

John Parascandola (1941–



John Parascandola was born in New York City on July 14, 1941. He received a B.S. in chemistry from Brooklyn College in 1963 and then went to the University of Wisconsin, where he earned his Ph.D. in History of Science in 1968 for his thesis on "Lawrence J. Henderson and the Concept of Organized Systems." After a postdoctoral year at Harvard University, Parascandola returned to the University of Wisconsin as assistant professor of History of Science and History of Pharmacy, with subsequent appointments to associate professor (1973) and professor (1980). He served the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy as director from 1973 to 1981 and as chair of its Council from 1989 to 2005.

Parascandola was appointed Chief of the History of Medicine Division (HMD) of the National Library of Medicine in Bethesda, Maryland in 1983 and held that position until 1992.

During his tenure at HMD, Parascandola significantly increased the application of computers and other technologies to the library's historical collections, was notably active in promoting the division's services to a wide variety of audiences, and developed a number of new scholarly programs. In 1992 he became the first incumbent of the position of Public Health Service Historian. His contributions as a Federal employee were recognized through such honors as the National Institute of Health Merit Award (1988), the Surgeon General's Exemplary Service Award (1989 and 1996), and the Assistant Secretary for Health's Superior Service Award (1999).

Parascandola's research interests have focused on the history of modern pharmaceutical and biomedical science, especially pharmacology and drug therapy, and, more recently, on the history of the U. S. Public Health Service. He has written more than 60 papers in peer-reviewed journals and numerous and often unsigned pieces for the "PHS Chronicles" series in *Public Health Reports*. He was coeditor (with James Wharton) of *Chemistry in Modern Society: Historical Essays in honor of Aaron J. Ihde* (1983) and (with Caroline Hannaway and Victoria Harden) of *AIDS and the Public Health: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (1995). He is the principal author of the forthcoming Surgeon General's *Call to Action on Global Health*. His book on *The Development of American Pharmacology: John J. Abel and the Shaping of a Discipline* (Johns Hopkins, 1992) was awarded the George Urdang Medal for distinguished pharmaco-historical writing by the American Institute of the History of Pharmacology in 1994. In 2002, Parascandola was awarded the Sidney M. Edelstein Award for his outstanding achievement in the history of chemistry, especially the history of pharmacy and medicine. He was awarded a Citation by the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 2005.

Parascandola retired as Public Health Services Historian in the Department of Health and Human Services in January 2004, after more than 20 years in Federal service. Upon his retirement, he was awarded the Surgeon General's Medallion, the highest honor of the Surgeon General. He remains active in teaching, research, writing, lecturing and consulting as an expert in the history of science and medicine. Parascandola currently serves as President of the American Institute of the History of Pharmacy (through March, 2007) and as President of the American Association for the History of Medicine (through April, 2008).

Parascandola believes "that scholarly work in the history of science is important because it helps us to acquire a perspective on how science has developed over time, to develop a better understanding of how science works, to learn more about the human side of scientists (such as their motivations and convictions), and to recognize the impact of science and technology on society. Although we cannot predict the future from the past, knowing where we have come from at least helps us to have a clearer understanding of our current situation."

Sources

Autobiographical information provided by John Parascandola.

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