

# The Oslerian

## A Message from the President Reflections: Boston, 2008

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Annual Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, 20-23 April

### *Greetings, fellow Oslerians!*

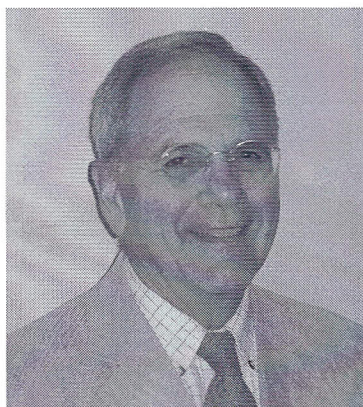
There's nothing like an impending 'inauguration' as President to heighten one's awareness of "the state of the union." I can report with confidence that our union—our family, as Larry Longo once called it—is in great shape. Both long-time Oslerians and newcomers agreed that the 2008 sessions were excellent. They seem to me to be getting better every year. We are still interested in the minutiae of Sir William Osler's life and work and in the technical and scientific evolution of medicine but these interests in recent years seem more broadly and deeply grounded, in our sessions, in the moral and professional values which drove Osler's life and the relevance of these to the evolution of medicine and to modern concerns.

Our program for this 38<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting inaugurated sessions according to topic. These reflected the broad interests of our colleagues as the abstracts portrayed them. Among the categories were: Regional Medical History; Ancient Medicine; and Notable Physicians. Others touched upon Osler himself, his family and personal and

professional life. There were topics in "Ethics, Efficacy, and Etiquette," and others dealing with Techniques and Therapies. Most papers had historical dimensions. There was a mini-symposium on President Theodore Roosevelt's physician friend and comrade-in-arms, Leonard Wood, as well as a series of talks illustrating the person and the impressive life and philanthropic works of the late Dr. John P McGovern including a discussion of the Osler Club at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston and the Annual McGovern Award Lecture-ship.

So much for breadth, but it was only through paying careful attention to individual papers that one could really appreciate their depth. Our program committee had warned of gongs ringing to the embarrassment of those tempted by podium verbosity, whether excessive or to the point. It was difficult for speakers to keep to a 15-20 minute time slot. But, no one went overtime and the program popped along with depth, scholarship, humanity and slick audio-visu-als.

A few examples must suffice. Regional Medical History. Quoting contemporary journals and records, veteran Oslerian, Herb Swick brought to life the practice of a medical husband and wife in a rough and tumble mining town in the rugged mountains of Western Montana—showing the couple, as Osler put it, "sustained ... by experience of the true poetry of life, the life of the ordinary man, of the plain toil-worn woman, with their loves and their joys, their sorrows and their griefs." Ancient Medicine. Laami Tiadjeri, a third year medical student, introduced many of us to the medicine of ancient Egypt and the life and work of Imhotep who lived in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. She briefly showed how he and his work were linked to the culture of his time and place. She also discussed the texts from which we know of all this. The John P McGovern Award Lecture was given by Ernest Monrad Professor Charles E. Rosenberg of Harvard's Department of the History of Science. Rosenberg stirred some controversy by suggesting that medical and health care



Joseph W. Lella

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## Reflections: Boston, 2008 (continued)

bureaucracies in modern America both provoke and manage fear and anxiety in the face of dreaded chronic illnesses, the statistical probability of which in populations is carefully tracked, then managed through statistically tracked medication and life style regimens. Culture and Controversy. Jennifer Hill, a third year medical resident at Lenox Hill Hospital in New York, presented a disturbing and thought provoking discussion of female genital cutting and the policy dilemmas raised by this practice which is deeply rooted in the history and cultures of many traditional societies and which have been brought, through immigration, to our so-called advanced, western societies.

Under the historic Ether Dome at the Mass General, we meditated in lively fashion, with Dr. John Herman of Harvard's Department of Psychiatry, upon the historic demonstration of the use of ether there, but also with AOS Vice President John Noble upon the drive for excellence in science and humane practice that characterized Boston's 19<sup>th</sup> century pioneers of medicine, including, as Charley Bryan our Secretary Treasurer discussed, Oliver Wendell Holmes: NB, not his son the jurist, but the father, physician and literary figure.

It would be worth the while of those interested in our society to peruse the program abstracts soon to be up on our website for a more fulsome picture of the richness of our meetings. I may be prejudiced, but I doubt that one may find in any other health-care meetings the breadth, depth and multifaceted humane richness that you will find there.

## Oslerian Progress Notes

**Stephen B. Greenberg** has been made a Master of the American College of Physicians. Also, **Robert G. Mennel** received the annual Clinician Teacher Award from the American College of Physicians.

**Charles G. Roland** writes: "On Tuesday, 29 April 2008, the Sir William Osler Elementary School had its formal Opening Ceremony. (The school opened to pupils, K-8, last November). The name was selected by a naming committee (students, parents, teachers, Board personnel, and community members), which invited suggestions—and received more than 120% "Based on predetermined criteria, "Sir William Osler" was selected and later approved by the Board's Committee of the Whole." I was honored to be the invited speaker on that occasion.

*The Quotable Osler* is now available as a deluxe, leather-bound edition (the perfect gift for graduation or any other occasion!) from the American College of Physicians ([www.acponline.org](http://www.acponline.org) (Click "products and services").

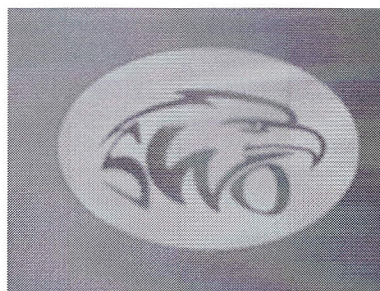
Our annual banquet illustrated this. It was truly a family affair with spouses, and even a second generation of members enjoying the event. My predecessor, Frank Neelon's after-dinner Presidential Address was a series of reflections on the blessings of his medical career, illumined by warm readings of selections from his favorite Irish poets.

We've long ruminated on the overwhelming proportions of grey and white haired men at our meetings but the William B. Bean Student Lectureships and Oslerian mentoring are bearing fruit: the last few years have seen an infusion of men and women with darker and more colorful locks. This year there were 7 students and one resident (5 of these, women) among the presenters of 7 papers and their topics were truly fascinating. They ranged, for example, from early Egyptian medicine to the disturbing evolution of TV doctors from "Marcus Welby" to "House" and what this tells us about the public's view of contemporary Docs. The papers were well researched and attractively mounted, and the podium personalities of our young colleagues were at once reflective, and dynamic, each in their own way.

We still have a long way to go toward gender equality. Only 7 papers of the 50 had women as authors, and a balance "across the ages" is still a long way off, but we are moving in the right direction. Now that we have removed the mandatory ceiling on membership, the Board of Directors has been rightly concerned with the efficacy of our "outreach." You should be hearing more of this in the year(s) to come.

All in all, our state of the union is sound and improving. We, and "Willie's shade," have much to feel good about.

Joseph W. Lella



Logo for the Sir William Osler Elementary School in Dundas, Ontario—Willie's boyhood home town

**Herbert L. Fred** has had published *Images of Memorable Cases* (with Hendrik A. van Dijk; Rice University Press). Herb also received an Award for Excellence in Editorial Writing from the Federation of State Medical Boards.

**William Smith, Jr.** is back safely from his second tour of Army duty in Afghanistan (he has also done a tour in Iraq). He reports that things are better than they might seem.



Bill Smith



## Pictorial Highlights of the 2008 Annual Meeting

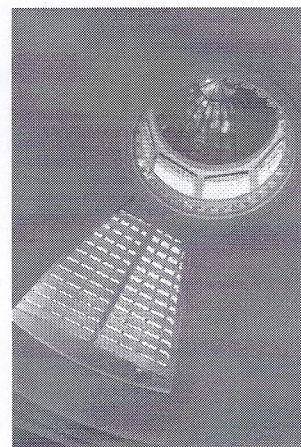


**Oslerians pose for their group photograph in the Ether Dome at Massachusetts General Hospital, May 5, 2008**



**John Noble, shown here in his lair overlooking Boston Harbor, was Local Arrangements chairman**

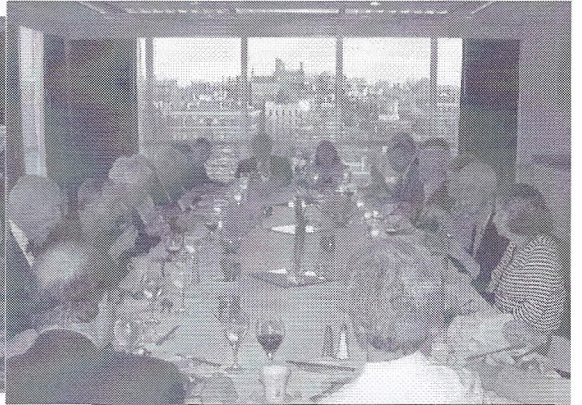
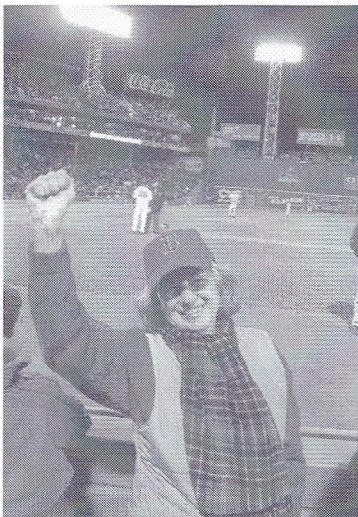
The thirty-eighth annual meeting of the American Osler Society took place at the Holiday Inn Beacon Hill, which is adjacent to the Massachusetts General Hospital. This venue provided easy access for the Ether Dome which—although uncomfortable for prolonged sitting by today's standards—seemed perfect for a one-hour session devoted to related Boston medical history. As discussed in incoming president Joseph Lella's letter (pages 1 and 2 of this issue), the meeting was a busy one and, by all measures, a success. The 118 registrants ranged in age from 22 to 97 and came from as nearby as next door (Massachusetts General Hospital) and as far away as Japan (15 persons, led by the venerable Oslerian Shi-geaki Hinohara). Although the program was a busy one—50 papers in two and a half days—the moderators and speakers kept on time remarkably well with the help of a timer and last-minute computer assistance from Mike Jones and Sandra Moss.



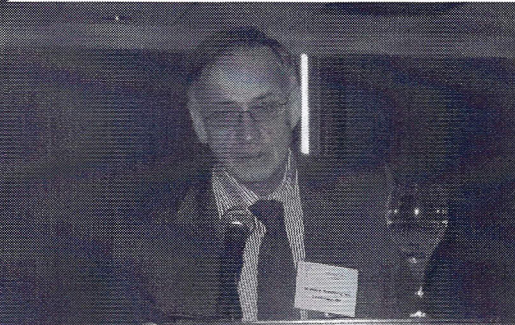
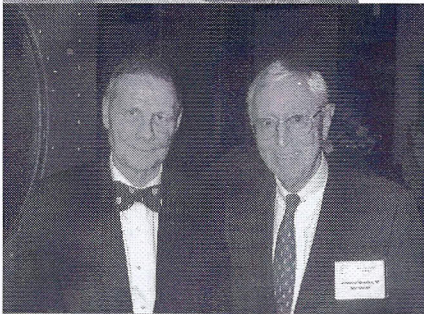
**The louvered window in the Ether Dome helped illuminate the operative field in the days before electric lighting.**



## More Pictorial Highlights

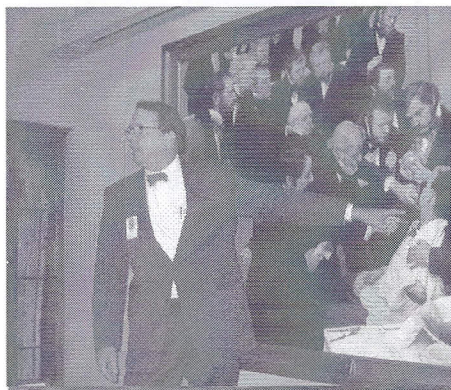


*Clockwise from upper left.* On Saturday evening, Donna Bryan celebrated the seventh-inning stretch at Fenway Park from a field box. Sunday afternoon began with what has become an annual Literature in Medicine seminar, created by Frank Neelon and led this year by Joe Lella. This was followed by the first of what may become an annual Past President's Dinner to contemplate the Society's future directions. Mark Silverman, who presided, suggested two brainstorming committees. Jock Murray focused on the papers before him at the Board of Governors meeting. On Monday the meeting began with Richard Golden receiving the Lifetime Achievement Award, for which he received a standing ovation. The audience settled down to hear the papers, all of which prompted stimulating discussion. Presenters ranged from Laamy Tiadgeri a third-year medical student, to Charles Rosenberg, often acknowledged to be the dean of professional medical historians in the United States, who received the John P. McGovern Lectureship Award medal from president Frank Neelon. Paul J. Krezanoski presented one of two William B. Bean Student Research Award lectureships. Despite the packed program, the format left ample time to renew acquaintances, such as that between Clyde Partin and Mike Jones (mainstays of the Society's thrust toward establishment of an electronic database) and past presidents Claus Pierach of Minneapolis and Jeremiah Baronness of New York City.

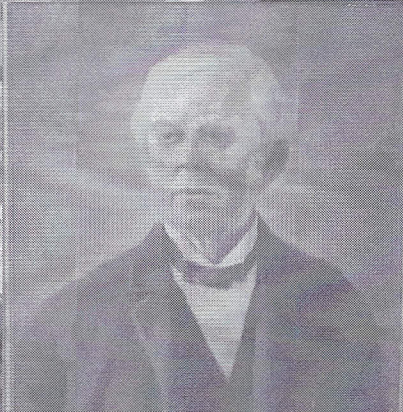
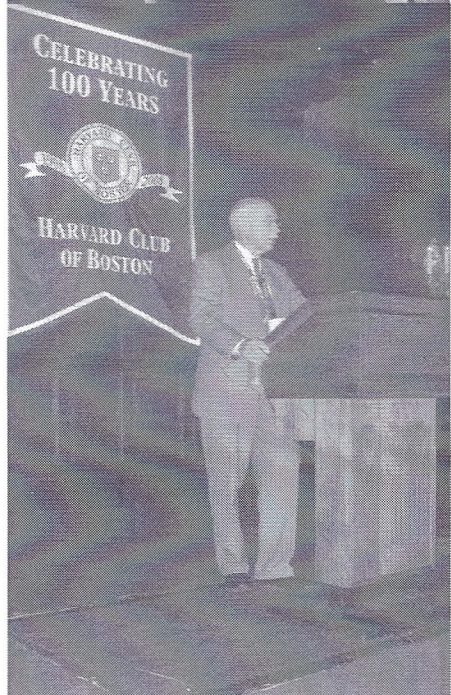




## More Pictorial Highlights



The Monday afternoon session at the Ether Dome began with a presentation by Harvard psychiatrist John Herman's overview of the 1846 story, illustrated by a relatively new painting. Monday concluded with a boat tour of Boston Harbor which lasted well into the evening. Luncheons afforded ample time for camaraderie. Jack Alperin presided at a table of fellow Galvestonians, while Paul Mueller seemed to have an especially good time. Tuesday concluded with the annual banquet, held this year at the Harvard Club of Boston. Henry Ingersoll Bowditch, who became among other things America's first pulmonologist, was among those who smiled benignly at Oslerians from their perches on the walls of the Aesculapian Room, site of the reception, where conversationalists included Californians Katherine and Daniel Morgan and Elizabeth Carson (center). Frank Neelon chose to give the Presidential Address at the banquet, where some 175 attendees heard reminiscences and verses from favorite Irish poets. The meeting concluded on Wednesday with Frank Neelon passing the latchkey to Joe Lella. Meanwhile, life went on as usual in the Boston Commons, where our roving photographer caught a child parading among the bronze sculptures inspired by *Make Way for Ducklings*.





## AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY

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*Spend the last half-hour of the day in communion with the saints of humanity.*

WE'RE ON THE WEB!  
WWW.AMERICANOSLER.ORG



### Aequanimitas

*The Oslerian is published approximately four times a year by the American Osler Society, Inc., a non-profit organization. Members of the American Osler Society are encouraged to send news items of interest, including but by no means limited to their personal activities and accomplishments and accompanied by photographs or other illustrations. For distribution of reprints and other materials of possible interest to AOS members, please send 180 copies. Your ideas for The Oslerian are of course most welcome! Direct all correspondence by mail, fax, or e-mail to the Secretary-Treasurer.*

The American Osler Society has been founded for the purpose of bringing together members of the medical and allied professions who are, by their common inspiration, dedicated to memorialize and perpetuate the just and charitable life, the intellectual resourcefulness and the ethical example of **William Osler** (1849-1919). This, for the benefit of succeeding generations, that their motives be ever more sound, that their vision be on everbroadening horizons, and that they sail not as Sir Thomas Browne's Ark, without oars and without rudder and sails and, therefore, without direction.

## Call for Abstracts for 2009 Annual Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, 20-23 April

The Board of Governors will meet on Monday, 20 April. Assuming that we once again have a surplus of abstracts, we will meet through the early afternoon of Thursday, 23 April.

For several years we have received more quality submissions that can be accommodated. The Program Committee will be chaired by the First Vice-President, John Noble. Please note the following guidelines for submission of abstracts (some of these are required for Continuing Medical Education credits):

1. Abstracts can be sent by e-mail to: smitche@gw.mp.sc.edu with a copy to cbryan@gw.mp.sc.edu or by regular mail. If sent by e-mail they must be **received** by 1 November 2008; if sent by regular mail, they must be **received** by 15 November 2008. Early submission is encouraged. Abstracts submitted by e-mail will be acknowledged. However, we will not be responsible for lost e-mail submissions.
2. The abstract should be no longer than one page. It should begin with the complete title, the names of all co-authors, and the corresponding author's mailing address, telephone number, FAX, and e-mail address. This should be followed by a two- to three-sentence biographical sketch indicating how the author would like to be introduced (This will probably be your entire introduction. Don't be modest!). The text should provide sufficient information for the Program Committee to determine its merits and possible interest to the membership. The problem should be defined and the conclusions should be stated. Phrases such as "will be presented" should be avoided or kept to a minimum.
3. Three learning objectives should be given after the abstract. Each learning objective should begin with an active verb indicating what attendees should be able to *do* after the presentation (for example, "list," "explain," "discuss," "examine," "evaluate," "define," "contrast," or "outline"; avoid noncommittal verbs such as "know," "learn," and "appreciate"), which is required for Continuing Medical Education.
4. A cover letter should state: Whether any of the authors have a potential conflict-of-interest such as direct financial involvement in the topic being discussed, and whether there will be any mention of off-label use of drugs or other products during the presentation.
5. Standard audiovisual equipment will consist of a laptop computer and LCD projector. Presenters should carefully weigh, and justify, requests for additional AV equipment since this will add substantially to the cost of the meeting.
6. Each presentation will have a 20-minute time slot, which will be strictly enforced. **Presenters should rehearse and time their papers to 15 minutes**, in order to permit brief discussions and to be fair to the other presenters. Although 20 minutes might seem quite short for a paper in the humanities, our experience with this format has been overwhelmingly favorable.

**Abstracts will be accepted by e-mail up until 1 November 2008 (smitche@gw.mp.sc.edu and cbryan@gw.mp.sc.edu) or by regular mail up until 15 November 2008. If submitting by regular mail, please send five copies of the abstract, a computer diskette containing the abstract (ideally in Microsoft Word format), and a cover letter to: Charles S. Bryan, Secretary-Treasurer, American Osler Society, Two Medical Park, Suite 502, Columbia, SC 29203. Again, the deadline for receipt by e-mail is 1 November 2008 and by regular mail 15 November 2008.**