For centuries, those familiar with Celtic folklore and mythology have been inspired by the story of the Irish mythological hero Cú Chulainn. Mortally wounded in battle, Cú Chulainn tied himself to a standing stone with his own intestines to die on his feet, facing his enemies. That this legend has endured for countless generations attests, I think, to the need for us mortals to have heroes, to celebrate courage, perseverance, excellence, dedication and a host of other noble human attributes.

When the bibliophile and avid collector of anesthesia equipment and artifacts, Paul M. Wood, M.D. (1894-1963), donated his personal collection to ASA in the early 1930s, what was to become the eponymous Library-Museum of Anesthesiology was basically a one-man operation. Over the years, however, the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology (WLM) has expanded and flourished. It is now served by highly accomplished and dedicated staff members, an honorary curator, nine trustees and several former trustees and officers as well as numerous committee members, all of whom feel passionately about the WLM’s mission to preserve and promote the historical, educational and archival treasures integral to the heritage of anesthesiology. During my 22-year involvement with the WLM, I have been deeply touched by the extended and extensive commitment the WLM family has made to the institution. Their service is truly a labor of love, and we thought it long past due to establish the WLM Distinguished Service Award (DSA) to honor the leadership, engagement and example of our most outstanding volunteers. Toward that end, for the first (and only) time, three exceptional colleagues will be honored with the WLM DSA at the ANESTHESIOLOGY® 2016 annual meeting (in subsequent years, no more than one person per year will be eligible for the award). This year’s distinguished awardees are Drs. Donald Caton, Elliott V. Miller and Charles C. Tandy.

Dr. Donald Caton has a sustained and exemplary record of promoting the specialty of anesthesiology through many avenues. Joining the Board of Trustees of the WLM in 1989, Don served in multiple capacities, eventually becoming president of the WLM from 1997-2001. He devoted considerable energy to growing the WLM endowment and to planning for
financial contingencies. Don crafted a detailed document outlining the fiscal situation of the WLM, highlighting the diverse services the WLM offers ASA members and officers, and underscoring the importance of monetary support for the WLM to buffer it from economic vagaries that could undermine its very existence. Moreover, he has promoted the professional character of our specialty through publication of scholarly papers, book chapters, books and lectures. In 1997, he delivered the Lewis H. Wright Memorial Lecture and, in 2004, he was named the WLM Laureate of the History of Anesthesia. His scholarly activities have consistently reached an audience beyond our specialty, nurturing recognition of anesthesiologists as valuable medical professionals. Indeed, his book What a Blessing She Had Chloroform received favorable reviews in both the New York Times and Los Angeles Times. Further, Don’s work on The Heritage of Anesthesia: Patrick Sim’s Annotated Bibliography of the Rare Book Collection of the Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology enabled that worthy tome to come to fruition after our beloved Patrick died in 2010.

Dr. Elliott V. Miller has an extensive history of service to the WLM, serving as chairman of the Board of Trustees from 1985-88 and then as president from 1988-97. An invertebrate and energetic organizer, Elliott breathed new life (some might say “fire”) into the foundation. He established and continually expanded a system of working committees with specific structures, set lofty goals and functioned as a demanding taskmaster. Miller was in almost daily telephone contact with our late Distinguished Librarian Patrick Sim, offering insightful suggestions for new acquisitions, including the Laennec stethoscope, and scholarly historical projects. Indeed, Elliott was the catalyst and driving force behind the eventual publication of Patrick’s annotated bibliography. He was also instrumental in ensuring the financial viability of the WLM by enlisting the help of Welch and Forbes, a talented Boston asset management team, to impressively increase the WLM endowment. Indeed, Elliott was the driving force behind the creation of the WLM WLM endowment. Indeed, Elliott was the catalyst and driving force behind the eventual publication of Patrick’s annotated bibliography. He was also instrumental in ensuring the financial viability of the WLM by enlisting the help of Welch and Forbes, a talented Boston asset management team, to impressively increase the WLM endowment. Indeed, Elliott was the driving force behind the creation of the WLM endowment. Although not all contributors experienced a favorable review, Elliott’s tenacity and determination ensured that the WLM remained operational during a challenging era when politics and economics threatened to close our nonprofit foundation. Importantly, Charles served as chairman of the Acquisition Committee from 1980 until currently. His wisdom and expertise have guided judicious decisions in husbanding our resources while effectively preserving the proud heritage of our specialty. Recently, approaching his 90th birthday, the indefatigable Dr. Tandy completed yet another term of service on the WLM Board. A “gentleman’s gentleman,” Dr. Tandy’s extraordinary talent and devotion have been recognized by multiple organizations. He served on the Dallas City Council from 1987-93 and has been active in his First Baptist Church Community continuously since 1960. Charles was the worthy recipient of the Texas Society of Anesthesiologists DSA in 2002. Impressively, the Health Sciences Library at Methodist Dallas Medical Center was named in his honor in 1991. (No doubt this tribute was especially meaningful to our beloved bibliophile from Texas.)

The WLM DSA will be presented in Chicago on Sunday, October 23, just before the Lewis H. Wright Memorial Lecture and the installation of George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., as the 2016 WLM Laureate of the History of Anesthesia. Please join us in honoring our distinguished colleagues.

Acknowledgments

The author would like to express her gratitude to the current WLM President, Dr. Mark Schroeder, for appointing the WLM DSA Committee, to WLM Trustee Dr. William D. Owens for delineating the policies and procedures governing the DSA, and to Karen Bieterman, MLIS, Director and Head Librarian of the WLM, for facilitating and enhancing the work of the WLM DSA Committee.