In Memoriam: Marie Cutbush Crookston
1920–2009

D. Mallory

Marie Cutbush Crookston, a dynamic person and exceptional scientist, was born in 1920 in Victoria, Australia. She received a Bachelor of Science degree from the University of Melbourne, and, in 1947, she set sail for England. There, she worked for 10 years with Dr. P. L. Mollison at the Medical Research Council Blood Transfusion Research Unit and contributed to the writing of the first edition of Dr. Mollison’s Blood Transfusion in Clinical Medicine.

In 1957, she married Dr. John Crookston, a hematologist from Toronto, who was in London working for Dr. J. V. Dacie. Giving up her studies for a PhD, she moved to Toronto to raise two sons and to continue to work in the field of immunohematology. In 1964 she joined the University of Toronto, Department of Pathology, where she directed research, and in 1978 she became an associate professor. She also served as immunohematologist in the Department of Hematology at the Toronto General Hospital and acted as a consultant for the Blood Transfusion Laboratory until she retired in 1986.

Marie’s contributions to immunohematology are outstanding and have made a permanent impact on the field. She and her late husband John helped transform the educational level and direction of immunohematology in the 1960s when they returned to Toronto from London. There, they helped to organize the Ontario Antibody Club, which was active for 25 years.

Marie’s studies on conversion of incomplete to complete antibodies by chemical modification were used by commercial companies to make chemically modified Rh antiserum. In addition, she was known for her discoveries of anti-Fy\(^a\) and anti-Lu\(^b\) and her early work in exchange transfusion of the newborn, long-term preservation of RBCs by freezing, and linkage of Chido and HLA. She and John Crookston also coined the term HEMPAS to describe an inherited chronic hemolytic anemia with multinucleated cells in the bone marrow associated with a positive acidified serum test (modified Ham’s solution).

Everyone who knew Marie and read any of her 65 published papers remembers her wonderful ability to write in plain intelligible English, or as she would say, “deathless prose,” and how she kept strictly to proper blood group terminology. Her papers were always accepted as submitted. She was on the editorial boards of Immunohematology, Journal of Blood Group Serology and Education, Transfusion, and Vox Sanguinis.

These are some of her awards:
- The Karl Landsteiner Memorial Award in 1976 with Dr. Eloise Giblett from the American Association of Blood Banks, awarded “for her discoveries of anti-Fy\(^a\), anti-Lu\(^b\), and anti-HEMPAS: for her studies of the relationship between blood-group antibody activity in vitro and in vivo; for her description of red cell uptake of Le\(^a\) and Le\(^b\) antigens from plasma; for her investigation of the Chido antigen in plasma; and for the detection of the linkage between Ch and HLA.” (quotation from citation on award)
- The Nuffield Foundation Award in 1952 with Dr. Hermann Lehmann for studying the blood groups of tribes in the Nilgiri Hills of South India.
- The Buchanan Award in 1980 from the Canadian Society of Transfusion Medicine.
- The Canadian Blood Services Award in 2002 for “Lifetime Achievement.”

Marie always found the time to help students and scientists who needed directions with their studies or help with their manuscripts. She was a wonderful, caring person who was an enthusiastic, intelligent, and brilliant scientist and one who will be missed by her many friends and colleagues around the world.

Delores Mallory, MT(ASCP)SBB
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