

Munn and Poston Tribute

Members of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health (the Board) wish to pay tribute to Ms. Wanda Iris Munn and Dr. John W. Poston Sr., who have resigned this year from the Board after tenures of extended and exceptional service. In both cases, their CVs are far too extensive to do justice to their careers and accomplishments, but we hope to provide a brief sense of these.

Wanda began her service to the Board in 2002, at its inception, as one of the ten original members appointed by President George W. Bush. Her history and career or careers is colorful and storied and deserves some note.

She is the daughter of a pioneering American family, her mother having “gone West” in a horse-drawn wagon in the late 1800s. Her nuclear engineering career was preceded and accompanied by employment spanning medicine, education, investment, accounting, law enforcement, and elective office. This elemental family imprint and wide professional experience has been well reflected in her clear-headed and practical perspectives on the diverse questions confronting the Board in its examinations of historical operations at nuclear weapons facilities. It has also served the Board through the clear and systematic approach Wanda brought to resolving each question at hand.

As a front-line nuclear engineer, a rare accomplishment among women of her generation, Wanda worked on the design, development, start-up, and management of the Fast Flux Test Facility at Hanford. The quality of her engineering work was repeatedly awarded during her career and ultimately landed her in the Oregon State Engineering Hall of Fame. It is also represented in her participation and leadership in professional societies associated with nuclear technology, including the Society of Women Engineers, the American Nuclear Society, and the Columbia Chapter of the Health Physics Society. This rich professional experience at Hanford gave her keen insights into so many complex operations that the Board has evaluated over these years at so many diverse facilities.

The Board has benefitted from and is grateful for the innumerable contributions made by Wanda, who missed no more than one or two of the hundreds of meetings of the Board and its many work groups and subcommittees over her 16-year tenure. It will also miss the personal figure Wanda cut among the Board, as an independent-minded colleague of feisty conviction, candor, and sympathy. Given the heavy burden of discussion that that composes our extensive workgroup and subcommittee proceedings, the Board will perhaps especially miss the fine parsimony of her elegant dry wit and humor.

Dr. Poston, John, has been with us almost as long as Wanda. He was appointed to the Board by President George W. Bush in 2005. He also bears some similarity to Wanda in his bent for efficiency. In John’s case, he was not loquacious. He rarely spoke first or most on a matter before the Board and its subgroups, even as a work group Chair. However, he always brought

important clarity with his questions and quick resolution of technical issues with his insights and answers.

This is not surprising given his scientific pedigree. He is a highly published researcher in health physics and has served at the top levels of science from more recent years as a professor of nuclear engineering for Texas A&M and previously Georgia Institute of Technology to heading the Medical Physics and Internal Dosimetry at Oak Ridge National Laboratory. He is a former President and Fellow of the Health Physics Society, a Fellow and former Executive of the American Nuclear Society, a Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, a Distinguished Emeritus Member of the National Council on Radiation Protection and Measurements, a Chair and member of multiple committees of the American National Standards Institute establishing national dosimetry and radiation protection standards, and a longstanding member of just about every other national and international body addressing the measurement of exposures to ionizing radiation and the protection of radiation exposed persons.

With his wealth of expertise, in addition to training generations of students of nuclear engineering and health physics, he has directly advised and lead advisory committees serving numerous health physics programs of International, foreign national, Federal and private nuclear operations spanning decades. These have covered a vast expanse of technologies and purposes including power and nuclear weapons production, nuclear medicine, waste disposal, contamination remediation, and addressing the threats of nuclear environmental disasters and terrorism.

The Board has been fortunate to have John's deep experience in dosimetry, its capabilities and limitations as it is practiced across myriad operational settings and circumstances. It has also benefitted from his enduringly collegial manner, his efficient chairing of work groups, and his good company during its travels, which will be missed.

Inasmuch as Ms. Wanda I. Munn and Dr. John W. Poston, Sr., have made significant contributions to the ongoing work of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health during their years of membership, we who remain as members of the Board thank them for their service, their scientific insight, and their wise counsel through many complex Board deliberations. They have served the Board and this country well!

This tribute is hereby adopted this 22nd day of August, 2018, at the 124th meeting of the Advisory Board on Radiation and Worker Health in Providence, Rhode Island.