Foreword

This 29th Annual Symposium on the Biology of Skin is the last one to be directed and chaired by its founder, William Montagna. Dr. Montagna, who will retire as Director of the Oregon Regional Primate Research Center on May 1, 1981, believes it important to turn over the responsibilities for this international forum as early as possible to his chosen successor, Dr. Kirk D. Wuepper. In preparation for the change in leadership, these two men, Montagna and Wuepper, have been working closely as co-directors of the past several symposia. This smooth transition of responsibility does not mean that Bill Montagna will be leaving us or that he will deny us his wisdom or his presence; heaven forbid! It means that he will be relieved, after 29 years, of the organizing chores inherent in conceiving and producing the Symposia and editing the material to be published once the symposia have taken place. We are indebted to Bill for almost 3 decades of scientific stimuli that have enriched our personal lives as well as our scientific careers.

In 1975 we paid homage to William Montagna on that 25th Annual Symposium on the Biology of Skin; a silver anniversary for an annual event that brought us golden years with a priceless person. That event is now documented in the Journal of Investigative Dermatology (vol 67:1-228, 1976) entitled, "Special Issue on Cutaneous Biology—1950–1975 (Vol xvii, Advances in Biology of Skin)." Bill would be embarrassed if we acclaimed him further. And we need not, for he knows how we feel.

"Twenty-five years ago, an event occurred at the Arnold Laboratories of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, which was to have a profound influence on the culture of dermatology," heralded Albert Klugman as he opened the 1975 anniversary celebration (J Invest Dermatol 67:1, 1976). And so it has!

Picture Dermatology after World War II; a small specialty of about 1400 physicians, solidly based in clinical medicine, gross and microscopic cutaneous morphology, and mostly empirical therapy. The great teachers of the time were telling their young that more basic knowledge was needed to understand and treat the diseases. At first the young turned to each other and to those few special teachers skilled in both "observation" and "experimentation" (see, Rothman, S: Presidential Address: Basic Research in Dermatology, J Invest Dermatol 13:165-170, 1949). And they all turned to the "experimenters" themselves, those nonclinical basic scientists who, for one reason or another, were also interested in the skin. Montagna was the most receptive and gathered in his own colleagues to meet with this new, young breed. They talked! During the short hiatus that separates the winter terms at Brown University, in 1950 and 1951, they talked and talked and taught each other and stimulated each other and came to understand and respect each other and to become very fond of each other.

It does not take much imagination to guess the rest. The young men went home and repeated the process. Their departments and divisions of dermatology were energized. These men then returned with their trainees, who in turn . . . , etc. In 29 years the progression has been geometrical! Their laboratories, their institutions and their patients all benefited from the impacts of these Symposia exchanges. And all the while the many of Dermatology’s leaders were being formed from the participants and attendees.

You can imagine, too, how the subjects were chosen for the Symposia. They have been an expression of the need of dermatology to learn more; each timely to their turn. After two years of talk (1950, 51) the need was obvious for an annual symposium that would bring together clinical dermatology and other disciplines from elsewhere, anywhere, to establish the appropriate exchange. In 1952 what could be more obvious than to hold a symposium on Normal Skin, Normal Morphology, Growth Dynamics, and Physiology of the Skin for 1½ days; and by 1980 standards, what could be more audacious? But in 1952 there was so little to know. However, in 1953 only the Dynamics of Skin Growth and in 1954 only Keratinization were pondered. They were off and running! Now watch dermatology develop: Hair Follicles (1956), Sebaceous Glands (1957), Dermis (1958) and Innervation (1958). The 1960s then tackled Blood Vessels and Circulation, Eccrine Sweating, Sebaceous Glands (again), Healing, Aging, Pigment, Carcinogenesis and again Hair and Dermis. Since 1956, Hair, the Sebaceous Gland and Acne, the Dermis, Aging and Carcinogenesis were each handled three times. The programs were indications of dermatology’s advancing knowledge and needs. And, for this last decade’s lust for cutaneous inflammation and immunologic events, the Symposia responded with Immunology and the Skin (1969), Pharmacology (1970), Genetics (1971), Cells of the Dermis (1977), Dendritic and Lymphocytic Cells in the Epidermis (1979), and Photobiology and Photomedicine (1980). The 1975 anniversary program had 38 international authorities speak on the 25 year advances of most of these subjects. These papers are still to be enjoyed in volume 67, 1976 of this Journal.

By 1958, these symposia were too good to disseminate by only word of mouth; the dermatologic world wanted and needed to know. So, Volume 1 of Advances in Biology of Skin presented in book form the proceedings of "The Biology of Cutaneous Innervation." In 1973, the Journal of Investigative Dermatology agreed to publish the proceedings of the Symposia as special annual issues thus making the material even more quickly and readily available to dermatology and its reading world. They continued with vol XI of Advances in Biology of Skin (Mammary and Apocrine Glands).

Now, these symposia, dermatology’s teaching programs and the programs and publications of dermatology’s societies are all in step with contemporary information. The source and force of impact is no longer clear. One cannot say any longer who rides cart or horse, or raises chicken or egg; nor is it important. All are intertwined for advance; all are involved in dermatology’s future. William Montagna, his symposia, and all those his symposia have gathered together over the years have played an important role in the genesis of this modern age of dermatology and cutaneous cell biology. This mutual love affair has helped our specialty to flower into full bloom.

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