Roses and rosettes—the two sides of James Homer Wright

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ABSTRACT

James Homer Wright is a distinguished figure in the history of pathology and one of the founders of the discipline in the hospitals of Harvard Medical School. While he has been recognized as a highly accomplished investigative pathologist, historical sources have described him as austere, formidable, forbidding, disheartening, and gruff. Wright once did something seemingly so impulsive that it astonished his colleagues. When he heard a beautiful Norwegian contralto named Aagot Lunde perform, he anonymously sent her roses on a daily basis until she eventually agreed to meet him. They fell in love, married, and lived happily together until Aagot's death. This article paper explores the lives and careers of J. Homer Wright and Aagot Lunde Wright using unique archival materials as well as newspaper and magazine coverage of their life and travels together. After their marriage, Aagot soon stopped performing, but Mrs. Wright continued as a New England socialite for about a decade, which also coincided with the timeframe in which J. Homer made almost all of his important discoveries. James Homer Wright was covertly a romantic who thrived academically when supported by his wife, both of their families, and close friends.

KEYWORDS Lunde; Aagot; Massachusetts General Hospital; medical history; neuroblastoma; pathology; Wright; James Homer

James Homer Wright^{1–4} (*Figure 1*) is a distinguished figure in the history of pathology and one of the founders of the discipline in the hospitals of Harvard Medical School and Boston.^{5,6} He is remembered for developing the Wright stain for assessing blood cell morphology, developing a popular intraoperative frozen section method, describing plasma cells as the cell of origin of multiple myeloma, establishing megakaryocytes as the source of platelets, describing the childhood tumor neuroblastoma (often characterized by possessing “Homer Wright rosettes”), and establishing the etiology of syphilitic aortitis.^{1–6} His contributions were such that, 30 years after his death, Benjamin Castleman, chief of pathology at the Massachusetts General Hospital (MGH), suggested to hospital authorities that its new pathology laboratories be named the “James Homer Wright Pathology Laboratories,” a designation that persists.

Wright was a highly driven academic pathologist, described by colleagues as “austere and formidable,” “formidable and rather forbidding,” “gruff,” possessing a “forbidding mien,” and “famous for his disheartening retorts.” In our research into

Wright's' life, however, we discovered a side that portrayed him in a different light—one that suggested he had a healthy work-life balance that likely contributed to his professional productivity.

Dr. Wright once did something seemingly so impulsive and romantic that it astonished his friends and colleagues and shed a light on him quite distinct from the impressions quoted above:

One evening Dr. Wright heard [Aagot Lunde, a Norwegian vocalist] singing and, never having met her, anonymously sent flowers to her after the performance, something repeated daily until the gesture led to their meeting, falling in love, and marrying.³

Aagot and James Homer Wright were married on Christmas Day in 1901 and lived happily together as a devoted couple for the rest of their married lives. This article utilizes newspaper coverage and Wright's personal papers to describe their careers, love story, and lives together.⁷ These sources offer unique insights into the lives of Dr. and Mrs. Wright, allowing us to understand how his professional and personal lives interacted in ways not apparent in previous writings. They also highlight the life and career of Mrs. Wright, whose own contributions have been overshadowed by those of her husband.

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Figure 1. James Homer Wright. Credit: James Homer Wright-Massachusetts General Hospital Pathology Archive. The original image was digitally restored by Thomas Kryton, BFA.

JAMES HOMER WRIGHT'S EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

James Homer Wright was the oldest of five children of Homer Wright (1833–1919) and Sara Livingston Gray Wright (1846–1894), who were married on January 2, 1868. James Homer (hereafter Homer) was born into a comfortable middle-class family in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, on April 8, 1869. His four younger siblings included a sister, Mary Richardson Wright, who never married and lived at home with her parents, and two brothers, Edwin Laughlin Wright of Pittsburgh and William Howard Wright, president of the Akron Lithographing Company of Akron, Ohio. Nothing is known about a fourth sibling, who may have died as a child. Homer's father was a partner in a small business, the firm of Collins & Wright, which was established in 1853 and manufactured decorative glass tableware.⁸

Homer was sent to an Episcopal boarding school, the Shattuck School, in Faribault, Minnesota, from 1884 to 1887.⁷ Next, he entered Johns Hopkins University, where he received an A.B. degree with honors in 1890. As an undergraduate student, he developed his interest in pathology working under both William H. Welch (1850–1934) and William T. Councilman (1854–1933). Wright then attended medical school at the University of Maryland, graduating in 1892 with its gold medal. Next, he served as a fellow under John Shaw Billings (1838–1913), completing important work on the bacteriology of water in Philadelphia rivers, a study published in the *National Academy of Sciences* in 1893. In the meantime, Councilman had moved from Hopkins to Harvard as the new Shattuck Chair of Pathological Anatomy. In 1893, Councilman hired Wright into a

Figure 2. Miss Aagot Lunde. Credit: Boston Public Library Music Department, Philip Hale Photograph Collection, 201-400. The original image was digitally restored by Thomas Kryton, BFA.

primarily research position at Boston City Hospital. In 1894, he published an important paper on the bacteriology and pathology of diphtheria in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* (now the *New England Journal of Medicine*). On March 13, 1896, Wright was appointed associate pathologist and director of the new Clinico-Pathological Laboratory at MGH and was sent to Europe to study laboratories there. The new laboratory officially opened on October 16, 1896, with Wright, who was only 27 years of age, as its director. In 1897, Frank Burr Mallory (1862–1941) and Wright published the first edition of their important textbook, *Pathological Technique*. They published six more editions together with the seventh and last being in 1918 (an eight edition was published by Mallory after Wright's death). Several sources describe this portion of his life in detail.^{1–7}

AAGOT LUNDE'S EARLY LIFE AND CAREER

Aagot Lunde was a Norwegian singer who moved to Boston c. 1890 and had a successful career in the United States (Figure 2). She was born in Christiania (now Oslo), Norway c. 1870. She was apparently the oldest of eight sisters (Figure 3) and also had three brothers; most of the Lunde sisters were musically gifted. Aagot, a contralto, studied voice for 3 years in Christiania and then moved to Dresden, where she studied 5 years under Fraulein Augusto Gotze. After this, Aagot moved to Boston, following in the footsteps of her sister Sigrid Lunde, a soprano, who had

Figure 3. The eight Lunde sisters posing in apparent chronological order. Aagot is on the far left and Gūdrūn is on the far right. Credit: James Homer Wright-Massachusetts General Hospital Pathology Archive. The original image was digitally restored by Thomas Kryton, BFA.

recently established a performing career there. The first mention of Miss Aagot Lunde in the *Boston Globe* was on January 31, 1890.⁹ When not traveling around America, Aagot was popular for small summer performances at the South Shore's "cottage country." A search of the *Boston Globe* database from 1890 until her marriage in 1901 revealed 129 pieces about Aagot Lunde; most of these relate to her performances. Her fame appears to have peaked just before her marriage. Between 1898 and her marriage, she was written about 72 times.

Several of Aagot's sisters married before she did into American families, mostly from New England. These include Mrs. Souther (Sigrid Lunde) of Boston (later, after the death of her first husband, Mrs. Hackett), Mrs. Philip Rice (Borghild Lunde) of Staten Island; and Mrs. Arthur of Cohasset. There was a fourth sister who married a Southerner. Early in her career, Aagot and Sigrid, when not traveling around the country performing in recitals, concerts, and oratorios, shared a studio apartment on Bolyston Street.¹⁰ Beginning in 1897, Aagot lived at Trinity Court, 175 Dartmouth Street in Boston,¹¹ which was a common address for concert musicians and voice instructors. Both Aagot and Homer were living in apartments at this fashionable street address when they were married in 1901, but it is unclear whether he was already living there or whether he moved there after they were dating. While this is unknown, it is not entirely unimportant, as there is a second version of the love story in which Homer repeatedly heard an unknown woman singing in a nearby apartment and began to send her red roses anonymously. (This version was relayed by Wright's niece in a letter to Dr. Robert E. Lee dated February 6, 1972.⁷) Regardless, the two stories converge in that he first saw her at one of her performances and only then asked her out on a date.

THE LUNDE-WRIGHT MEETING, ENGAGEMENT, AND WEDDING

Newspaper articles suggested that Wright met Miss Lunde sometime in late 1897, as they had reportedly been

seeing each other for 4 years when their engagement was announced. It seems more likely that this was incorrect and that he first saw his wife perform at Harvard's Sanders Theater "Concert of Norwegian Music" that was sponsored by Mrs. E. C. Hammer and Harvard University, as a copy of this announcement resides among his papers. Part of the announcement reads: "The instrumental music will be provided by the Boston Symphony Orchestra under the leadership of Mr. Max Zach. Miss Aagot Lunde, a Norwegian singer, now resident in Boston, will sing folk-songs and ballads of her native country."⁷ The announcement stated that the concert was on "the evening of Friday, February sixteenth, at eight o'clock" but did not include the year. Since the year 1900 is the only time that the 16th falls on a Friday during the years that they could have met, this was almost certainly the concert where Wright fell under the spell of the enchanting songstress and decided to start sending her flowers. A short article published in the *Harvard Crimson* describing Miss Lunde's performance supports this analysis.¹²

After dating for about 21 months, Homer proposed to Aagot and she accepted. The December 6, 1901 *Boston Post* covered the announcement with the headline, "Miss Aagot Lunde, Singer, to Wed Hospital Doctor"; a full-length photo of Aagot in a long gown included the caption: "The beautiful and accomplished contralto, whose engagement to Dr. Wright of the Massachusetts General Hospital is announced." The announcement was as follows:

The engagement of the well-known vocalist, Miss Aagot Lunde of Trinity Court, to Dr. James Homer Wright of the Massachusetts General Hospital is announced. Miss Lunde is a native of Christiania, the capital of Norway, and has been heard in all parts of this country in recitals, concerts, and oratorio. She is of charming personality, a tall graceful woman, of the true artistic instinct, whose frank and cordial manner makes a delightful impression upon all who meet her. She developed a taste for music in childhood and was placed under the best masters. When her voice settled it was found to be a warm contralto of large compass.... Dr. Wright, who is pathologist and bacteriologist at the General Hospital, and who also lives at Trinity Court, met the beautiful singer four years ago in this city, and hearing her tell in song love's old, old story, was captivated by this remarkable

woman and her brilliant contralto voice. Dr. Wright is from Pennsylvania, but has made his home in Boston for several years. The wedding will occur in the near future.¹³

Wright was apparently so “captivated” that, knowing Aagot did not like the name Jim, which he had regularly used in his interactions with friends and colleagues, increasingly embraced his middle name, Homer.

The engagement announcement in Pittsburgh was very brief: “Pittsburgh people are interested in the engagement just announced of Dr. James Homer Wright, of Boston, son of Mr. Homer Wright ..., and Miss Aagot Lunde, of Boston.”¹⁴ Their engagement also made the pages of *Town & Country* magazine, the oldest continually published general interest magazine in the United States, in the December 14, 1901, issue:

An engagement just announced is one in which both the social and the musical circles of Boston are much interested. It is that of Miss Aagot Lunde and Dr. James Homer Wright, of the Massachusetts General Hospital staff. Miss Lunde is a Norwegian singer who came to Boston a number of years ago, and has made an unusual place for herself socially and in the musical world. She has been heard frequently in New York, where she met with equal success. Miss Lunde is a tall, handsome young woman, with a most winning personality. Always beautifully gowned, she is a conspicuous figure wherever seen. Dr. Wright has been devoted to her for several years, so that the engagement is not altogether a surprise.¹⁵

With a wedding date now set, the *Boston Post* picked up the story again on December 15, 1901: “Christmas will also witness the nuptials of Miss Aagot Lunde of Trinity Court, to Dr. Homer Wright, whose engagement came out some 10 days ago. Dr. Wright and his bride-elect are very happy in the near at hand alliance, and Miss Lunde’s rooms have been filled with flowers ever since the engagement was made public. Everyone speaks in the highest possible terms of Dr. Wright.”¹⁶ The *Globe’s* readership was also interested in Miss Lunde’s upcoming song recital to be held at Steinert Hall. It was announced in the paper on December 15, the performance was on December 17, and coverage about it ran through December 22. It was billed as “the last public appearance of Miss Aagot Lunde before her marriage to Dr. James Homer Wright.”¹⁷

Coverage in the *Globe* on the Sunday following the Tuesday recital noted: “Miss Lunde was charming in a gown of white silk, set off with a dash of black, and a large black hat with plumes. She had many gifts of flowers and made her entree carrying a bouquet of long-stemmed roses.”¹⁸ Considering how they met, it seems reasonable to speculate that the roses were a gift from Homer. The Lunde-Wright wedding took place on Christmas Day in New York City.^{19,20}

AAGOT AND HOMER’S MARRIED LIFE AND ITS EFFECT ON HIS EARLY CAREER

Married life had differing effects on Homer Wright’s and Aagot Wright’s careers. For Homer, it was clearly beneficial (see below). As noted above, Aagot’s career peaked while she and Homer were dating. After their marriage, Mrs. Wright mostly performed for charitable causes or small private audiences. One of these performances was likely very special to

Homer. On March 7, 1902, the widow of the Danish consul at Boston hosted a free concert devoted exclusively to Danish music at the Sanders Theater, which was only open to Harvard faculty members. Aagot was the soloist.²¹ As noted earlier, it seems almost certain that Wright first saw Lunde perform and fell in love at another exclusive Harvard event, also at the Sanders Theater, only 2 years earlier. Having curtailed her performing career, Aagot is mentioned only 25 times in the *Boston Globe* during the 21 years between her marriage and her death, and most of these “mentions” related to attendance at social events or her trips to Norway.

Notably, most of the accomplishments for which Homer Wright is remembered occurred while he was dating Aagot or during the first decade of their marriage, and it seems highly likely that his happy personal situation fostered his remarkable professional productivity during these years. In 1900, he described the plasma cell as the cell of origin for multiple myeloma. In 1901, he published his intraoperative frozen section technique, which became the most popular method in the first half of the 20th century.²² In 1902, he developed the Wright stain, which revolutionized the study of blood morphology. In 1905, his paper on actinomycosis won him the Samuel D. Gross Prize, a prize that is awarded once every 5 years for the best original surgical research by an American citizen during the preceding 5-year period.²³ In a paper he published in 1906 (and a subsequent more detailed paper in 1910), Wright demonstrated that platelets were derived from fragments of megakaryocytes. In 1909, Wright, with his colleague Oscar Richardson, histologically demonstrated the presence of spirochetes in syphilitic aortitis. In 1910, Wright described neuroblastoma, a childhood tumor often characterized histologically by pseudorosettes that are now named after him. William Osler wrote Wright and congratulated him for several of these publications, and these letters are extant.⁷ Wright also received honorary doctorates of science from both Harvard University (1905) and the University of Maryland (1907).^{1–6}

In the 1910s, Aagot corresponded frequently with family members; many letters to her father-in-law Homer and her sister-in-law Mary in Pittsburgh are extant for the years 1913 to 1917.⁷ In a letter to Homer dated September 21, 1914, it is clear that she was still smitten with her husband. She told his father:

How I wish you could see what a dude of a son you have. This bright morning Homer is dressed in a black and white checked suit, tortoise shelled glasses with a string attached, frenchy gray soft hat, gay stockings and tie and yellow reindeer gloves. This outfit is so becoming. So much so that I have my doubts if it would be safe to send him into the streets alone.

In other letters she often wrote about “that dear husband of mine,” how great and understanding he was, how much she missed him when he traveled, and many other endearing comments. Again, when one reads such comments, one cannot help but imagine that her strong support was a significant help to Homer’s career during this period.

Figure 4. J. Homer Wright and three Lunde sisters on a balcony overlooking Christiania, Norway, in August 1905. Dagny is on the left, Aagot is seated in front of J. Homer, and Gūdrūn is on the right. Credit: James Homer Wright-Massachusetts General Hospital Pathology Archive. The original image was digitally restored by Thomas Kryton, BFA.

A BIT OF TROUBLE

Our research into James Homer Wright's marriage also yielded an interesting insight into a less-than-favorable event in 1912. The Wrights traveled frequently back to Aagot's homeland to visit her relatives (*Figure 4*). Their first trip was the summer after their marriage^{24–26} and, according to Boston newspaper coverage and extant correspondence,⁷ they made trips again in 1903, 1905, 1906, 1908, 1909, and 1910. We know of a trip in 1912 because of some negative publicity appearing as an article in the *New York Times* entitled "Hold Doctor as Smuggler: James Homer Wright of Harvard Charged with Violating Customs Laws." According to the article:

The customs officials allege that Dr. Wright, upon his return from Europe on Sept. 11, named in his declaration to the customs officials only personal property which is exempt from duty. A search of his baggage, it is charged, disclosed numerous articles purchased abroad. Despite Dr. Wright's protest, the goods were seized and sent to the Appraiser's Stores, where a valuation of \$1,100 was placed upon them.²⁷

The *Washington Times* and many other East Coast papers also ran the story and the *Times'* coverage provides additional details:

Dr. Wright and his wife, who was Aagot Lunde, famous Norwegian singer, arrived in Boston on the *Laconia*. Examination of their baggage, according to the inspectors, revealed numerous articles not declared, among them one fur stole, two overcoats, three suites of clothes, a black silk wrap, a pair of silk portiers and a quantity of lace.... The offense is punishable by confiscation of the goods and a fine of three times their value.²⁸

Perhaps it is not surprising that all of the smuggled goods were items of clothing, as correspondence documented that Aagot liked to shop, that she liked to dress well, that she wanted her husband to dress well, and that Homer sometimes had suits made for him when he was in Norway.⁷ Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that this was a substantial amount of expensive clothing, amounting to about \$30,000 in today's dollars.

Homer was "held in \$500 bonds by United States Commissioner Hayes for a hearing next Thursday" [October 3].²⁸ Wright quietly paid the fine to settle the matter before the trial date. Curiously, while all of this happened in Boston, there was no coverage in the Boston newspapers.

From Aagot's correspondence with her father-in-law Homer, it is clear that the Wrights went to Norway again in the summer of 1913 and that they befriended a Russian countess, who invited them to St. Petersburg.⁷ They were apparently able to avoid any scandalous interactions with the US Customs Service on the return trip. Aagot and Homer returned to Norway in 1914 and, because of World War I, this may have been their last trip together.^{29,30}

THE SECOND DECADE OF THEIR MARRIAGE, AAGOT'S DEATH, AND ITS IMPACT ON DR. WRIGHT AND HIS CAREER

After about 1910, Wright's research productivity tailed off considerably. It has been speculated that this was due to the appointment of a new MGH chief of medicine, David Linn Edsall (1869–1945), in 1912 who immediately began to develop new clinical and research laboratories outside of the pathology department, a move that marginalized Wright and lessened his influence within the hospital.³ Wright's coverage in newspapers, which previously included descriptions of his groundbreaking research, awards, and honorary doctorates, now was much more mundane. In 1915, his only appearance in the *Boston Globe* was for serving on a committee for the Women's Municipal League focused on decreasing the numbers of rats and flies in Boston.³¹ In 1916, the federal government determined there may be an acute need for military base camp hospitals on the US-Mexican border because of its rapid militarization, primarily by state-based National Guard units which were being transferred there to protect the border from possible invasions by Mexican troops. In this context, three Boston hospitals, MGH being one of them, were asked to provide hospitals to support troops from Massachusetts. Wright was placed in charge of laboratory services for the MGH base hospital.^{32–34} He enlisted in the Medical Reserve Corps in 1916 as a first lieutenant and was discharged as a captain on October 4, 1917. In 1918, the seventh and last edition of Mallory and Wright's *Pathological Technique* was published. In the 1920s, Wright made the *Globe* for his involvement in the Cancer Commission of Harvard University, which was chaired by Robert B. Greenough. Wright was in charge of its free cancer diagnosis service.^{35,36} However, it should be noted that state-sponsored free cancer diagnosis was highly controversial at the time,³⁷ and the need for it died out before the end of the decade.^{38,39}

In the early 1920s, Aagot developed signs and symptoms of advanced ovarian cancer. She was cared for by Mary Wright, who came from Pittsburgh, and Catherine Scully, a friend and registered nurse who later traveled overseas with Mary⁷ and who wrote that "Dr. Wright would join Mrs. Wright in her room and read to her from 7:00 until 9

o'clock. He never missed a night."⁴ Aagot died on March 6, 1923, almost certainly before the age of 55. According to the *Globe* on Thursday, March 8, 1923:

Funeral services for Mrs Aagot Lunde Wright, wife of Dr. J Homer Wright of 1016 Center St, Newton Center, were held this afternoon at her late residence. Rev Dr. Edward T. Sullivan of Trinity Episcopal Church officiated.... Mrs Wright was prominent in musical circles and before her marriage, as Miss Aagot Lunde, made a notable success in concert work and as a church singer. She is survived by her husband and by her sister, Mrs. Sigrid Lunde Hackett.⁴⁰

James Homer Wright was devastated by the death of his beloved wife. Wright, who had become fluent in Norwegian during his life with Aagot, traveled to Christiania with his sister Mary on the Scandinavian-American liner, Hellig Olav, in May 1923 and visited Aagot's family, taking them some of her personal items. They returned home in July.⁴¹ After Aagot's death, a colleague insinuated that Wright's use of alcohol increased.⁴ Regardless, his research productivity had been low and he had been reportedly at odds with Edsall for more than a decade, and perhaps for a combination of all of these reasons, Wright was asked to resign his leadership role at MGH in September 1925. He remained as a consultant until his death on January 3, 1928. One of his obituaries noted that Aagot "died a few years ago, and since then Dr. Wright had lived very much to himself."⁴² This same obituary recorded that "Dr. Wright had gone to Pittsburgh, Pa., to spend the Christmas holidays and on his way home was seized with a severe cold. Arriving at his home in Center Street, Newton, he rapidly became worse with pneumonia developing he was taken to Phillips House on Monday noon." (The Phillips House had been built in 1917 to provide elegant, private patient rooms for elite or wealthy patients.) James Homer Wright died there on January 3, 1928.⁴² The funeral was held at his Newton home on January 5, 1928. Rev. Edward T. Sullivan officiated, as he had for Aagot's funeral. Homer was buried beside Aagot at the Newton Center Cemetery.⁴³

DR. WRIGHT'S LEGACY IMAGE

Sadly, the historical portrait of Dr. Wright's personality is more negative than positive. For example, Scully and Vickery, in their history of surgical pathology at Harvard, provided the following analysis of Wright's career as an academic pathologist, citing that he was "famous" for being "disheartening":

Wright was one of the most luminous and at the same time tragic figures in the history of Boston pathology. He was an ardent investigator and a magnet for aspiring young men who were not intimidated by his initially forbidding demeanor. Reserved and succinct in conversation, he was variously described as austere and formidable, and was famous for his disheartening retorts.²

James Homer Wright was a reserved man. He found lecturing to students stressful and even perspiration-inducing. One student characterized him as "quiet and reserved, spoke deliberately and with precision and brevity."³ Councilman,

who helped train Wright at Johns Hopkins and then hired him at Harvard, said the following about him posthumously:

He had little interest in teaching, though he was a clear and stimulating teacher to the individual student.... He was not a social man, rarely going to medical meetings, but he formed many enduring friendships. By his character and his work he exerted a strong and stimulating influence on the hospital and the students.¹

Wright did not train other pathologists and had little interest in setting up a pathology residency training program, for which he was apparently criticized, and which may have been part of the reason he was dismissed as MGH chief of pathology in 1925. Yet, his laboratory trained some famous Harvard physician-scientists including internist and quality assurance pioneer Richard C. Cabot (1868–1939), future Harvard Medical School Dean Henry Asbury Christian (1876–1951), trailblazing surgical-oncologist Robert B. Greenough (1871–1937), pioneering diabetologist Elliott P. Joslin (1869–1962), and 1934 Nobel Prize corecipient George R. Minot (1885–1950), who acknowledged Wright in his acceptance speech.

As shown in our review of the primary materials, Wright clearly had a big heart and a soft side for his wife, family, and friends. Notably, Wright's personal commonplace book contains perhaps the first hints of Wright's romantic tendencies.⁷ Commonplace books are like scrapbooks as they contain documentation of things heard, seen, or read which the individual wishes to remember. However, in Wright's case, his comprised mostly newspaper clippings describing "cute facts," thoughts about love and life, people he knew, some poems that he particularly liked, and a short article on how to keep lapel flowers fresh. Most of these were at the beginning of the book and not dated. The latter portions of the book represent a more traditional scrapbook, containing newspaper clippings about successes in his career, Aagot, and postcards from Norway. The commonplace portion of the book included a clipping with the following advice about love:

The man for whom a woman is most eager to sacrifice herself is likely to be a man who would be unwilling, if he knew it, to accept the sacrifice. Love contains no element of comic. In all of its forms, whether apparent or latent, it is always serious.... Long engagements, postponed again and again, are apt to starve the love that originally induced them.⁷

Wright followed this advice, as his engagement to Aagot was less than 3 weeks. On another page is a short snippet: "A happy fireside is better than a big bank account." This quote, measuring less than 50 × 10 mm, is precisely cut out of a newspaper and is neatly attached to the page with clear cellophane tape,⁷ perhaps an early indication of his extreme precision and attention to detail that made him such a great pathologist.

In summary, we draw attention to the apparent relationship between Wright's personal and professional lives and we suggest that his periods of greatest productivity as an academic pathologist were associated with his periods of greatest personal happiness through his marriage—and, unfortunately, vice versa. From this more balanced

historical perspective, Homer Wright becomes a man not only famous for his description of rosettes, but someone who was a real human being whose gift of roses was probably just as important. We have also shed light on the life and career of Aagot Lunde.

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DECLARATION OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The first author of this paper, James R. Wright, Jr., despite the similar name, is not related to James Homer Wright. The two other authors are affiliated with the James Homer Wright Pathology Laboratories of the Massachusetts General Hospital. All three of us have a longstanding interest in the history of pathology. We have no conflict of interest. The study was unfunded and we have no financial interests to acknowledge.

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