated by the quiet and persuasive work of one who was not only a good scientist but one who believed that Physiology had more to offer than its own advancement as a strong and vital discipline of the basic sciences. Dr. Lee gave us perspective and vision -- he encouraged the Society to become an essential element in the broad arena of active involvement in society as a whole. The American Physiological Society regrets his passing but looks back at his accomplishments with pleasure and appreciation.

Dr. Lee is survived by his wife, Helen Mayhew Lee, 3368 Darlington Lane, Sarasota, and two sisters, Mrs. Ray Evans of Polo, Florida and Miss Doris Lee of Bradenton, Florida.

Memorial donations may be made to Suncoast Heart Association, Inc., Sarasota County Branch, P.O. Box 3341, Sarasota, Florida 33579.

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HONORS AND AWARDS

The Institute of Medicine, established by the National Academy of Sciences for "the protection and advancement of the health of the public," elected 39 persons to a first term recently. Three APS members were recipients of this honor, their terms to begin January 1, 1979.

Robert M. Berne, Chairman and Charles Slaught Professor of Physiology, University of Virginia School of Medicine.

Stuart Bondurant, President and Dean, Albany Medical College.

Samuel O. Thier, Chairman, Department of Internal Medicine, Yale University School of Medicine.

Two APS members have received awards for their research on the cardiovascular system from the Microcirculatory Society, Inc. Both recipients are faculty members at the College of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey.

Francis P. Chinard, was honored with the Eugene M. Lands Award of 1978 for his studies on capillary permeability in the lungs and kidneys and the development of a method to assess permeability.

Wallace N. Duran was honored for his research on the exchange of substances, across the capillary walls of the cardiovascular system.