

Remembering Maria (Ikenberg) Lindberg 1907 – 2006

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Maria Lindberg passed away in October 2006. She was a pioneer in the specialty of otolaryngological photography at the University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center. A portion of her imaging legacy can be viewed within the university's Buckingham Collection and the Jacques Hollinger Collection. Maria was a longtime and devoted member of the Biological Photographic Association (predecessor of the BioCommunications Association), and maintained that devotion right up to the time of her passing. In 2007, the BioCommunications Association was advised of a gift from her estate of more than \$326,000. The BCA Board of Governors established a Working Group to make recommendations to the Board for how the funds should be invested and/or distributed in support of BCA programs. The Working Group met in North Carolina in May. That meeting resulted in four recommendations to the BCA Board of Governors for near term use of funds from the gift. Maria (Lindberg) Ikenberg boldly left her mark and set a shining example for us all to follow.

Beginnings of a Career

Maria Lindberg, who was a longtime member of BPA/BCA, passed away October 7, 2006, in Laguna Hills, California. She was born Maria Elsasser, in Germany, July 20, 1907. After completing basic and secondary schools, she went to England to learn Business English. Returning to Germany, she was employed at the Farben Co. Bank, and then went on to complete an intensive two-year course, becoming a certified Technical Assistant for Medical Institutions. Her medical technology training included anatomy and histology, plus an introduction to microphotography (photomicrography). Maria then found work at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute and completed additional photography training at both the AGFA and Leitz factories. Her combined education of German and English translation, medical technology, and technical photography, would ultimately prove to serve her well in future professional endeavors.



Portrait of Maria Elsasser (1939).

In the spring of 1938 Maria and her parents immigrated to the United States. Initially, Maria worked for a short time in New York City with the E. Leitz Co., and at Columbia University. It was also at this time that she met Louis Schmidt, at the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research. In 1939 Maria joined the Department of Otolaryngology, University of Illinois at Chicago Medical Center. Two years later she married and was then known to BPA members as Maria E. Ikenberg. And for better than three decades she would go on to provide stellar photographic services to the University. The results of her efforts are now part of the University's extensive Buckingham Collection, and the Jacques Holinger Memorial Collection—two elegant educational collections of still and motion media clinical and endoscopic images.

Recognition in the Profession

Maria's photographic work did not go unnoticed. In 1947, she was an invited photographer—along with fellow BPA members, Avis Gregersen, Grace MacMullen, and Stella Zimmer—to exhibit her work in the First Women's Invitational Exhibition of Photography, New York City Camera Club. The exhibit, which was on display during the month of November, featured the work of forty women photographers. The vast majority of the images were exhibited by commercial, fashion, and portrait photographers. Scientific and medical photography, which included Maria's clinical and endoscopic images, was well represented by these four women.

During this same period of time at the University of Illinois, Maria worked with colleagues Joseph D. Brubaker, FBPA, and James E. Brubaker, FBPA, (both Photographic Engineers), and Paul H. Holinger, M.D., FBPA (Schmidt Laureate '59). Their combined efforts would create pioneering methods in endoscopic photography by creating the Brubaker camera. For its time, although a somewhat awkward set-up, the Brubaker system



Maria with Brubaker-Holinger endoscopic camera.

proved to be one of the first successful clinical endoscopic cameras. Its design was exceptional for capturing images that were used to document patients' conditions and to train medical professionals.

Perhaps Maria's most noteworthy effort was coordinating the production of a classic medical reference: *Atlas of Otorhinolaryngology and Bronchoesophagology* (Library of Congress catalog card number 68-10091, 315 pages). Maria worked closely with Drs. Becker, Buckingham, Holinger, Korting, and Lederer. This monumental effort capitalized on Maria's combined talents of exacting German/English translation, her attention to detail, and her photographic expertise. The text was originally published in Germany (in German) in 1968. Maria proofed translated copy, and saw that many of the images she herself had created since 1939 had been selected for reproduction in the Atlas. And from the text's Preface (1969 English edition) the five authors offer: "Maria E. Ikenberg, RBP, FBPA, Scientific Photographer at the Illinois Eye and Ear Infirmary, Department of Otolaryngology, University of Illinois, produced many of the illustrations of the pathology of the head and neck. We extend our thanks to her for the aiding in the selection of material, for assistance in the translation, and above all for the dedication to the innumerable tasks associated with the mechanics of setting up this Atlas."

Maria and the BPA

Concurrent with her professional career, Maria made significant contributions to BPA. In the *Journal of the Biological Photographic Association (JBPA)* Maria is first mentioned as a new member in 1941, and was personally recruited by founding member, Ralph Creer. As an active member of the Chicago Chapter, she hosted countless monthly Chapter Meetings, and served as the Chapter's Secretary, Treasurer, and President. On three occasions Maria was a member of the planning committee for BPA's Annual Meetings in Chicago (1946, 1950, & 1961). Over the course of many years

she regularly attended BPA Annual Meetings, presented papers, and participated as a member of many standing committees. In addition, she attended and participated in numerous professional meetings conducted in Europe, including Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.

During her career Maria was recognized for her many professional contributions. Among her numerous honors, BPA awarded her Fellowship (FBPA) in 1953; she and her colleagues were recognized at the First International Congress of Medical Photography and Cinematography, Düsseldorf, Germany, in 1960 with an award for an endoscopic movie; she was the 1963 recipient of BPA's highest honor, the Louis Schmidt Award; and she was certified as a Registered Biological Photographer (RBP) in the first class of 47 recipients in 1965.



Maria presenting paper at 1953 BPA Annual Meeting.



Maria with cinematography award, Düsseldorf, Germany, 1960.



Maria, wearing Schmidt Key, BIOCOMM 1990.

Maria retired in 1971 and moved to California to enjoy leisure activities and travel. During this time she met, and later married Hans Lindberg, a retired dentist who shared Maria's passion for photography. Although retired, she maintained contact with many BPA Members through correspondence and by telephone. As an Emeritus member she continued to attend BPA/BCA Annual Meetings, including BIOCMM '90 and '93. Later, after Hans' passing, Maria donated his sizable collection of photographic equipment (including two Nikon SLR cameras & various lenses, a Hasselblad system, and seven Leica cameras) to the BPA Annual Auction, resulting in significant donations to the Association's Endowed Fund For Education.

Throughout her long career Maria was well known for touting the benefits of being a BPA member, and she was also very outspoken in her quest to see more women recognized for their contributions to our biophotography profession. In her later years Maria continued to maintain a keen interest in "the Association." She always wanted to know about changes in the profession, and "How was the meeting?" was a constant question. As her health began to fail she required assistance in her daily life. Caregivers reported that she proudly shared stories about her career and her beloved BPA. Maria was committed to the end to the "Association." Her feisty disposition, steadfast devotion, and loyalty to BPA/BCA, will be sorely missed.

A Gift to BCA

As testament to Maria's love for and devotion to BCA, she was kind enough to remember BCA in her will. In 2007, the BioCommunications Association was advised of a gift from the estate of Maria Lindberg of more than \$300,000. The BCA Board of Governors established a Working Group to make recommendations to the Board for how the funds should be invested and/or distributed in support of BCA programs.

The Maria Ikenberg Lindberg Trust Working Group, chaired by Ken Michaels, FBPA, met in Hillsborough, North Carolina in May. That meeting resulted in four recommendations to the BCA Board of Governors for near-term use of funds from the gift. First, that the keynote address at future annual meetings be officially named the Maria Ikenberg Lindberg Keynote Address. In support of this, a portion of the trust funds are to be added to the existing Anne Shiras Pioneer Lectureship fund to bring its total assets to approximately \$75,000, and the fund be renamed the BCA Endowed Lectures Fund. Henceforth, the fund will generate interest earnings sufficient to support both annual major lectures: The Maria Ikenberg Lindberg Keynote Address, and the Anne Shiras Pioneer Members Lecture. Second, that the BCA Endowment Fund For Education (EFFE) be relieved of the current requirement to dedicate 50 percent of its annual interest earnings to the BIOCMM Annual Meeting support. This will allow EFFE greater latitude in its annual adjudication of proposals, and should a future BIOCMM require extra support, the Maria Ikenberg Lindberg Trust can be called on for help. Third, that the Board of Governors use as much as \$25,000 of Trust funds over the next 12



Casual photograph of Maria visiting Chicago, 1987.

months to support unspecified programs and/or initiatives as they may see fit. And fourth, that the Board of Governors establish a Maria Ikenberg Lindberg Trust Advisory Group to seek input from members, to brainstorm possibilities, to evaluate options, and to make recommendations for use of Trust funds to the Board on an ongoing basis. The above recommendations were approved by the BCA Board of Governors at its 2008 meeting in Rochester, NY.

The Maria Ikenberg Lindberg Trust Advisory Group was established as a six-member body upon which members will serve three year terms, staggered such that each year two members will leave the group and two new members will be added. The inaugural Advisory Group, appointed by the president and ratified by the Board, is Daphne Demas and Thomas Turner (2009), Ken Michaels, FBPA (Chairman) and Sally Robertson (2010), and John Hendrix, RBP, FBCA and Gabe Unda, FBCA (2011).

Acknowledgements

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Author

Bob Turner has been active in the field of biocommunications for close to four decades. He has been Director of Biomedical Graphics, The Scripps Research Institute, La Jolla, California, for the past twenty-nine years; holds an MBA in Health Care Administration; is a Registered Biological Photographer (RBP); was named a Fellow (FBPA) of the BioCommunications Association; is a BCA Past President; and has been honored with BCA's Ralph Creer Service Award, and Louis Schmidt Award. bturmer@scripps.edu