

## Editorial

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### "I doubt if there's been another story quite like it"

So quotes Ursula Marvin of Fred Whipple, referring to the history of the Meteoritical Society. I would state this slightly differently, I doubt if there's ever been a history of a 20th century learned Society quite like that written by Ursula Marvin for this issue of *Meteoritics*. Putting the paper together has been a 10-year labor of love for its author, and the last 5 or 6 months would have taxed the energy of any of us. Dr. Marvin not only delivered the manuscript on time, almost to the day, but has been incredibly sensitive to the comments of the team of eight reviewers and the Editor and his associate. Nevertheless, it is a project fraught with difficulties and I and the author look forward to receiving elaborations and corrections from assiduous readers who care to contact us.

It is perhaps of value to mention, briefly, the points considered by the editors in making the necessarily gargantuan demands of the author, reviewers and the sponsors. First, there was a widespread consensus that the paper would be of interest to our readers most of whom had shared the adventure. Second, the history of our Society offers unique insights as to how a group of professional scientists reacted to some monumental events on the world scene. It was the second World War that gave rise to the Institute of Meteoritics, it was the race into space that drove us during the 1950s and 1960s and it was the Apollo program that prompted the growth our field experienced in the 1970s.

Then there are the "classical" questions like how instrumentation drives a field; X-ray crystallography in the 1940s, mass spectrometry in the 1950s, electron microprobe analysis of the 1960s, and so on. And there are the "humanistic" questions, such as the relationship between generations of scientists, the "young Turks" vs. "amateurish practitioners" in Ursula Marvin's story. I wonder how many events in the history of our Science, as opposed to our Society, have also been affected by such issues.

As Ursula Marvin succinctly remarks in her history, "... journals are very expensive". The cost of publishing Ursula's major paper has been borne entirely by a group of rather special sponsors who all share a great devotion to the community and respect for our journal. But "institutions" are really the individuals who made our case to their colleagues or who made personal sacrifices. John Paul Barringer and Drew Barringer for the Barringer Crater Company; James Papike and Rhian Jones of the Institute of Meteoritics; Martin Prinz of the American Museum of Natural History, New York; Carleton Moore at the Center for Meteorite Studies; Ignacio Casanova and his colleagues in the Geology Department of the Field Museum, Chicago, where the Society held its first meeting. The contribution of the meteoriticists at the Max-Planck Institut für Chemie in Mainz and the meteorite community in Great Britain are special because they signal that this is a truly international story. A special mention should also be made of the contribution of Roy Clarke, Jr., Glenn MacPherson and Brian Mason of the National Museum of Natural History in Washington D.C., who used the Edward P. Henderson and Rebecca Henderson Meteorite Fund to support the paper. Ed Henderson, a founding member of the Meteoritical Society who died last year, would surely have much approved of his funds being used in this way.

Of course, this is also the abstract issue of *Meteoritics*. Now that *Meteoritics* is not being typeset by the printer, it has been a phenomenal task to prepare this issue. Joyce Roth prepared Ursula's paper with great care and professionalism while the staff of the Publication Department at the Lunar and Planetary Institute prepared the abstracts, surpassing even their normal standards of excellence. We also enjoyed wonderful cooperation from the local organizer's, Trude King and Ian Ridley. I and all the authors of these pages are deeply grateful. The standard of abstract preparation was also remarkably high this year, suggesting that the advice we received from authors and associate editors after last year's meeting was good advice indeed.

Derek Sears