

# Commentary

## Forty Years of the Warner-Lambert/ Parke-Davis Award

### *A Remarkable Record*

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Societies' young investigator awards are meant to encourage and recognize meritorious research by members under a certain age, but they are also expected—optimistically—to predict future success by their recipients. This year marks the 40th anniversary of the Warner-Lambert/Parke-Davis Award, established by the American Society for Experimental Pathology, as it was then known, in 1957, to honor research contributions by members under 40 years of age (changed to 43 in 1992). The recent election to the National Academy of Sciences (NAS) of two of its previous recipients—Drs. Gerald R. Crabtree and Michael A. Gimbrone, Jr.—prompted me to scan the list of past awardees for their subsequent scientific accomplishments, influence in biomedical research, or contributions to pathology. The record is remarkable.

There have been 44 recipients of the Award since 1957, and the most astonishing statistic is that 11 were subsequently elected to the NAS (Frank Dixon, Robert Good, Peter Nowell, Hans J. Muller-Eberhard, Vincent Marchesi, Emil Unanue, George Todaro, Richard Lerner, Michael Gimbrone, Jr., Peter Howley, and Gerald Crabtree), eight to 15 years after they were selected for the Award. Thus, if one excludes the ten most recent recipients, one-third of all awardees eventually made it to the National Academy. Many were also honored with other prestigious national and international awards, and thus far three have landed Lasker Awards (Good, Dixon, and Unanue).

The group has also had a profound influence in biomedical research and academic pathology. The first recipient, Frank Dixon, built one of the most outstanding centers for biomedical research at The Scripps Research Institute and dominated experimental immunology for three decades. Emmanuel Farber, the second recipient, developed into one of the most influential experimental pathologists of this time. Thirteen served or are serving as

chairmen of major, mostly research-intensive pathology departments (Frank Dixon, Emmanuel Farber, Robert Good, Peter Nowell, Henry Pitot, Peter Ward, Vincent Marchesi, Emil Unanue, Stanley Cohen, Michael Lieberman, Peter Howley, Lance Liotta and James Madara). Others served as directors or leaders of cancer centers, successful biotechnology companies, research institutions, and foundations. Virtually every one of them continues to be an active, productive investigator. The recipients of the last 15 years represent some of the most successful scientists in experimental pathology today.

A few other observations:

Missing from the list are a number of “stars” of experimental pathology of the last four decades. Perhaps some did not flower until after 40, or faced stiff competition in narrow windows of opportunity due to age, or were in fields that were not fashionable at the time, or were politically incorrect. But I fear that most were not nominated because their supporters were not active in the Society or their chairmen simply did not care. Some of these, happily, were later chosen for the Rous-Whipple Award—the Society's research prize for established investigators over 50.

It has taken us 40 years to select a woman, Dr. Cynthia Morton, in 1997.

What was the influence of these young award winners on the Society? Here the record is mixed. Some virtually never showed up after they collected the prize, except when coerced to give an invited talk. But many were enormously active and indeed ten became President of the Society in its various incarnations. Others served as editors of the Journal, program committee chairmen, or chairmen of various committees.

What does all this mean? Perhaps very little. Many denigrate awards as political, elitist, or chancy, though I have never heard of anybody refusing one. But as the Society, like others, wrestles with its challenges, it could bask a bit in its riches: a consistently outstanding scientific program at its Annual Meetings; the dominant Journal for molecular and experimental pathology; and an NAS batting average of .333 for its young awardees!