

ACS recognizes Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* for Landmark contributions to chemistry

Rachel Carson's 1962 classic, *Silent Spring* — a book that forever changed the way society and science relate to the world around us — was recognized as a National Historic Chemical Landmark by the American Chemical Society on Oct. 26 during the Rachel Carson Legacy Conference at Chatham University in Pittsburgh, Pa.

“Rachel Carson could not have imagined that her words and ideas would so profoundly change the way modern Americans think today,” said Nancy B. Jackson, Ph.D., immediate past-president of ACS. “*Silent Spring* presented a new perspective on humans' role in the world around them, and the quality, rigor and compelling tone of her book caught the attention of readers nationwide, including policy makers and journalists at the highest levels of influence. *Silent Spring* led to a paradigm shift of great significance that set the stage for the more sustainable science we practice today.”

On behalf of ACS, Jackson presented a plaque honoring Carson's *Silent Spring* to Wenying Xu, Ph.D., vice president of academic affairs for Chatham University.

A Springdale, Pa., native, Carson was a life-long naturalist with scientific degrees from Chatham University (formerly Pennsylvania College for Women) and the Johns Hopkins University. *Silent Spring*, written by Carson in 1962, caused national controversy by challenging the widespread indiscriminate use of agricultural pesticides that was common at the time and arguing for stricter governmental regulations of chemicals. The years following the publication of *Silent Spring* saw the establishment of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and the passing of numerous laws protecting the environment and human health, including a ban on domestic use of DDT in 1972 due to its widespread overuse and harmful impact on the environment.

Carson's ecological perspective — a belief in the interconnectivity of insects, birds, animals and mankind with the environment — provided a new framework of understanding where humanity is not the center of life on Earth, but a part of nature. Her work has had profound implications on the practice of chemistry, including the advent of green chemistry, and the design, development and implementation of chemical products and processes that reduce or eliminate the use or generation of substances hazardous to human health and the environment.

The ACS Committee on Environmental Improvement presented a panel during the conference titled, “The Impact of *Silent Spring* — Fifty Years of Chemistry Practice.” Panelists discussed perspectives on the evolution of the practice of chemistry in academic, industrial and public arenas over the last 50 years.

ACS established the National Historic Chemical Landmarks program in 1992 to recognize seminal events in the history of chemistry and to increase awareness of the contributions of chemistry to the well-being of society. Other events recognized through this program have included the home and laboratory of Joseph Priestley, discoverer of oxygen and other gases, who moved from Great Britain to Pennsylvania in 1794; the development of diagnostic test strips by Al and Helen Free, which today help millions of diabetics to self-monitor and manage their

diseases; and the pioneering work of Alice Hamilton, whose experiences with Chicago's immigrant workers in the early 1900s led to the origins of occupational hygiene and medicine. For more information about the program, visit www.acs.org/landmarks.



Nancy B. Jackson, Ph.D., Immediate-past President of the American Chemical Society, presents the National Historic Chemical Landmark plaque to Wenying Xu, Ph.D., Vice President of Academic Affairs for Chatham University. Photo courtesy Chatham University.