

Memorial Resolution

Narcissa Hocker
School of Medicine

Narcissa “Narcy” Hocker was born December 8, 1922 in Lizton, Indiana, the daughter of Alva and Fannie (Bailey) Hocker.

She received a Bachelor of Science degree from Purdue University in 1944 and a Master of Science in 1964 from Indiana University. She was a medical technologist at Wesley Memorial Hospital in Chicago for one year before she began her long distinguished career at the Indiana University Medical Center as an instructor in the Allied Health Science Division of the Department of Pathology, in 1964. She was promoted to Assistant Professor in 1971 and subsequently to Associate Professor (the highest attainable rank for a non-PhD faculty member.) She retired as an Emeritus Associate Professor and “Distinguished” by all who were familiar with her unbelievable career—perhaps the longest uninterrupted career in the history of our university.

Ms. Hocker focused all her efforts on the Blood Bank and became its supervisor until her retirement in 1992. On sabbatical in 1972 – 1973 at the University of Hawaii, she wrote two auto-tutorials for self-instruction, Techniques, and Immunohematology, for which she received many laudatory comments from students and faculty. Her teaching activities in these were supported by Public Health Service Grants: RRS01RR5371. She also authored several papers, the most important of which covered the astounding detection of the rare “Bombay” blood type first published in the *Am. J. Clin. Path.* (37: 579-583, 1962). This appears to be the first documented detection of this rare blood type in the sub-continent of the United States. She also publicized the ability of blood to be transferred safely between hospitals, *S.G.O.* (117: 105-107, 1963). She was among the first to prove the safety of the common practice of drawing blood and sending it to hospitals. In addition, Narcy told me several times that she was responsible for maintaining the supply of all types of red cells in a refrigerator in the basement of Long Hospital. This was utilized by hospitals in and around Indianapolis. They would withdraw the amount and type of red cells needed for the different institutions and were expected to replenish the blood taken. These transactions were recorded in an immense ledger. This established another significant milestone in conceptualizing and adopting the origin of blood centers drawing blood separate from participating hospitals. (See enclosed photo of Narcy at the IU Blood Depot in Long Hospital.)

A woman of few words, yet immense impact, she was a polished lecturer. As such, she gave many lectures and seminars. However, due to her service demands, she could only accept a few lectureships: two Seminars in Continuing Education in 1969 – 1970, four in 1970 - 1974, as well as guest lecturer on selected health problems in 1974 - 1975. Her teaching the technologists and pre- and post-doctoral fellows and residents was legendary for its simple and easy to understand terms as well as her assigned teaching in

Immunohematology. She received many awards and recognitions, perhaps the most outstanding were her Outstanding Medical Technologist awards in 1964 and 1967. She also received the first Victor H. Muller Achievement Award. She was President of Indiana Society of Medical Technologists in 1959-1960, 1960-1961, 1963-1964, Secretary, 1966-1967, member of Constitution and Bylaws Committee 1970 – 1971, 1971 – 1972, member of Legislative Committee 1970-1971, and 1974-1975, member of Awards Committee in 1969-1970, all for Indiana Society of Medical Technologists. For the Indiana State Association of Blood Banks, Nancy was President in 1964, Board Member in 1963 – 1964, and 1965, Program and Education Committee in 1960 and 1963, and Workshop Committee in 1961, 1962, and 1963. Nancy was also President of the Indianapolis Society for Medical Technology in 1969 – 1970.

It is impossible for anyone to appreciate the impact and significance that Nancy had during her decades of service and leadership in ensuring the safety of blood transfusion in Indiana. No exact number of students she taught or mentored is available or known. Yet numbers approaching or surpassing one thousand is a “best guess.” She was and will always remain the Grand Dame of Blood Transfusion in Indiana, perhaps the Mid-West. As such, her accomplishments were recognized with a Sagamore of the Wabash, the highest award given by the Indiana Governor, as well as with Technologist of the Year in 1964 and 1967. She was highly respected at our Medical Center and served as the de facto Medical Director of the Transfusion Services in WWII when most doctors were drafted. She met with the Dean of the Medical School about once a month to discuss any concerns. When I became the Medical Director of the IU Blood Bank in the mid-1970s, she was an immense comfort to me, not only in educating me to the many intricacies and nuances of serology, but also increasing my awareness of its influence and the need for more insight into the uses and misuses of the expanding new blood component therapies available.

During her tenure, our transfusion service transfused well over 100,000 units for more than 10 years, perhaps the largest in the US. Also, the blood bank, now Transfusion Service, began a new program of Cryopreservation of Red Cells modeled after the US Army program in Kentucky. Stanley Roberts established our frozen blood program, which at that time was the required therapy for renal transplant patients, pre- and post- transplantation. Nancy oversaw this activity as well as the many other unique programs that followed, such as apheresis for red cell exchanges for sickle cell patients, plasma exchange for TTP patients, and lastly, a stem cell program for treating patients with their own modified cells—virtually all these programs were firsts in Indiana. In the mid-1980s we provided the intense transfusion support for the new transplant programs. Nancy was involved in all these programs and services, and more.

Nancy had many capable assistants and supervisees. It would be impossible to name them all, but Sandy Rothenberger, Betty Korn, Stanley Roberts, Alvin Limiac, Elaine Skipworth, Vicki Graves, and Elvie Miguel were a few. They all worked under the careful guidance and distinguished leadership of our former long-term Chairman and Professor Dr. Carlton Nordschow.

Even after her retirement and heart attack, Narcy came to the hospital weekly to tabulate the apheresis data and continued teaching lab techniques. She passed away at the age of 95 on May 26, 2018. All who knew her benefited from her wisdom and patience. We are all so proud and very privileged to have known Narcy, and to have experienced firsthand her understated excellence, her soft-spoken mannerisms, and her model professionalism. There will never be another to equal her.

Respectfully submitted,

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June 21, 2018