



Charter members after receiving 25-year medallions at the twenty-fifth AMI annual meeting, Houston, 1970. Eleanor is sitting in the front row, far right. *The History of The Association of Medical Illustrators*, p. 59.

# Eleanor Sweezey

## Charter member of the AMI

Eleanor was a Charter Member of the AMI. She was one of thirty delegates who met in Chicago, Illinois, between July 16–19, 1945, to organize a society with the goal “to promote the study and to encourage the advancement of medical illustration and allied fields of visual education, to promote understanding and cooperation with the medical and dental professions including public health and nursing, and to advance medical illustration.”

She was an Honorary Trustee of the Vesalius Trust, bestowed upon her and her fellow charter members in 1994.

1952 – 53 Vice-Chair, Board of Governors  
 1957 – 58 Chair, Board of Governors  
 1958 – 59 Vice-President

1960 – 61 Vice-Chair, Board of Governors  
 1961 – 62 President

The following was written by Eleanor A. Sweezey,  
 from *The History of The Association of Medical Illustrators*.

I'm a Canadian, from Montreal, to be exact. I applied for Max Broedel's program in 1938 and was accepted at the last minute. Mr. Broedel told me to hop the first train to Baltimore. I didn't have enough money and, in as much as I was scheduled to get my B.A. in the spring of 1939 at Queens University, I decided I'd better do that instead. With degree in hand, I wrote to Broedel once more to make arrangements to come. Too late. He apologized profusely, but he had already accepted four students and that was his limit. He would, he said, look forward to seeing me in 1940. But that didn't settle it. He wrote again and, apologized even more profusely, said that he had been told that he would have to retire in 1940. Therefore, when I at last got to Baltimore in the fall of 1940 I found myself a student, not of Broedel, but of Jim Didusch.

Broedel was still feeling guilty. He told me to visit him in his office at the hospital whenever I had any questions. On my first visit he gave me a bit of advice. If I wanted to learn about medical art, he said, I should stick close to Dorcas Padgett. Dorcas was working for the Carnegie Institute of Embryology but she did her drawings in the same studio as the students. Stick I did, and she and I became very good friends.

In the spring of 1942 I spent three months in Toronto doing eye fundi for Maria Wishart on a special project for the Canadian Air Force. Wishart's school had not officially opened at the time, but she and her assistants and students were great. I supplemented my income by working weekend nights as secretary in the hospital emergency room. It may not have taught me much about medical illustration, but it taught me quite a bit about life. By May of 1945, I had a full-time job at the Veteran's Hospital in Montreal.

In spite of being a very recent employee, my employer let me go to Chicago for the founding of the AMI. Marie Wishart had invited me as to go as a delegate from Canada. It was, at the time, the most exciting and significant invitation I had ever received, and I still consider it so. Fifty delegates from all over the continent attended the meeting and, at every lunch and dinner, Tom Jones and Willard Shepard had arranged for influential members of the medical profession to address us. At the banquet, I happened to be sitting next to Dr. Barry Anson, professor of anatomy at Northwestern. I treasure the copy of his *Atlas of Human Anatomy* which he sent me in 1951.

One of the most striking impressions I have of the meeting was how gracious and considerate Tom Jones was. Even though I was an unknown novice, he treated me with the same respect as he bestowed on the most illustrious delegates. Willard Shepard and his wife, Alice, were equally courteous, and Helen Lorraine became one of my close friends. What a joy to be able to talk to everyone without having to explain what medical illustration is!

I continued to be active in the AMI. I had admired Kay Hyde's drawings whenever I came across them and when I met her, at the meeting of 1946 or 1947, I was delighted to find that she was as friendly as a puppy and had a terrific sense of humor. She, Jessie Phillips, Angela Bartenbach and I often shared rooms at the AMI meetings.

In 1949 I became an advisor in medical illustration and photography for all the Canadian Veteran's Hospitals, which gave me a chance to travel around my country as well as the United States. I stayed in this job for over 30 years, and then went to Montreal General Hospital for four and one-half years. In 1985 I quit traveling as part of my job-and really began to travel, for fun.

Seventeen years after my first AMI meeting, I delivered, in 1962, my presidential address. I pitched it to our younger members. I wanted them to know that all the knowledge and goodwill of the AMI would always be at their disposal. My message was that if we had the habit of honesty in our work, we would recognize any lapse in our integrity. And if we cared enough about our work, the joy that comes with attainment would undoubtedly follow.