

A Shared Legacy

THE ACR ARCHIVES YIELD AN IMPORTANT PIECE OF HISTORY.

By Lyndsee Cordes



It was the summer of 1931 in Paris. As the story goes, Benjamin Orndoff, MD, ACR executive secretary, scanned the crowd, looking for the guest of honor at the ACR Gold Medal ceremony. The same question was on everyone's minds. After canceled luncheons and missed dinner appointments, the notoriously publicity-shy, two-time Nobel laureate had finally agreed to publicly accept the Gold Medal at a special ceremony in her honor. But would she come?

Orndoff had connected with Marie Curie through a mutual acquaintance. Together, the two persuaded Curie to not only accept the award but to allow her acceptance to be recorded in a motion picture with sound for what they believed would be the first time. Orndoff recalled that in accomplishing the task, his "ingenuity was taxed to its utmost."¹

As the ceremony approached, Orndoff's eyes finally rested on a small elderly woman. He needn't have worried about Curie showing up. She appeared, as promised, to accept the ACR Gold Medal for her contributions to the field of radiology. And, thanks to Orndoff, the moment was immortalized on film.

For 81 years the film remained in the care of the ACR archives, a testament to

"I would like to express here all my thanks to the delegation of the American College of Radiology and American Society of Radiology for the honor that brings me here and by which I am extremely touched." — Marie Curie, 1931 ACR Gold Medal ceremony, translated from the original French

the College's appreciation for Curie and her important work. But in September 2012, in an effort to share this historic record, the ACR offered to donate the film to the Curie Museum in Paris.

The museum occupies what was once Curie's lab. It was here, a few streets from the smaller lab in which Curie discovered polonium and radium, that Curie conducted research from 1914 until her death in 1934. And it was here that Curie's daughter and son-in-law, Irène and Frédéric Joliot-Curie, discovered artificial radiation, for which they won a Nobel Prize.

Today the museum, now part of the prestigious cancer research center Institut Curie, educates visitors about Curie's life and contributions to science. "Marie Curie was a model for women in science," says Natalie Pigeard-Micault, engineer at the French

National Center for Scientific Research in charge of the Curie Museum's archives. "She proved that women could be great scientists."

A statement from the museum reads, "This rare document from July 1931 is very precious to us because it is the only film we know of in which we can hear the voice of Madam Curie. We are deeply thankful for this generous gift for our visitors to enjoy." The ACR is proud to help the world remember Marie Curie and to contribute to the mission of the museum, which is, in part, to contribute to historical research as well as to conserve, develop, and enrich its collection. //

ENDNOTE

1. Orndoff BH. "An Interview with Madame Curie: An Historical Note." Presented before the Radiological Conference of the Rocky Mountain Radiological Society, August 15-17, 1957.

Curie receives the Gold Medal from members of the ACR in 1931.



From ACR Archives

Visitors to the museum view artifacts from Curie's life and career.



Courtesy Christophe Hargoues

Marie Curie's lab equipment is displayed at the Institut Curie in Paris.



Courtesy Christophe Hargoues