Presentation of the President's Special Award for Distinguished Service

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Mary Louise Hanson Pritchard is an example of the highest level of scholarship, mentorship, service, and vision to which this society can aspire. She has been a member of ASP for 46 years and has served this society as reviewer, consultant to the editor, and assistant editor of the Journal of Parasitology, as associate editor of the ASP Newsletter, as Program Officer and author of a handbook for the program officer, as Archivist, and Member of Council; as ASP representative to the AAAS Council, the Association of Systematics Collections, and the National Institute for Conservation; as member and chair of the Committee on Nomenclature and Terminology, member and chair of the Awards Committee, member and chair of the Nominating Committee, member of the In Memoriam Committee, member of the Committee on Biodiversity, and member of an ad hoc committee to evaluate awards guidelines; as member of the local organizing committee for the 1987 annual meeting, during which time she arranged a reunion of past Ward medalists; and as chair of contributed paper sessions and symposia at ASP annual meetings. She has also been a consistent supporter of the activities of the Annual Midwestern Conference of Parasitologists, 1 of the ASP affiliate societies. She has achieved international recognition as a systematic parasitologist and as the founder and developer of the Harold W. Manter Laboratory, Division of Parasitology, University of Nebraska State Museum, now 1 of the 6 largest parasitology collections in the world.

Mary Lou entered the University of Nebraska in her hometown of Lincoln and emerged with an academic record that is undoubtedly unparalleled today. At convocation in 1946, she received a B.Sc. in Business Administration with Distinction, but that tells little of the story. She majored in Economics, Accounting, French, and Zoology, and was supported by major fellowships each year, including a prestigious Regents Fellowship. She also began accumulating Greek letters, such as Phi Beta Kappa, the national academic achievement honorary; Phi Sigma Iota, the national Romance Language Honorary, of which she was president; Phi Chi Theta, the national business administration women's honorary, which awarded her the 1946 key as the outstanding woman graduate of the College of Business Administration at the University of Nebraska; and Phi Sigma Iota, the national business administration honorary.

Next came an M.Sc., working on the taxonomy and systematics of digeneans from Bermuda fishes under the tutelage of Harold Manter. During her graduate days, Mary Lou supported herself by holding teaching assistantships in both the Department of Zoology and the College of Business Administration. Her collection of Greek letters grew as she was elected to Sigma Xi. Upon completion of her M.Sc. degree in 1949, Mary Lou was awarded the Wolcott Prize as the outstanding graduate of the Department of Zoology. She was also informed by the then-chairman of the department that it was department policy not to recommend women for doctoral programs. Undaunted, Mary Lou took the Wolcott money and went to Honolulu, where she became the first person to collect parasites from Hawaiian fishes, and where she had Waikiki Beach to herself every morning. She returned with her material to Lincoln and rapidly became an indispensable part of Harold Manter's research program.

From 1948 to 1957, Mary Lou worked as a technical assistant in the University of Nebraska State Museum, rising to a rank of associate curator. During that time, she became a charter member of the Society of Systematic Zoology, now the Society of Systematic Biology. From 1959 to 1968, she was appointed a research associate in the Department of Zoology. She continued to collect Greek letters, this time Sigma Delta Epsilon, the graduate women in science honorary, whose national publication she edited from 1958 to 1966. In 1968 she was appointed associate curator of parasitology in the University of Nebraska State Museum and assistant professor in the Department of Zoology, still without tenure. During this period, Mary Lou published her own original research, collaborated with Manter on his research and with his graduate students, and coordinated a growing parasite collection, developing both the accession records system and the now-famous notebooks that many of us have used and imitated. She became primarily responsible for the external funding of Manter's program, generating more than $125,000 between 1959 and 1972 from National Science Foundation grants that were first Manter and Pritchard, then Pritchard and Manter, and finally Pritchard. She was invited to do research and lecturing in South Africa in 1962 and was an invited participant on Scripps Institution of Oceanography cruises along the west coast of Latin America in 1967, 1968, 1972, and 1973. Last summer I met a curator at the natural history museum in Geneva who had been on one of those cruises. She began talking about her roommate, a woman parasitologist who worked virtually nonstop during the entire cruise and who sent her the nicest Christmas cards afterward—it could only have been Mary Lou.

In 1971, the Harold W. Manter Laboratory was established as the division of parasitology at the University of Nebraska State Museum. As the first curator, Mary Lou had a vision of building the collection into a National Resource Center for Parasitology by making it a major repository for specimens, not just for types but also for voucher specimens, large faunal series, and orphan collections (she was far ahead of most curators in anticipating the current surge of interest in biodiversity inventories); by establishing a major repository for parasitological literature; and by encouraging original research, especially on the part of graduate students. In 1981, just a decade later, the Manter Lab
became 1 of only 4 collections designated as National Resource Centers for Parasitology by ASP. During that
time, specimen collections increased 5-fold, and the
accession system developed with Manter became the
core of the first computerized accession system for any
parasitology collection. In typical fashion, Mary Lou
shared the accessions program with any interested col-
lection.
In 1980, the University of Nebraska finally saw fit
to grant Mary Lou tenure and full professorship, but
by that time she was so busy that I suspect she hardly
noticed it. For example, graduate students working un-
der her tutelage produced more than 125 publications
between 1972 and 1988. The National Science Foun-
dation awarded the collection a $194,000 collections
improvement grant in 1985, and in 1994, Mary Lou
received an additional $16,000 from NSF to rescue the
International Reference Centre for Avian Haematozoa.
True to her roots in business, Mary Lou has actively
built 4 separate endowments for the collection, in-
cluding the J. Teague Self and William C. Campbell
endowment funds. And true to her commitment to
parasitology in general, and to ASP in particular, she
generously agreed to have the Manter Lab designated
as the official repository of the ASP archives.
Mary Lou's successes have attracted attention from
organizations like the Association for Systematics Col-
llections and the Society for the Preservation of Natural
History Collections, and this has helped increase
awareness that too few parasitology collections exist.
And, as the Manter Lab grew in size and international
stature, Mary Lou's efforts began to have a beneficial
effect on the University of Nebraska State Museum.
When Mary Lou began her efforts, the museum was a
small operation with a regional perspective and an ex-
cellent vertebrate paleontology collection. Once the
Manter Lab achieved international prominence, the
museum had 2 major league collections. In 1994, the
museum was awarded accreditation by the American
Association of Museums, which gives accreditation to
only 10% of all museums. The 1994 report of the ac-
creditation board states, in part, "In two collection
areas, Parasitology and Vertebrate Paleontology, the
collections are world class . . . and are models of cu-
ratorial quality and expertise—they were a joy to ex-
amine!"
This award is doubly significant. First, it recognizes
the career, a record of professional achievement at a
very high level sustained over a long period of time.
Second, it recognizes a person of unusual courage and
strength of character. Mary Lou has fought her entire
career against prejudices towards women, towards
museum collections and towards systematics in para-
sitology, usually in a local professional environment
that ranged from indifference to antagonism and which
always undervalued her. Despite all that, she has man-
gaged to maintain her personal integrity without com-
promising her standards and has managed to maintain
a strong sense of optimism and good humor. The 2 yr
I was her graduate student were devoid of the small-
mindedness, jealousy, and vindictiveness that char-
acterize most of professional science. I could never
have had a better role model. Students were encouraged
to stretch themselves and to explore novel and exciting
areas of research, and Mary Lou always delighted in
the successes of her students, which is the most pow-
ful form of positive reinforcement one can have. She
never missed a chance to recognize others—she turned
a casual conversation between me and Monte Mayes
into the Golden Slide Award for outstanding contri-
butions to the specimen collections of the Manter Lab,
and sprang the first presentation of the award on me
at a parasitology seminar 1 day. I continued to return
to Lincoln on a regular basis after I finished my M.Sc.
to spend time in the Manter Lab with Mary Lou, where
I could feel that people were judged on the content of
their character and a desire to work for a common
good, professional attributes that are becoming anach-
ronistic in today's cynical world. At the risk of exposing
my anachronistic nature, I can say that Mary Lou has
told me she is proud of me as a person and a scientist,
and no other professional recognition can ever top those
words. The American Society of Parasitologists has
never had a better ambassador. It is only fitting that
we recognize Mary Louise Hanson Pritchard with the
President's Special Award for Distinguished Service.