

Edith Hinkley Quimby¹

Dr. Edith Quimby, now Professor Emeritus of Radiology at Columbia University, was associated with Dr. Failla's radiation research programs for more than 40 years. Coming to New York immediately after the First World War, she looked for a position to augment the family income while her husband, Shirley Leon Quimby, worked for his doctor's degree at Columbia University. Failla was looking for his first research assistant and was courageous enough to employ a woman, rare in 1919. It was a decision which he never repented, and it was a position which she continued to occupy long after her husband had his degree.

During the next 24 years at Memorial Hospital, Failla and Quimby worked together on problems of x-ray and radium dosimetry, radiation protection, relative biological effectiveness of various types of radiation, and methods of improving procedures in radiation therapy. As the practical importance of their work became apparent, residents were assigned to spend specified periods in the radiation research laboratory. Most of them worked with Mrs. Quimby, learning research techniques and assisting her in the laboratory. Their help was especially important in the long series of studies involving observation of skin reactions produced by specified irradiations. These had to do with protraction, fractionation, and relative biological effectiveness of different types of radiation.

A natural outgrowth of this association with the residents was the establishment of an informal lecture course on radiation physics. Over the years this course has grown to academic stature and resulted in the production (with several collaborators) of *PHYSICAL FOUNDATIONS OF RADIOLOGY*, the basic physics textbook for would-be-radiologists. This is now in its third edition.

In 1943, when Dr. Failla went to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, of Columbia University, to establish a radiation research laboratory, she went with him. By this time she had been awarded an honorary degree of Doctor of Science from Whitman College, her alma mater. Like Dr. Failla, she was involved in the Manhattan Project, but to a lesser degree, so that certain hospital and medical school activities could be initiated.

She became immediately interested in clinical work with artificially radioactive isotopes, which were available from cyclotrons. Some of the earliest work with radioactive sodium and radioactive iodine was carried out by her with her medical colleagues. For the remainder of her professional life she was to be involved in isotope programs.

¹Professor Emeritus, Columbia University, New York.

When the war was over and Dr. Failla returned to his laboratory, his interests were oriented more definitely toward radiobiology, while Dr. Quimby's activities were directed toward isotopes and radiation dosimetry, and also increasingly involved classroom and laboratory teaching. Although she continued to be a member of his division, their scientific association was never again as close as it had been earlier.

She developed and directed a busy radioisotope laboratory, offering clinical services and also collaboration with medical school faculty members desiring to initiate isotope projects. As radioactive isotopes become more widely available there was a demand for practical training, and she, with Drs. Feitelberg and Silver, of the Mt. Sinai Hospital of New York (a Columbia affiliate), developed a lecture and laboratory course which should prepare doctors for AEC licensure. Over 600 students have now completed the course. Shortly after its initiation it became evident that a textbook was desirable, so *RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES IN MEDICINE AND BIOLOGY*, by Quimby, Feitelberg, and Silver, was brought out. It is now in its second edition.

During this period, because of the need for simple instruction in radiation safety, for hospital medical and nursing personnel, she published a little book entitled *SAFE HANDLING OF RADIOACTIVE ISOTOPES IN MEDICAL PRACTICE*, which has found wide use.

As radiation physics and biophysics became increasingly important, due to the great expansion in use of radiation, a need developed for professionally trained individuals in all branches of this field. At Columbia, Dr. Quimby assisted in the development of two courses for different levels of achievement; one leads to a master's degree in radiological physics and one to a doctor's degree in biophysics. Both involve collaboration by a considerable group of faculty members. In spite of her retirement, Dr. Quimby is still actively teaching in both of these programs.

She was always interested in professional societies and their activities, and is a member of half a dozen having to do with radiation from either the clinical or laboratory standpoint. She was President of the American Radium Society in 1954, the first (and so far the only) nonmedical person to achieve this honor. She was in the first group to be granted the diploma of the American Board of Radiology in Radiological Physics, in 1947, and in the first group to be created Associate Fellows of the American College of Radiology. She has been guest examiner for the American Board of Radiology since 1934, a member of the National Committee on Radiation Protection and Measurements since 1937, a member of the AEC's Advisory Committee for Medical Uses of Isotopes since 1947; she is still active in all of these.

She has traveled widely in Europe and South America, having taken part in many international and interAmerican congresses of radiology; she has honorary membership in several Latin American radiological organizations.

Her honors and awards have been many. She holds two honorary Doctor of Science degrees, one from Whitman College and one from Rutgers University. A list of her medals comprises gold medals of the Radiological Society of North America, the Indian Radiological Association, the Inter American College of

Radiology, and the American College of Radiology, the Janeway medal of the American Radium Society, the Ewing medal of the James Ewing Society, the medal of the American Cancer Society, and the Katherine Berkan Judd Award for Cancer Research. She is a member of Phi Beta Kappa and of Sigma Xi.

In speaking of herself today she says, "My life has been a happy and interesting one. The start of my professional life placed me in a field that was then full of fascinating problems, and which time has made only more interesting. I have always had good health and the ability to work at a fairly high pace and to keep several balls in the air at once. But any success which I have achieved I owe largely to the help and encouragement of others. First of all I am deeply indebted to Dr. Gioacchino Failla, who started me in the field, and who was always available for comment, criticism and help. Then to all my associates in both the physical and clinical aspects of almost everything I did, I owe a tremendous debt; I could not have accomplished a tenth of my work without them. And behind everything else was an understanding and encouraging husband, always proud of any accomplishment and ready to help promote the next activity. I can indeed count myself among the fortunate people."



DR. EDITH HINKLEY QUIMBY
Professor Emeritus, Columbia University