

## The Benedict Cassen Memorial Fund

# EDUCATION AND RESEARCH FOUNDATION RECEIVES \$1.25 MILLION BEQUEST

**T**HE SOCIETY OF NUCLEAR Medicine's Education and Research Foundation has received a \$1.25 million donation from the estate of Mary Wylie Balfour Cassen to establish a memorial fund in her husband's name, Benedict Cassen. William Blahd, MD, executor of Mrs. Cassen's estate and a close friend of both Dr. and Mrs. Cassen, has submitted a proposal for the fund's operation that seeks to follow the intent expressed in Mrs. Cassen's will. The proposal will be discussed and the mechanics for implementation of the fund will be finalized at the Society's Annual Meeting in Cincinnati.

The fund is likely to create an award, called the Benedict Cassen Prize, that will be given to a scientist whose research has led to major advances in nuclear medicine, according to Andrew Taylor, Jr., MD, President of the Education and Research Foundation. The fund will also provide at least one postdoctoral basic science fellowship.

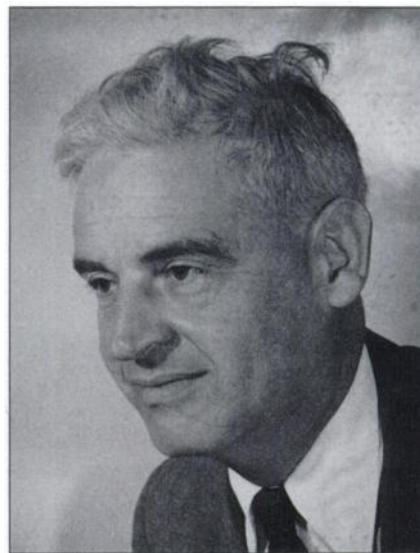
Trained as a physicist, Dr. Cassen received his doctorate from the California Institute of Technology in 1930. Early in his career he spent two years as a National Research Council Fellow at Princeton University and five years as a research physicist at the Westinghouse Research Laboratory in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, conducting research involving X-rays. After World War II, he joined the University of California-U.S. Atomic Energy Commission Project (which later became the Laboratory of Nuclear Medicine and Radiation Biology), and continued to work there for the remainder of his career. He is best known for his invention in 1950 of the automated scintillation scanner. This invention provided the basis for the field of nuclear medicine imaging, allowing clinical imaging of

human organs with radioisotopes.

The Society awarded Dr. Cassen a special Distinguished Scientist Award in 1970 in recognition of his scanner invention and his other scientific accomplishments, which included establishing the effects of shock waves on mammalian organisms and the development of a jet injection system for administering isotopes. The Society honored him with the Nuclear Medicine Pioneer Citation, awarded posthumously in 1978, which was renamed the following year as the Georg Charles de Hevesy Nuclear Medicine Pioneer Award.

Dr. Blahd describes Benedict Cassen as a creative and intense man who was dedicated to his work. These qualities were evident during Dr. Cassen's invention of the recording device for his rectilinear scanner. Dr. Cassen told Dr. Blahd that he often went to his stockbroker's office at lunch to check on his investments. As he sat there, he watched the ticker tape machine and listened to its monotonous tapping sound. After staring intently at it for some time, it suddenly inspired him with an idea for making the scanner's recording device. That scanner with its recording device is now on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, DC.

Dr. Blahd, a past president of the Society, and his wife Miriam (Mitzi) knew Mrs. Cassen for many years and Mrs. Blahd was instrumental in securing Mrs. Cassen's donation. In 1982, Mrs. Cassen updated her will because her son Balfour was in poor health, and she asked Mrs. Blahd for a suggestion as to a second beneficiary in case her son predeceased her. Mrs. Blahd responded that "Benedict's life was research" and that the Education and Research Foundation would be an ideal place for the



*Benedict Cassen, PhD*

money to go. Mrs. Cassen agreed.

The Cassen's son Balfour died in 1987, triggering the clause that would leave the bequest to the Foundation after Mrs. Cassen's death. Mrs. Cassen entered a nursing home that year and remained there until her death in 1990.

The Blahds remember Mrs. Cassen as a vivacious woman who was always the "life of the party." Dr. Blahd recalls that her friendly, outgoing character complemented Dr. Cassen's more serious and reserved nature.

The Blahds noted that just as the idea for Dr. Cassen's recording device came from his investments, so too does the money that will be used by the Foundation to further research in nuclear medicine. Scholarships paid for much of Dr. Cassen's education and his money will now be used to further the education of others. Dr. and Mrs. Blahd believe that Dr. Cassen would highly approve.

*Joan Hiam*