

AIP AND SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

The Compton Medal

The highest award of the American Institute of Physics, the Karl Taylor Compton Gold Medal for Distinguished Service in the Advancement of Physics, was presented in January to Henry A. Barton, director emeritus of the Institute. Dr. Barton, one of the founders of the AIP and its first director, served as the organization's administrative head from the time of its establishment in 1931 until 1957, when he retired. As director emeritus, he continues to serve the Institute as a consultant.

The award was established by the Institute in 1957 in memory of K. T. Compton, the first chairman of the AIP Governing Board. Dr. Compton, who was chairman of the Corporation of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology at the time of his death in 1954, played a leading role in the founding of the American Institute of Physics. The Compton Medal has been awarded on only two other occasions. The first presentation was made in 1957 to the late George B. Pegram, who had served continuously for a quarter of a century as an officer of the AIP. The second recipient of the award was Karl K. Darrow, secretary since 1941 of the American Physical Society and a former board member of the Institute.

The medal was presented to Dr. Barton by Ralph A. Sawyer, the present chairman of the AIP Governing Board. The ceremony took place on January 24, following the banquet of the American Physical Society and the American Association of Physics Teachers, held at the Statler-Hilton Hotel in New York City during the annual joint meeting of the two organizations.

Dr. Barton was introduced by Dr. Darrow, and the comments of both on that occasion are reproduced below.

K. K. Darrow's Introduction of Compton Medallist H. A. Barton

"Messrs. Presidents, Mr. Sawyer, Mr. Barton, distinguished guests: To me has been allotted the privilege of introducing someone who needs no introduction, and justifying a prizegiving that needs no justification. This I have accepted because it is such a pleasure to speak of Harry Barton and his distinguished career. About two thousand years ago one Quintus Horatius Flaccus, otherwise known as Horace, said 'exegi monumentum aere perennius'—I have made a monument more enduring than bronze. He was speaking of his poetry, and he was right; but most poets could not say this truly of their poems. There must have been millions of poets whose poems did not outlast themselves, let alone bronze. If you want to make something more enduring than bronze, it is a much better bet to found an institution. That is what Harry Barton was doing, nearly a third of a century ago. If you will go to Twenty-third Street and Fifth Avenue you will see a remarkable building which for many years was as much the emblem of New York as the Empire State Building is today. It is the Flatiron

Building. Go to the north of it and look back at its north apex, and let your eyes travel up to the fifteenth floor. You will then be gazing at the windows behind which Harry Barton organized the Institute." [Aside to H. A. B.:] "Yes, Harry, I know that you have told me that your very first office was elsewhere, but forget it and never speak of it again; the story is much nicer if it starts in the Flatiron." "In his office he sat, at first alone, then with one secretary, then with more secretaries, then with Madeline Mitchell; and Harry will not begrudge it if I take twenty seconds of his time to say that those of us who remember Madeline Mitchell will always hold her in loving and grateful memory. With Madeline Mitchell and John Tate, Harry started the publication by the Institute of the great journals of American physics; and he was doing other things as well. For instance, he was interpreting physics to the press. Also and for years, he was doing something which now seems supererogatory: he was promoting applied physics, that is to say, he was persuading industry to employ physicists. When I

The Karl Taylor Compton Gold Medal
for Distinguished Service to Physics
is herewith awarded to
Henry Askew Barton
in recognition of

his eminent statesmanship in the organization of American physics and his service over a period of twenty-six years as the first Director of the American Institute of Physics. His skill in putting the physics journals of America on a sound financial basis and thus helping to raise them to the high position they now occupy as the outstanding physics journals of the world. His initiative in setting up an Advisory Council on Applied Physics which did much to encourage the further application of physics in industry and the recognition of physics as a true profession. His role, in conjunction with a War Policy Committee, in setting policies for the publication of research in physics and the effective utilization of physicists during the critical war years. His leadership in establishing the first headquarters building for American physics.

And finally: His kindness, generosity, modesty, and wisdom which he has continued to make available to physicists and their organizations since he retired in 1957 from the Directorship of the Institute.

Given at New York City this 24th day of January 1964 by order of the Governing Board of the American Institute of Physics.



Ralph A. Sawyer
Chairman
Elmer Hutchison
Director
William H. Rind
Secretary