

EDITORIAL

Fifty Years of Laboratory Investigation: Chronicle of a Blossoming Discipline

*I*t was 1952. The Korean War was inching to a stalemate. The first mass vaccinations of children for polio were underway. Harry Truman was President. Selman Waksman of Rutgers University received the Nobel Prize in Medicine for his discovery of streptomycin, the first antibiotic effective against tuberculosis. The Nobel Prize in physics went to Felix Bloch and Edward Purcell for their discovery of nuclear magnetic resonance. Capt. J. Saper, Director of the United States Naval Medical Research Unit No. 3, was leading a team of tropical medicine specialists working to improve public health in the Arabian country of Yemen, all at the behest of Yemen's king, His Majesty Imam Ahmad bin Yahya Hamid al-din. And *Laboratory Investigation*, a "journal of technical methods and pathology" and the official organ of the International Association of Medical Museums, was inaugurated under the able leadership of Drs. Thomas Kinney and Nathan Kaufman, Editor and Assistant Editor, respectively.

This year (2002) thus marks the 50th anniversary of continuous publication of *Laboratory Investigation*. Actually, the origins of *Laboratory Investigation* are much more venerable, dating to the earliest part of the last century. It all began with the creation of the International Association of Medical Museums (IAMM) under the leadership of Drs. James Carroll, William MacCallum, and Maude Abbott in 1906. Major Carroll directed the Army Medical Museum in Washington DC and served as the IAMM's first president. A courageous, if not the wisest of early experimentalists (dying the next year from a self-inflicted infection of yellow fever), Dr. Carroll brought to the IAMM an impressive array of leaders in early 20th century pathology and medicine. These included among others Drs. J. Ritche (Oxford), J. Aschoff (Freiburg), W. Welch (Johns Hopkins), and W. Osler (McGill). The aim of this new society was to promote the creation and dissemination of medical museums and their use for teaching and research, in a way the conceptual forerunner of modern day cDNA and tissue microarrays. To promote the mission of the IAMM, it was decided to publish a bulletin. The purpose of this bulletin would be to disseminate news about the new organization, and to publish articles relating to methods for the preservation and organization of museum specimens. While the early editorship of the first issues of the *Bulletin of*

the International Association of Medical Museums was not specified, it seems clear that Maude Abbott served this role. A native of Quebec, a brilliant student, and a determined scholar, Maude Abbott received her MD training in Europe, and was one of the first women to matriculate into North American Medicine. Respected for her work on cirrhosis and congenital heart disease, she was curator of McGill's medical museum, and was awarded an honorary MD from McGill University in 1910, an institution that did not admit their first woman medical students until 1918. The first three issues of the *Bulletin* were dated 1907, 1909, and 1910, and all appeared in 1910. Subsequently, issues of the *Bulletin* appeared sporadically and under different editors, interrupted by World War I. In 1929 the name was changed to the *Journal of Technical Methods and Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums*. At this time, Maude Abbott returned as the Managing Editor, and the journal enjoyed an Editorial Board of about ten prominent pathologists from North America. The fortunes of this incarnation of the *Bulletin* again waxed and waned, with the next issue (no.13) not appearing until 1934 (with an Editorial Board reduced to just three people). In 1938 Maude Abbott retired (and died in 1940). Robert Moore then assumed the editorship and continued in this role until 1945 when he was replaced by Dr. Sidney Farber. Dr. Farber changed the name of the journal back to *Bulletin of the International Association of Medical Museums* in 1949, and the last issue (no.32) in this form was published under his leadership in 1951.

It was clear at this time that the IAMM was in trouble. The focus of the association, and its *Bulletin*, on medical museums and the technology associated with them was regarded by many as archaic. Only 30 people had registered for the annual meeting of the North American IAMM in 1951, and competing societies devoted to more modern methods of study, such as histochemistry, were forming. In response, the IAMM decided to reinvent their association and their journal. Following an emergency meeting of the IAMM council in October 1951, a successor to the *Bulletin* was spawned that was to be called the *Journal of Laboratory Investigation*. Reluctant to shift too far from the original aims, the focus of this new journal was still to be technical methods but was broadened to include all aspects of pathology. However, as implemented by

its first editor, Dr. Thomas Kinney, Associate Editor Nathan Kaufman, and an Editorial Board of nine, *Laboratory Investigation* from its inception was a journal of experimental pathology. Members of this first Editorial Board were Drs. J. Ash, G. Duff, J. Edwards, S. Farber, A. Liebow, R. MacCardle, J. McManus, M. Stewart, and R. Stowell. Included in the very first volume of *Laboratory Investigation* were articles that not only described new techniques, such as methods for the rapid diagnosis of brain tumors using chlorazol black or the use of ultraviolet spectrophotometric microscopy, but also articles studying the changes in blood plasma proteins in disease, the consequences of experimental biliary obstruction on hepatic pathology, and the first report of adverse pathological effects of chemotherapeutic agents. This new focus of the journal was an immediate success and reinvigorated the organization. Indeed, the first issue of *Laboratory Investigation* (1250 copies) quickly sold-out. A plea went out from the Editor that "...members who discard their journals (be) urged to return them to the Editor...(since)...he needs back issues badly." With the subsequent reorganization of the IAMM into the International Academy of Pathology 4 years later (and after that into the United States and Canadian Academy of Pathology [USCAP]), interest in the journal and in USCAP grew continuously. Most recently, this growth, coupled with the accelerating pace of discovery in medical science and the need for a forum to report both experimental advances as well as advances germane to the practicing pathologist, led in 1988 to the creation of a second USCAP sponsored journal, *Modern Pathology*. With the creation of this second forum, *Laboratory Investigation* was able to focus its attention more fully on experimental advances in basic and translational disease science.

Since this auspicious beginning, *Laboratory Investigation* has prospered. Thomas Kinney served as Editor until 1966, when he moved to become Editor of the *American Journal of Pathology*, and Robert Stowell replaced him at *Laboratory Investigation*. By this time, the journal had a well-deserved reputation for publishing outstanding articles in experimental pathology. The subtitle relating to "Technical Methods" had been dropped, replaced first by the more appropriate subtitle "A Journal of Experimental Pathology;" and then, to emphasize its broad scope, just "A Journal of Pathology;" and finally, no subtitle at all. In 1968 the journal's size was changed to its present dimensions. Under the leadership of successive Editors, Nathan Kaufman (1972–1975), Robert Heptinstall (1976–1981), Emanuel Rubin (1982–1995), Jon Morrow and Jordan Pober (1996–2000), and the current Editors, the journal has continued to grow in prestige and impact and presently ranks among the very top of medical science journals in its field.

Now, in 2002, we find ourselves at an exciting time in biomedical science, an era of unprecedented revelation. *Laboratory Investigation* has played, and will continue to play, an prominent part in this unfolding saga of discovery, a path that builds on basic understandings in genetics, molecular and cellular biology, protein biochemistry, and metabolism, to enable the deepest understandings of how the systemic phenotype is altered by disease. This is the Pathology of the 21st century. We invite you, the reader, to join us at *Laboratory Investigation* as we continue on this journey, and celebrate 50+ years of progress.

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