

## ANESTHESIOLOGY REFLECTIONS FROM THE WOOD LIBRARY-MUSEUM

### Dame Cicely Courtneidge's 1931 "Laughing Gas" Recording



Born in Sydney, Australia, Dame Cicely Courtneidge (1893–1980, *center*) became a British star of stage, screen, and recording studios. In 1931 for H.M.V. ("His Master's Voice"), she recorded her classic sketch *Laughing Gas*. In that routine, young Ramona, the daughter of the late James Endicott Dowlick, fiddles with her uncle's nitrous oxide apparatus. Eventually, laughing gas fills the room and complicates the reading of Mr. Dowlick's last will and testament. To their own giggles and then howls of laughter, Dowlick's disappointed survivors learn that he bequeathed merely a fifth of the promised sum to his "dear friend Ernest Mitchum," only "best wishes" to his solicitor, and solely "income tax demands" exceeding £2,000 to his "dear wife Agatha." Regarding the laughing gas, the butler observed, "They gives you a whiff of that and you don't feel any more agony until you comes to." (Copyright © the American Society of Anesthesiologists, Inc.)

George S. Bause, M.D., M.P.H., *Honorary Curator, ASA's Wood Library-Museum of Anesthesiology, Schaumburg, Illinois, and Clinical Associate Professor, Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, Ohio. UJYC@aol.com.*