

## MEMORIAL RESOLUTION

### J. MURRAY LUCK (1899 – 1993)

James Murray Luck, Emeritus Professor of Chemistry, died of pneumonia at his home in Menlo Park on Aug. 26, 1993, at the age of 92. He joined the Stanford faculty in 1926 and was the last of the pre-World War II Chemistry Department faculty.

Professor Luck was born on October 23, the last year of the last century, in the small town of Paris, Ontario, Canada. He grew up in Brantford, a few miles from Paris, where his father was a blacksmith in the Adams Wagon Works, which later became the Cockshutt Plow Company, a farm implement manufacturer. Murray attended public schools in Brantford and was awarded a four year tuition scholarship to the University of Toronto, from which he graduated (Victoria College) in 1922. Upon graduation from the University, he was awarded a prestigious "1851 Exhibition Scholarship" for graduate study. He chose to go to Cambridge University where he joined Gonville and Casius College and studied biochemistry in the laboratories of Sir Gowland Hopkins and J.B.S. Haldane, the renowned Professor of Physiology. He earned his Ph.D. degree in 1925 with a thesis titled "The Origin of Blood Ammonia."

He returned to the University of Toronto for one year, and then in 1926 he was offered an appointment as Assistant Professor of Chemistry by Robert Eccles Swain, of Stanford, with responsibilities for the teaching of Biochemistry. He remained an active member of the Chemistry Department, teaching and doing research in biochemistry, until his mandatory retirement in 1965. Luck taught biochemistry to thirty generations of first year medical students and chemistry majors, until 1959, when the Medical School moved from San Francisco to the Stanford campus, and a separate Biochemistry Department was established in the Medical School. In addition to his formal teaching, he carried on research with graduate and postdoctoral students, mostly in the area of protein chemistry. He became a world authority on the basic proteins of nuclei, known as histones. These studies led to over 200 published research articles in biochemical journals.

Luck's interests in biochemistry were wide indeed and led to service on many extramural organizations. He served as an officer of the Pacific Division of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) for many years; he was Head of the section on biological chemistry of the International Union of Pure and Applied Chemistry; and he was elected President of the American Society of Biological Chemists. In addition, he served on granting and study panels for the National Institute of Health, the National Science Foundation, and the National Research Council.

In scientific circles, Luck was best known as the founder and editor of *Annual Reviews of Biochemistry*, first published in 1932. This enterprise soon expanded to include the *Annual Reviews of Physiology*. The editorial offices were initially located in the Physiology Department, which was situated on the Outer Quad, just to the right of the main entrance. These were the

quarters for Annual Reviews, Inc. for almost twenty-five years. Further expansion led to a family of reviews that appear annually, now covering twenty-seven different scientific disciplines. Annual Reviews, Inc. ultimately moved to their own quarters in Palo Alto. Luck continued as the editor of the *Annual Reviews of Biochemistry* for eighteen years, and participated in an administrative capacity of the complete undertaking until 1967, when he became Emeritus Founding Member of the Board of Directors of Annual Reviews, Inc.

In 1946 he published a book on *The War on Malnutrition and Poverty: The Role of the Consumer Cooperatives*. Then in 1957, he gave a lecture before the American Association for the Advancement of Science, entitled "Man Against His Environment: The Next Hundred Years," which was published in *Science*. He included what he thought was a reasonable statement about birth control; namely, "Abortion at the request of the prospective mother should not only be permitted, but, in some instances, encouraged." This was picked up by the press, and led to a stream of letters and editorials, including one in the *Wall Street Journal*. In the public press he was remembered more for this controversy than for his scientific and publishing accomplishments, a fact that he found amusing.

An outgrowth of his life-long interest in nutrition was an annual survey, which he personally made, of food prices in Palo Alto from 1939 to 1953. The cost of food for a defined, standardized, "liberal," one-week diet for an adult male was determined by pricing appropriate items in local grocery stores. The results were published annually in *The Palo Alto Times* (and twice in *Science*; 1944 and 1948.) This formed a practical guide to the local cost for this particular nutritional diet: for instance, \$2.28 in 1939 and \$7.07 in 1951, an increase over the twelve-year period of 210%.

In addition to his academic pursuits, he had a very active interest in practical public affairs, especially those involving the "Co-op Movement." While at Cambridge, he was greatly influenced by the philosophy of the "Society of Friends," with their non-violent anti-war beliefs, as well as their cooperative organization. He also became a member of the Cambridge and London Cooperative Societies. When he came to Stanford, he worked to bring the Cooperative Society ideas to the Palo Alto area. He played a key role in establishing the first co-op grocery store in Palo Alto, which led to five co-op supermarkets in the area. He was an organizer of the Peninsula Housing Association, which was conceived as a cooperative venture for the development of Ladera. After getting well started, it lacked the necessary capital and was taken over by a commercial real estate developer, but no one lost any money on the venture. Finally, he was also one of the founding group responsible for establishing the very successful Stanford Federal Credit Union.

Murray's involvement in many national and international conferences, symposia, scientific societies, and his sustaining contributions to the prestigious *Annual Reviews* publications led to an international reputation which certainly opened the gate to his major occupation and new career after retirement from teaching at Stanford. In 1962 he was appointed by the State Department to be the Scientific Attaché to the U.S. Embassy in Bern, Switzerland. This assignment, and his follow-up studies, resulted in three major books: 1) *Science in Switzerland*, 1967, 2) *Modern Switzerland*, 1978, and 3) *History of Switzerland, From Before the Beginnings to the Days of the Present*, 1985. This 887-page volume is now the definitive English language book on the subject. These three books all reflect Murray's love affair with Switzerland in his latter years.

In his remarkable way, J. Murray Luck had impressive careers as a teacher, in research, in public life in the Co-op Movement, as author and publisher, and as a historian of Switzerland. He has left a rich legacy to Stanford and to his colleagues.

Professor Luck is survived by his wife Eroeda, daughter Nadya Elizabeth, (Mrs. Edward M. O'Connell Jr.) and son, Edward Eugene, to whom we extend our sympathies.

Harry S. Mosher, Chair  
Sidney Raffel  
Douglas A. Skoog