

It is my privilege and honor to present the 2010 Delaware Valley Society for Radiation Safety Meritorious Achievement Award to Sydney W. Porter Jr. At the outset I would like to acknowledge contributions from a number of people and to admit to on occasion shamelessly plagiarizing their words: the officers of DVRS; Howard Dickson, President of HPS; John Frazier, Ron Kathren, Keith Dinger, Ray Johnson, past Presidents of HPS; Frazier Bronson, protégé and Past President of the American Academy of Health Physics; Rodger Granlund, Ken Miller, Alex Boerner, Joel Lubenau and Robert Hicks, Director of the Mutter Museum. I also received a phone call last Saturday from Dick Burk, HPS Executive Secretary, who was fly-fishing in Minnesota with Rich Vetter and Ken Miller. That they took time out from fishing to talk about Syd says volumes. Everyone expressed their support.

Syd Porter earned a bachelor's degree in Physical Sciences from St. John's College in 1954. He took graduate courses in physical chemistry from John Hopkins University and radiochemistry from New York University. From 1957 to 1963 he was the assistant coordinator and then coordinator of health physics at General Dynamics Electric Boat Co. In 1963, Syd became the Head of the Radiological Safety Department at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRI). In 1969, he left AFRRI and was the co-founder of Radiation Management Corporation in Philadelphia. When RMC folded in 1974, Syd started Porter Consultants, Inc.

Syd Porter was also an adjunct professor at Drexel University.

He is a Certified Health Physicist. And has certificate #4 in radon testing and analysis in Pennsylvania.

Sydney Porter is a charter member of the Health Physics Society. Sometimes when talking to Syd he asks if I know So and So. He obviously thinks I am older than I really am. When Syd began work in this profession, I was learning ... to walk. He became a Fellow Member of the Society in 1997.

Syd was a charter member and early President of the Baltimore-Washington chapter of HPS. He was President of DVRS. And President of the American Association of Radon Scientists and Technologists. And President of the HPS Radon Section which he helped found.

He has served on numerous HPS and AAHP committees. A recitation of appointments does nothing to illuminate Syd's character compared to a few well-chosen anecdotes. It seems appropriate to start with his HPS History Committee involvement. In November 1995 Syd had an idea to videotape an interview of one of his HP heroes, Robley Evans, at the upcoming HPS Midyear meeting. The idea came too late to get HPS funding, so Syd planned to pay for it personally. Sadly, Evans died before the interview occurred. Thinking this was a worthy endeavor, Syd sought and received appointment to the History Committee where he championed the program to videorecord interviews of notable individuals in our profession. He personally interviewed 26 health physicists on camera. Ray Johnson is in a close second with 20, no one else is in double digits.

Those of you with ties to Bloomsburg University's Health Physics program probably know that the library has a substantial collection Health Physics related books and other materials. What you may not know is that it was enhanced by a significant donation by Syd.

While with the Baltimore Washington Chapter he [along with Mike Terpilak] started the Chapter's ABHP Exam Preparation Study program. It was the first one in the country. Ten years later, Ron Zelac and Frazier Bronson copied it here in Philadelphia. I purchased the prep

guide book in the mid 80's and used it to prepare for the certification exam. So, Syd, I and perhaps others in this room owe you belated thanks.

Along these lines, let's examine Syd's mentoring: In 1965, Syd hired three young health physicists at AFRRI: Frazier Bronson, Lee Booth and Les Slayback. Without overt pressure from their boss, all three became certified health physicists. All three served on the American Board of Health Physics. All three served on the Executive Committee of the American Academy of Health Physics (two as President, one as Treasurer). All three won the ABHP McAdams Award.

This story comes from Frazier Bronson:

Syd was called to TMI a few hours after they thought something was wrong. He immediately drove up there and after assessing the situation, gave Frazier a call in Chicago, where Frazier was at the time. It was very early in the morning so it took a while to comprehend his request to come out there immediately to do some measurements. When asked how long Frazier should be prepared to stay [i.e. how much did he need to pack] Syd said something like 2 or 3 days. Well, after working 18 hour workdays for 30 straight days, those working closely with Frazier wished that Syd's estimate had been more realistic.

Ken Miller, who expressed his regrets at not being able to attend and sends his best regards, provided this story.

During the second day of the TMI Accident, Syd called Hershey Medical Center and asked Ken if he had any shields that could be used to ship samples from TMI for analysis. After a brief discussion of the sample containers, Ken suggested the lead shields in the hospital's Mo-Tc generators. Hershey would store spent generators to allow the molybdenum to decay, remove the lead and recast it into bricks. The generator shields nicely matched Syd's samples and so, Ken offered him a supply. Within an hour, a helicopter landed at the Hershey Medical Center to pick up the shields.

From Robert Hicks, Director of the Mutter Museum:

The Museum owes a large debt to Syd for his work in elucidating the importance and value a piezo-electric apparatus and accompanying correspondence donated by Marie Curie. He rescued the Curie device from obscurity by having it restored. He arranged with Eagle Pitcher, a Kansas company, and Teledyne Isotope in New Jersey to create new quartz crystal lamina to replace decayed and ruined originals. Syd conducted a radiological survey of the apparatus, her correspondence, and the entire museum storage spaces, found contamination, and cleaned up not only the apparatus but Curie's correspondence. Materials that were found to be too hot to retain in collections were dispatched to a storage facility in Virginia. The same survey put the entire museum staff at ease. All this work was done *gratis*.

Syd's correspondence now forms a permanent part of the curatorial record as he made clear the importance to the history of science of the Curie artifact. Syd's interest and enthusiasm has been infectious: Dr. Hicks recently presented a soon to be published paper on the device and the circumstances of Curie's donation of it at a science history conference.

In 2008 Syd nominated Mike Terpilak for the William McAdams Award. This award is given by the American Board of Health Physics "for significant contributions toward the advancement of professionalism in Health Physics and to the Certification process." That year, the award was not given to Mike, but to another deserving individual. Syd re-nominated Terpilak; this time

providing additional information. And last year, Mike Terpilak received the McAdams Award. Posthumously. Trish Milligan, who chaired the McAdams Award Committee, said that learning about Mike's contributions was a humbling experience. Syd knew of the enormity of Mike's accomplishments and was determined that they be recognized.

Management consultant Peter Drucker once wrote, "Wherever you find something getting done, you find a monomaniac with a mission." Syd gets things done.

In short, Syd Porter is an extraordinary health physicist that has been a mentor to many and whose career is characterized by leadership, initiative and passion for the profession. The DVRS is delighted to present its 2010 Meritorious Service award to Sydney W. Porter, Jr.

-- Kent Lambert