

DAVID HENRY DIETZ
(1897-1984)

David Henry Dietz, retired Pulitzer Prize-winning science editor for the Scripps-Howard Newspapers, died 9 December 1984 at the Margaret Wagner House of Benjamin Rose Institute in Cleveland Heights, Ohio, at age 87. "Mr. Science of Press, it was David Dietz who blazed a trail that popularized science through his skill in deciphering its mysteries for easy public consumption." (*The Cleveland Press*, page one, 24 January 1977).

Born 6 October 1897 in Cleveland, he was a son of Henry W. and Hannah (Levi) Dietz. Upon graduation from the old Central High School of Cleveland in 1915, he worked as a night office boy at the now defunct *Cleveland Press* for \$10 a week. He entered Western Reserve University that same year and earned an A.B. degree (1919).

Mr. Dietz was named science editor of Scripps-Howard in 1921, the first American newspaper reporter to bear that title. Starting in 1923 he wrote a daily column on science for the newspaper chain, "... and as near as I can calculate, I have written 9 million column words to date" (David Dietz, 1977). In addition to his newspaper work, he authored nine books by the time he retired from the *Cleveland Press* (1977).

Concurrent positions included lecturer at Western Reserve University (1927-1950); publicity committee, division of medical science, National Research Council (1939-1946); consultant to the Surgeon General, U.S. Army (1944-1947); and science commentator, National Broadcasting Company (1945-1950). While at NBC, he was heard on the Morgan Beatty News of the World program over 181 radio stations.

In 1934, he proposed what became the National Association of Science Writers and was elected its first president. Membership in this organization has grown from 12 at its time of conception to more than a thousand [in 1985].

Mr. Dietz wrote the "Atomic Bomb" article for the Encyclopedia Britannica in 1946. That same year he accompanied the Joint Army-Navy Task Force One to Bikini Atoll to cover the atomic bomb tests for newspaper and radio. Many articles on atomic energy were subsequently written for the Britannica Yearbook.

Honorary doctorates were bestowed upon Mr. Dietz from Western Reserve University (1948) and Bowling Green State University (1954). He was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in Journalism (1937). Other

awards included the Goodrich Award for Distinguished Public Service (1940), Westinghouse Distinguished Science Writers Award (1946), Lasker Medical Journalism Award (1954), Ohioana Career Medal (1958), and the Grady Gold Medal of the American Chemical Society (1961). Mr. Dietz was named a fellow of Sigma Delta Chi/Society of Professional Journalists (1965) and received a distinguished service award from their Cleveland Chapter (1972).

Joining the physics and astronomy section of The Ohio Academy of Science (1924), he became a fellow (1933) and emeritus (1971). In Mr. Dietz's own words,

"I still recall with a glow of pleasure the meetings of the Academy I attended in the 1920s and 30s. The Academy made it possible for me to get to know many of Ohio's leading men of science... It is my firm belief that every Ohio scientist would find it to his advantage to become a member of the Academy. It offers him an opportunity to broaden his interests and extend his horizons."

Membership was also held in A.A.A.S., American Astronomy Society, American Geographical Society, (Fellow), Royal Astronomy Society (fellow), and French Astronomical Society. Mr. Dietz had been a trustee of Mount Sinai Hospital (1961-1970) and also for Shaker Heights Public Library. He served as president of Suburban Temple in Beachwood for four years.

Surviving are his wife, Mrs. Dorothy (Cohen) Dietz, whom he married in 1918 and three children, Mrs. Doris Turner, Mrs. Patricia Morris, and David Dietz, Jr. Burial was at Lakeview Cemetery in Cleveland.

In 1977, upon his retirement, he said "I will miss my column. I will miss my readers." We will miss David Dietz.

W. LOUIS PHILLIPS
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