Florence A. McQuillen is named recipient of the 7th Annual AANA Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment

Florence A. McQuillen, CRNA-retired, former AANA executive director, was named the recipient of the 7th Annual Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment at the AANA Formal Banquet in Phoenix, Arizona. The award was presented in absentia to Miss McQuillen.

Kathryn L. Wagner, CRNA, AANA president (1980-81) commented during the award ceremony, "The Agatha Hodgins Award for Outstanding Accomplishment was established seven years ago to recognize individuals who, through their dedication to excellence, have furthered the art and science of nurse anesthesia. Florence A. McQuillen is indeed such an individual.

"For more than 20 years, from 1948 to 1970, she devoted her life to the growth and continuance of this organization. Thus, it is only fitting that during our Golden Anniversary celebrations, the members of this association present Miss McQuillen with this honor.

"Florence McQuillen, or 'Mack' as she was known to countless nurse anesthetists, graduated from the University of Minnesota School of Nursing in 1925. She received special training in anesthesia at the Minneapolis General Hospital. While working in a hospital in Fargo, North Dakota, she met Dr. John Lundy, the chief of the anesthesia department at the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota. Upon his invitation, she joined his staff in 1927.

"Miss McQuillen remained at the Mayo Clinic as a staff anesthetist and anesthesia instructor until 1948, when she became the AANA's executive director. For the next 22 years, she was influential in virtually all areas of the Association's growth and expansion."

AANA past president Marie Bader, CRNA (1968-69) had the following words to say about Miss McQuillen.

"I have known and worked with Miss McQuillen on committees, as a Board member and as an officer. I know what she has done in influencing the Association's growth. For example, she set up a refresher course for nurse anesthetists who had not attended an accredited program so that they would be eligible for the Qualifying Examination and eventual membership. She suggested compiling a history of the Association, which was later written by Virginia Thatcher.

"She was instrumental in gaining recognition for the AANA by external groups such as the American Hospital Association in 1949 and the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare which, in 1952, recognized the AANA as the accreditation and certification agent for nurse anesthetists.

"She was the right person at a time when we needed someone to take over the pressing needs of the Association. She was a dedicated woman whose life was the Association. I sincerely believe we would not be here celebrating our 50th Anniversary if it had not been for the careful charting of our course by this lady. I am sorry for those of you who have never met or known Miss McQuillen. For myself, I say, 'Thank you, Mack, and God bless you.'"

In preparing to deliver her presidential address, Sandra Kilde, CRNA, MA, said, "I plan to address my remarks directly to Miss McQuillen this evening. As you know, I am a program director of a school of nurse anesthesia and have been since late 1968. I completed anesthesia school in 1967 and worked in a staff position for just one year prior to accepting my current position. I'm not sure I would repeat this venture without more experience.

"However, I did accept the job—notice that I was. The anesthesiologist involved in my interviews and hiring suggested that since I was so new to the field, it might be a good idea if he and I took a trip to Chicago to see you, Miss McQuillen. I made the appropriate travel arrangements, arranged for the day off, and scheduled the appointment with you.

"As the day approached, and our
trip drew near, the anesthesiologist informed me that he was unable to travel with me to Chicago and that I must go alone. Believe me, I was very frightened. There I was, a new graduate, an even newer program director, making my first trip to Chicago to see you, the Executive Director of AANA. I almost didn’t make the trip.

“However, I concluded that if I really wanted to keep my job and learn about nurse anesthesia education, I would have to persevere and go to Chicago. I did that—arrived safely at the airport and took a cab to Prudential Plaza to see you, Miss McQuillen. I really believe that I was as nervous at the thought of seeing you as I have ever been in my life. I didn’t want to enter your office, but I did.

“Miss McQuillen, I want you to know that I was most graciously received by you and the staff. You were very kind to me, and gave me directions and useful materials. You made me feel welcome to the profession and for that I have ever been grateful.

“In subsequent years, I attended AANA functions such as the Annual Meetings and the Assemblies. In every case, you were very kind to me and so supportive. For this, I say thank you.

“In this, the 50th year of our Association, I can think of no other CRNA who more richly deserves the Agatha Hodgins award than you. And, as President-elect of AANA, I am most happy to share these thoughts with you and with all those here tonight.

“Miss McQuillen, thank you for what you have given to our profession.”

The Agatha Hodgins Award was established in 1975. The recipient of the award must have worked toward furthering the nurse anesthesia profession, however, he or she does not necessarily have to be a nurse anesthetist.

Past recipients of the award are: Ruth Satterfield, CRNA, 1975; Helen Lamb Frost, CRNA-deceased, 1976; Hilda Salomon, CRNA-retired; Gertrude Fife, CRNA-deceased; Helen Vos, BSN, CRNA-retired; and Olive Berger, CRNA-deceased.