Miriam Shupp and Sophie Winton presented with 10th AANA Annual Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment

Two esteemed CRNAs were feted with the 10th Annual Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment at the AANA Annual Meeting in Chicago. The award, established in the name of the AANA's founder and first president, recognizes individuals "whose foremost dedication to excellence has furthered the art and science of nurse anesthesia."

CRNA. The prepared text of her comments on behalf of Miss Shupp follows.

"It is a great privilege to accept this award for Miriam Shupp. Miss Shupp was a charter member of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists and one of the leaders who shaped the development of the young Association.

"She became a member of the AANA Board of Trustees in 1935 and served as President from 1937 to 1940—the only person to serve three years in that office.

"Following her presidency, she again served on the Board until 1943. During that time she was chairman of the Public Relations Committee and chairman of a special committee to develop a plan for certification. From 1944 to 1946 she was chairman of the committee that planned and implemented the Qualifying Examination program.

"She was chief anesthetist at Strong Memorial Hospital in Rochester, New York from 1933 to 1945. In 1946 she succeeded Gertrude Fife as Director of the School of Anesthesia at University Hospitals of Cleveland. While there she continued to work on AANA committees, including the Advisory Committee for the Approval of Schools.

"Because of her health, she moved to Arizona in 1953 where she accepted a position as anesthetist in a 50-bed hospital in Morenci. Before her retirement in 1965, she had been made chief nurse, and found herself in charge of the dietary and housekeeping departments as well as nursing and anesthesia.

"Miss Shupp had the rare quality of being an intellectual who could put her ideas into action. She never stopped being a student and was, therefore, a great teacher. She respected her students as individuals, and instilled in them the confidence and realization of self-worth that fostered their development.

"She was a superb clinician with sound physiological orientation, and was technically innovative, having invented equipment and devised new techniques.

"She published a number of papers on education and on clinical subjects, and was probably the first to publish a report on controlled respiration with an anesthesia ventilator.

"AANA has been fortunate in having such a dedicated and capable leader as Miriam Shupp. I am so pleased to accept this award on her behalf." Miss McMahon concluded.

Sophie Winton, CRNA

As he presented Mrs. Winton's award, President Downey commented,

"Sophie J. Winton, CRNA, age 97, was a pioneer in nurse anesthesia, having practiced for more than 50 years."

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Sophie Winton
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During World War I, she served as a nurse anesthetist in the American Expeditionary Forces in France, receiving numerous military honors.

“In 1933, she lent her financial support in a test case in California that was to have far-reaching effects on the practice of nurse anesthetists—the case of Dagmar Nelson vs. Chalmers-Frances. Mrs. Winton established a dental outpatient clinic in California and was later awarded honors by the Mexican Dental Society in conjunction with the International Dental Association for her advancement in the delivery of dental anesthesia. At the request of a group of plastic surgeons seeking quality anesthesia, she opened an outpatient plastic surgery clinic, numbering among her patients the likes of Judy Garland, Tyrone Power, Ronald Coleman and Deanna Durbin. Mrs. Winton was the epitome of the independent practitioner who forged new ground for the nurse anesthetist.”

Although unable to attend the Banquet to receive the award personally, Mrs. Winton sent a message to the AANA membership with Joyce Kelly, CRNA, MA, who then accepted the award on Mrs. Winton’s behalf.

“Mrs. Winton’s message is as follows:

“This award is the highlight of my life. I never dreamed I’d live to be 97, or how much faith and work it would take for us to be here today working as nurse anesthetists.

“I would like to thank God for guiding me through life. I haven’t the words to thank you, but I want to share my moment of glory with Adeleline Curtis, Florence Henderson, and two friends, Bruce Cooley of Ohio Chemical and G. W. Olson, Superintendent, California Lutheran Hospital. Without their help, none of us would be here today.

“God bless you all, thank you again.”

Mrs. Kelly’s remarks

Mrs. Kelly, a personal friend of Mrs. Winton’s, related to the Banquet attendees the story of Mrs. Winton’s career and contributions to nurse anesthesia:

“Sophie was born on a farm in rural Minnesota on April 24, 1887. She graduated from Swedish Hospital in Minneapolis in February, 1911. Members of her class were the first nurses in Minnesota to take the state nursing board examination, becoming the first registered nurses in that state.

“Sophie worked only two years as an RN, since at that period of time her duties as a nurse included doing laundry, cooking, and caring for the patient 24 hours a day for $5.00 a month and room and board. She decided to return to Minneapolis and Swedish Hospital (continued on page 7)

The war years: Nurse anesthetist at the front lines

In 1918, Sophie joined the Nursing Corps, which at that time of war, was part of the Red Cross. Her military training was two weeks of drill in New York City while staying at a local hotel. Arriving in France, Sophie and nine other nurses from Minnesota Hospital Unit No. 26 were assigned to Mobile Hospital No. 1.

Sophie was sent to the mobile front line units where the majority of the nurse anesthetists served. While serving in France, Sophie worked with Dr. James T. Guathemeyer. She also gave anesthesia overseas for the famous neurosurgeon, Dr. Harvey Cushing. In her story telling, she talks about when shells fell close to the hospital and the surgeons and staff would duck under the OR table, but she would continue her anesthesia, holding one of the metal surgical trays over her and the patient’s heads. They used only open drop ether and chloroform and had no oxygen or nitrous oxide, because the Army did not have enough supplies to send to the front lines.

All of the nurses in Sophie’s unit were awarded the French Croix de Guerre. Sophie personally was awarded six overseas service bars. (She has since been honored on several occasions by the Overseas Nurses Association, the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars for her outstanding service to her country.)

The following retrospective interview was given by Sophie to a local newspaper:

“This interview is one of my personal experiences. Dr. Proctor McGee was second in command of Mobile Hospital No. 1 in France. I gave many anesthetics for him after we had settled in, also another surgeon, Dr. Bellanger. When Dr. Harvey Cushing and staff arrived from Massachusetts General Hospital in Boston, I became their private nurse anesthetist. Dr. Cutter also did surgery with a Dr. Steele assisting, and I provided anesthesia for them on occasion.

“During the drives, patients came in so fast that all the surgeons could do was to remove bullets and shrapnel, stop hemorrhages and put iodine packs in the wound and bandage it. As soon as they were through operating on one patient, I would have to have the next patient anesthetized. Much of the work was done at night and when there was a blackout the surgeons worked by flashlight; I had to work in the dark with only the patient’s pulse and respiration to go on.

“A young boy who lived in California was one of the soldiers who was badly hit by shrapnel in the face. I gave him anesthesia (ether). Dr. McGee operated, removing the shrapnel and stopping the bleeding but there was no time for plastic surgery.

“After the war was over, the boy came to California to live. Dr. McGee decided to move to Hollywood, California from Pittsburgh to do plastic surgery. His first patient was to be this boy that he had operated upon in France. Now and then he called me to find out when Dr. McGee was to arrive, because he said ‘I can’t stand the scars much longer.’ This was to be Dr. McGee’s first patient at the California Presbyterian Hospital. The day of the operation the operating room was all set to operate when Dr. McGee said where is the nurse anesthetist who is to give the anesthesia? They said a nurse anesthetist can’t give the anesthetic, it is against the law. Dr. McGee stated that he had given anesthesia under the most trying conditions and had won his bar on grace, why was it against the law? They said if you plan to work in California you have to obey the law; only MDs can administer anesthesia in this state. They then provided a physician for administering the anesthesia. The patient died as the physician tried to anesthetize him; this was before the surgeon could start the operation.

“During this same period of time, they arrested Dagmar Nelson, a nurse anesthetist, who was giving anesthesia for Dr. Vern Hunt at the Mayo Clinic, Rochester, Minnesota. She had given his anesthesia for three years with no deaths. There was a court trial and she was successful in winning the test case as to whether a nurse could administer anesthesia in California.”

What Sophie did not tell the newswoman was that she and two other people helped support the cost of the test case in California that determined whether nurse anesthetists could administer anesthesia.
when G. W. Olson, superintendent of the hospital, asked Sophie to begin training as a nurse anesthetist. Not only was this a great honor to take over the duties at the head of the table, but she would receive $5.00 a month, cuffs and collars, laundry and room and board. She would also have the opportunity to learn X-ray. Anesthetic agents were open drop ether and chloroform. Strychnine was used as a stimulant. It was given IV, a tank of N2O was in the delivery room, and there were no anesthesia machines.

"In 1914 Sophie joined the Red Cross. Her membership number was 4442. At the request of the Red Cross, Sophie's pin has been placed in the Red Cross Archives in Washington, DC.

SOPHIE WINTON, today.

"Sophie's interest in continuing her education in anesthesia was aided by Ohio Chemical Company, which was close to Swedish Hospital. She also took frequent trips to Rochester to Mayo Clinic to talk with the anesthetists there. She shared with the anesthetists at Mayo her technique of placing a wooden block between the teeth to secure an airway in a stormy induction. There were no airways to buy from the equipment company.

"One afternoon after a very busy day, the hospital superintendent, G. W. Olson, appeared in the operating room with Dr. J. A. Heidbrink in tow with a new anesthesia machine he had developed. The machine held two tanks with an on/off valve, O2 and N2O, nearby. Sophie had been selected to demonstrate the new anesthesia machine. The patient selected for the demonstration weighed 250 pounds and had a broken neck. When Sophie walked into the OR, the patient was lying on his stomach with his head flexed over the end of the OR table. The surgeons were already gowned and gloved, and a group of physicians had gathered in the corner of the OR for observation. On induction with N2O the patient turned very cyanotic. The observing physicians said, 'Oh, the patient is dead,' and promptly left the room.

"Sophie mustered up a few chosen words she had learned on the farm, but under normal circumstances would never consider using as a professional nurse, and brought the sterile scrubbed surgeons to her assistance, even though they had informed her they were scrubbed and sterile. They helped Sophie to turn the patient to his side, whereupon she resuscitated the patient, and the surgeons completed their surgery. The patient recovered from the anesthesia and lived nine days but died from meningitis.

"Swedish Hospital bought three of the anesthesia machines. Dr. Heidbrink paid Sophie three months' salary ($15.00) for demonstrating his anesthesia machines.

"Another invention which Sophie shared with her anesthesia friends in Minneapolis and at Mayo Clinic was an obstetrical mirror-in-light. The mirror, positioned at the end of the delivery table, enabled the anesthetist to watch for the patient to crown without walking around to the foot of the delivery table. The nurse anesthetists had been given strict orders by the physician delivering the baby never to call the doctor until 'the patient was crowning.'

"When Sophie left for the Army with the Minnesota Unit, in April of 1918, she had given over 10,000 anesthetics at Swedish Hospital. Remember, they didn't have a 40-hour week in those days. Her Army days began in New York City, where her only training before leaving for overseas was learning to march. The nurses were quartered in a hotel across the street from the Rockefeller Institute. Mr. John D. Rockefeller personally allowed Sophie to walk in his gardens if she didn't damage any of his trees.

"After the war, Sophie traveled to California because of her husband's health. Arriving in California, she found her old friend G. W. Olson from Swedish Hospital in Minneapolis, who had brought a Heidbrink machine to Los Angeles knowing Sophie had planned to practice anesthesia in Los Angeles. But this was never to be. California physicians were threatening to sue the nurse anesthetists for practicing medicine. The Depression was sweeping the country, and the true issue was that a female would be replacing a male head of the household in the work force. Bruce Cooley of Ohio Chemical and G. W. Olson assisted Adeline Curtis and Sophie in organizing nurse anesthetists to prepare for the test case against Dagmar Nelson. Sophie and Adeline lent not only psychological support, but also financial support in this endeavor. The test case was won by the nurse anesthetists: they would be allowed to administer anesthesia in California.

"Sophie never practiced anesthesia in California Hospital, instead managed her own dental and plastic surgery clinic in Hollywood until 1960. She administered anesthesia to most of the movie stars of that era."

In her concluding thank you remarks, Mrs. Kelly closed with this thought for Sophie:

"Let us not bask so heavily in our own glory that we forget those who built the bricks for our foundation."

ACCEPTING THE AGATHA HODGINS AWARD from President Downey on behalf of Sophie Winton is Joyce Kelly (r).