

# Meredith Herald

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1990-1991: Celebrating Meredith's Charter Centennial

## Nobel Prize Winner Speaks at Convocation "A Conversation With Gertrude B. Elion"

by Julia Haskett (with thanks to Jane Kennedy and to Dr. Mary Thomas)

Gertrude B. Elion, recipient of the 1988 Nobel Prize in Medicine, will address the Meredith College community during Convocation today. She will also be the guest of Dr. Deborah Smith's vertebrate physiology class later in the day.

"We are still harvesting the fruits of what they determined almost 40 years ago," said a Nobel official in Stockholm as Elion, along with George Hitchings and Sir James Black, won the coveted prize. It was an uncommon break with tradition: the Nobel committee recognized researchers in the commercial drug industry.

The January 29, 1989 issue of *New York Times* magazine, described the Nobel Prize ceremony: Gertrude Belle Elion was the only female recipient on the stage at last month's Nobel Prize ceremony. Dressed in royal blue chiffon, she was a flash of brilliance among the starched white evening shirts and formal black suits of the others. Elion overcame the crucial handicap of gender, which as sunk many a female scientist, and the lack of a Ph.D. Perhaps more crucial, the Nobel has been given only rarely to employees of pharmaceutical companies. So apparently reluctant was the Nobel Committee to recognize this kind of commercial research that the prize came almost 30 years after most of the team's discoveries.

In the 1940s, Elion and Hitchings, who have worked together since 1945, found that the genes of healthy cells process information differently from those of cancerous cells and disease-causing bacteria and viruses. By targeting these cells and microbes with drugs that interfere with replication, they



established an approach that led to new drug therapies for many diseases, including leukemia and malaria.

In 1957 they developed the drug, asathioprine, that controlled rejection in organ transplants. That led to the development of acyclovir for the treatment of herpes and AZT, the earliest drug to win approval by the Federal Government for AIDS.

Elion and Hitchings published many papers together, sometimes with her name first, sometimes his, but he was always the boss. As Elion puts it: "He had two arms of research and I was one of them. It wasn't really until he became research director that I was on my own."

Did they think of themselves as a team?

"I did," Elion says, "but I doubt George did."

According to the *Times* article, Hitchings says he "pretty much told the [lab employees] what do to" although Elion responds, "I was never a yes man."

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## Staley Lecture Series: Morality in the Arts

The Staley Distinguished Scholar Lecture Series will be held the week of September 24-26, 1990. Our lecturer will be Dr. Harold M. Best, Dean of the Conservatory of music at Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois. Dr. Best will be addressing the topic of morality in the arts during two public addresses.

On Monday, September 24 at 10:00 a.m. in Jones Auditorium, Dr. Best's topic will be "Creation, Worship, and Artistic Action." On Wednesday, September 26 at 10:00 a.m. in Jones Chapel, Dr. Best will present "Towards a Christian Response to Art."

Dr. Best has published a number of articles lately that relate to this subject as well as being a lecturer on morality in the arts for the Staley Foundation at several colleges and universities. No stranger to Meredith, Dr. Best visited our campus last year with the accrediting



Dr. Harold Best

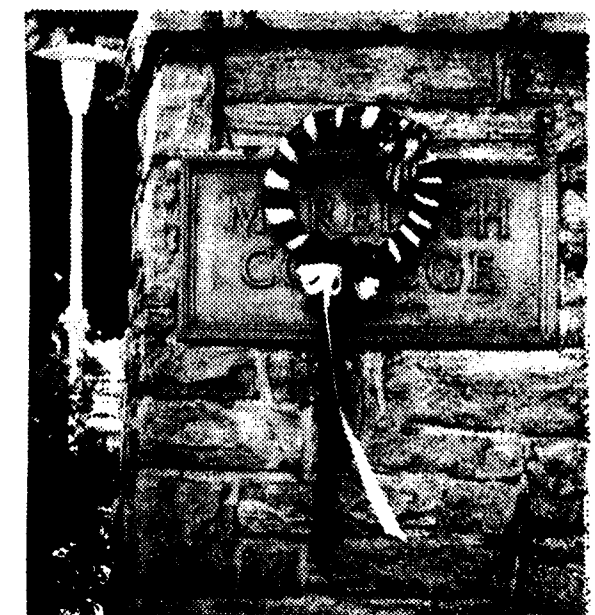
committee of the national Association of Schools of Music.

In addition to the lectures and classroom visits, Dr. Best will be present for a faculty and staff dialogue on Wednesday in the President's Dining Room at noon.

## To Support Our Service Members...

Anyone arriving at Meredith's campus might notice the red, white and blue wreaths which are hanging at both front and side entrance gates to the school. Junior class members last week collected donations during hall meetings to raise money to buy the wreaths and yellow and green ribbon bows. Their project was sanctioned by the Office of Student Activities.

According to junior class president Martha Inscore, "The purpose of the wreaths is not to take a political stand but to honor the American soldiers



[serving in Saudi Arabia and the Persian Gulf] in the hope that they will safely arrive home soon."

The yellow ribbon bows symbolize hope for the families and loved ones of the soldiers and the green ribbon bows represent peace.

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