Gertrude Fife named recipient of 4th AANA Annual Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment

A SPECIAL TRIBUTE to Gertrude Fife's educational contributions to the AANA was given at the Banquet by Ruth Satterfield, CRNA, AANA senior educational consultant.

Gertrude Fife, who served as the AANA's first president from 1933-35, was named recipient of the 4th AANA Annual Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment at this year's AANA Formal Banquet.

Janet McMahon, CRNA, a member from the Pennsylvania Association of Nurse Anesthetists and the individual who nominated Mrs. Fife for the honor, accepted the award on behalf of Mrs. Fife, who was unable to attend the Banquet due to illness.

In accepting the award, Ms. McMahon cited Mrs. Fife's many outstanding achievements made on behalf of the Association and the nurse anesthesia profession as a whole.

She called Mrs. Fife a "far sighted educator" who early on in the Association's history promoted the idea of accreditation of schools. Ms. McMahon noted Mrs. Fife's role as one of the signers of the original articles of incorporation, as well as her stature as a "great teacher and a superb anesthetist."

Earlier this year, in her letter nominating Mrs. Fife for the award, Ms. McMahon provided the following historical perspective of Gertrude Fife's achievements:

"Mrs. Fife was Agatha Hodgins' first assistant at the University Hospital's School of Anesthesia, Cleveland, at the time of the founding of the American (then National) Association of Nurse Anesthetists. She was present at the organizational meeting on June 17, 1931 and it was she who made the motion that the National Association of Nurse Anesthetists be formed. She was one of the signers of the Articles of Incorporation and a member of the first Board of Trustees.

"When Miss Hodgins became ill, Mrs. Fife became acting director, then director of the School of Anesthesia. She also carried on Miss Hodgins' work as administrative leader of the NANA and was instrumental in organizing the first annual meeting of the Association which was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in September 1933.

"She served as the first AANA president and during her two terms of office, she organized the Association's executive office. She also served as editor of the Association's official bulletin from the publication of the first issue in November, 1933 until 1946, when a part-time editor was hired and publication transferred to Chicago.

"She was elected Treasurer in 1935 and served in that office until 1950.

"Mrs. Fife was a dynamic and dedicated leader whose work provided a foundation for subsequent growth. She was influential in obtaining the close relationship with the American Hospital Association which was especially valuable in the Association's formative years, and her business acumen stood the young organization in good stead. She was a farsighted educator who implemented and extended many of Agatha Hodgins' educational goals. She promoted the idea of accreditation of schools and in her address at the first annual meeting, advocated a national board examination for nurse anesthetists.

"Mrs. Fife has not been active in Association work in recent years because of personal and health reasons, but she is still vitally interested in the progress of the Association and in the future of nurse anesthesia."

In addition to Ms. McMahon's tribute delivered at the Banquet, Ruth Satterfield, CRNA, AANA senior educational consultant, also lauded Mrs. Fife's contribution to the nurse anesthesia profession, especially in the area of education. Mrs. Satterfield, who formerly served as education director of all army schools of nurse anesthesia, emphasized that the "educational philosophy of Gertrude Fife is as pertinent now as it was in 1941-42." (Mrs. Fife succeeded Agatha Hodgins in 1942 as chairman of the AANA education committee.)

A further tribute to Mrs. Fife was added by Mary Babinic, CRNA, president of the Ohio State Association of Nurse Anesthetists who stated that she was "proud that Gertie Fife is from Ohio."

In recognition of her achievement, Mrs. Fife has received a commemorative plaque inscribed with her name. A permanent plaque—complete with the name of all Agatha Hodgins award recipients—is on display in the AANA Executive Office.

The AANA Annual Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment was established in 1975 to "recognize individuals whose foremost dedication to excellence has furthered the art and science of nurse anesthesia." The recipient of the award does not necessarily have to be a CRNA, but must have worked toward furthering the nurse anesthesia profession.

Nominations for the award are solicited each year from the state associations by the AANA Public Relations Committee. Individual members are also free to submit names of candidates they wish considered. Once all nominations are received, the Public Relations Committee then reviews all prospective candidates and their backgrounds, and makes a recommendation for that year's recipient to the Board of Directors, who must approve the recommendation.

Past recipients of the Agatha Hodgins award have included: Ruth Satterfield, CRNA, 1975; Helen Lamb Frost, 1976; and Hilda Salomon, 1977.