



The Oslerian

A Message from the President

Mike Jones

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A Perspective on "Perspective" Personal Transformations and Beyond

In my last President's message in June, we rooted around in the etymology of the word "perspective." At the level of the individual we seem to use the word as an equivalent to "opinion" or "viewpoint" most of the time. That is usually what we are looking for if we ask people to give us their "perspective" on a matter. This mis-sive will focus on perspective at the small scale, the individual level, and subsequent messages will address more global concerns.

While pondering this material it became apparent that more nuanced interpretations and assumptions are often made. The word itself includes the prefix meaning "through", and the process of "looking through" indicates that we are "framing" the viewpoint in a more specific way. I read of a psychologist speaking to a group, asking them to hold their first fingers and thumbs closely over one eye to form a small opening. The audience was then asked to note what they could see through the space. This was followed by changing the instruction so to form a large circle with the arms and repeating the observation. Trite perhaps, but it illustrates the impact of increasing the expanse of what one "sees" in contributing to the understanding of what is about us. One way of interpreting the

addition of "per" to the act of looking or observing is that one's opinion or viewpoint has been reinforced by something more than just observation—a focusing aid or method—perhaps another reason to support the adoption of the word "perspect" as an active verb to include the process of enhancing observation to support an opinion.

In June I included a couple of cartoons relevant to our current Coronavirus situation; these suggested that conflicts in assumptions regarding perspective are often at the root of much of our humor. So, here is another offering in that light:

As I have pondered the many faces of "perspective" for this column, the sense has been growing that the word is extraordinarily plastic and pervasive in its coverage, which may in part explain its rising usage since 1940. Per-

spective might be thought of as something more palpable than just an opinion, an entity having qualities like dimensions.

How does one enlarge that field of view? We begin acquiring perspective well before we are mature enough to engage in that investigative process advocated above. That process of expanding is sometimes reflected in the word "experience." The spatial dimension of "Perspective" acquired



**President
Mike Jones**
51st AOS President
installed at the 2020 Zoom
Board of Directors Meeting

President's Message (Continued from page 1)

through experience is reflected in our range of personal interactions, places visited, books read, personal failures, or adverse situations. We also must think about the temporal dimension, allowing for enough years to accumulate potentially instructive events.

In addition to enlarging the area viewed by spatial and temporal experience, it is helpful to have a “lens” to bring things into focus. Thus, we have the role of instruction, either through guided mentorship (the imparting of collective wisdom accrued with time) or applying a method, *e.g.*, the numerical method of Pierre Louis so vigorously advocated by Sir William Osler: observe, record, **ANALYZE**, and publish.

We also begin acquiring perspective before we can interpret by ourselves the experiences of life. Hebrew holy writ tells us in the book of Proverbs that if you train a child in the way you want them to go, when they are old, they will not depart from it. History certainly demonstrates the verity of that proclamation for most humans. Could one say the proverb applies robustly to perspectives in politics and religion? Perhaps why most of us were advised, when still children, against discussing such things. This mentoring process may or may not be superimposed on an “experience” and is very often much more powerful in shaping our perspective than the experience in front of our eyes. Just as we may be taught incorrect information, not all raw experiences are followed by learning. If one learns to do a frontal lobotomy incorrectly, then performing it another thousand times the same way may not improve the results.

In my last message I suggested that an interest in the word “perspective” only cropped up a year or so ago. Further reflection disabuses me of that notion, and I can recall several instances from a younger life when I was becoming aware of the substance of perspective. Please forgive me, but I do not know how to talk of perspective at the individual level without drawing on my only source of experience—me. Some have said that nature (biology) determines our outlook and we cannot do much to change it. I respectfully disagree with that perspective. If we mean opinion or viewpoint when we say perspective, then my journey validates the ability to change it.

From earliest memories we are shaped by the scenes of the world around us. The semi-arid landscape captured here surrounds my tiny hometown (Winters) south of Abilene, Texas. Who can doubt that a childhood here would shape a child's perspective? I mention these origins not only to emphasize the influence on perspective, but also to acknowledge our upcoming annual meeting next year in Galveston and the longing of a native Texan to visit “home” again.

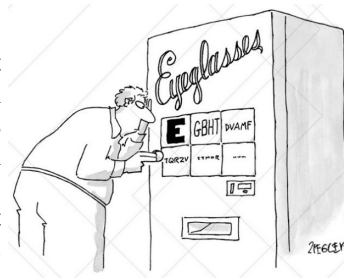
I distinctly remember, in a fifth



grade geography class, looking at a flattened map of the world and marveling at how the shape of the continents would fit together like a jigsaw puzzle, if only they could be shoved back together. That visual perspective seemed inescapable. Had I been in position to make that observation 50 years earlier as an adult, I would have carved out a place as the father of plate tectonics and continental drift. Alas, Alfred Wegener beat me to the notion. Interestingly, Wegener's perspective, when published in 1912, was ridiculed from several directions: 1) from the religious community whose perspective dictated that the earth was formed as you see it and nothing has changed, and 2) also the scientific community, who averred the earth's crust was too cold, solid and immovable to support such a process. But it seemed reasonable to an 11-year-old a few years later without any prompting. Now we know the “rest of the story.”

Perhaps my most disappointing encounter with perspective came in the form of the original meaning of the medieval Middle English “perspectyf” as “of sight, optical.” Like many youths, I once aspired to be a professional baseball player. Having been confined behind the “perspective” (seeing through) of spectacles since age 5, it became increasingly obvious that I was not going to pose a threat to the records of the “Babe” or Ted Williams.

Of course, I did not recognize “perspective” in those days, even four years later during my Freshman year in high school in 1954 when the Supreme Court declared that “separate was inherently unequal” when applied to public schools. Our small district immediately complied with the letter of the law and admitted three African American students—2 boys and one girl. Earlier I had rare occasion to play with these two boys, the only African American children I knew, and really had no comprehension of our entangled histories. But when I witnessed these two young men, singled out for significantly harder hits on the football practice field and totally unable to cope with academic requirements of the grade level due to prior neglects, my perspective about such things began to change. My acquaintances, Allison and Louis, did not make it to graduation, but Louise did. A couple of years ago I was asked back to my high school to receive a “distinguished alumnus award” and to help direct the students to a path toward success. As I looked out over the small student body, it was apparent that a much larger percentage were now students of color; as I mused about the young woman, the first African American in the history of the school to graduate with us in 1958, I could not help but note that she had opened new perspectives for those sitting in front of me. Paul Harvey, the celebrity radio commentator, was our commencement speaker in 1958—and now you know “the rest of the story.”



President's Message (Continued from page 2)

I would not want to pass an opportunity that presents itself as I write these final words. In the last several days Congressman John Lewis died, and the news outlets have been filled with recounting his life. The Spring of 1961, only three years after the graduation above, brought an interesting confluence of events. While I was comfortably pursuing a degree in history and political science, Lewis (in college in Nashville) was one of the original thirteen "Freedom Riders." Just as I had known few of another race, John, the son of sharecroppers, had grown up seeing only two whites by the age of six. Within 4 years of the rides, he spoke at the "March on Washington" and was beaten at Selma's Pettus bridge. One could talk about differences in perspective, but there can be little doubt about whose has affected the world more. I can only marvel at his courage.

Just about the time Lewis was on a "Freedom Ride" in 1961, I was a pre-law student who chanced upon a display of books by Tom Dooley, who as a US Navy doctor had helped evacuate Vietnamese refugees (1954) fleeing Ho Chi Minh's troops as they swept away the French colonial presence there. Based upon his appreciation of the enormous need in that part of the world, shortly after his Navy duty was finished, Dooley formed a secular medical mission effort called "Medico" and returned to Laos to provide medical care for third-world villagers. He wrote of his experiences before dying at age 33 of metastatic melanoma in early 1961, just before I picked up one of his books. I took it home, spread a blanket on the grass, and read it through that afternoon. The next morning, I was in the Dean's office to change my major to pre-Med. As you may have surmised, another change in perspective had visited.

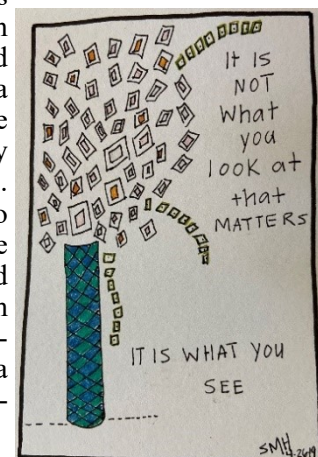
Most of us who went to medical school can testify to the perspective-changing nature of that experience in both intellectual and emotional ways. Some of that change came through simply witnessing the experiences of others, some came through direct mentoring and encouragement. Those of us who were exposed to Dr. Carl Moyer, our Professor of Surgery at Washington University School of Medicine, can remember him saying, "Don't just do something, stand there." It was his way of telling us to stop and think, then draw upon a defensible perspective as a basis for our actions. Our appreciation of relevant facts often swiftly changes in urgent medical situations, which reminds me of the comment once made by the famous economist John Maynard Keynes, "When the facts change, I change my mind. And what do you do, Sir?"

It is often asserted that a virtuous perspective is one which treats everybody the same. I understand now that statement usually implies no gratuitous favoritism, but always before had taken it at face value until I was participating in a St. Louis Cardinals fantasy baseball camp during my 60th year. Our team was traveling across Jupiter, Florida to play a game against the Mets fantasy team and I found myself seated next to our manager, former Cardinal pitcher Greg Matthews. In our conversation I inquired as to who was the best manager he ever knew, and he responded with Whitey Herzog. When I asked why he was

the best he replied, "Because he did not treat everyone the same." Pursuing that discussion, it became apparent he meant that Whitey knew how to treat each of his players according to their needs to get the best out of them. Certainly, different than treating everyone the same, but seen in that perspective, equally valid. What was it that made Osler such a beloved figure? I think he and Whitey must have been cut from the same cloth in terms of viewing people with an open and accepting perspective, attuned to the needs of each person individually.

Adoption of the word "perspect" as an active verb is perhaps just a quick way of implying the virtue of actively seeking knowledge, wisdom and understanding. I would submit that Sir William's periodic "brain dusting" trips abroad for exposure to different ways of thinking was a prime manifestation of "perspecting." One of my acquaintances is a very empathetic and artistic woman. I noticed on her refrigerator one of her drawings, which pretty much says it all regarding perspective:

Over the years I came to appreciate the various "perspectives" that brought many of my colleagues to *A Life in Medicine*. What a rich panoply of choices and opportunities medicine has provided us. For the curious there was the allure of investigating the hidden causes of disease. As it was for William Osler as teacher, there was gratification in passing on the accumulated knowledge of generations to a new cohort. For some, there was the prospect of generously providing for their families. And some have been called into a more intimate service to the suffering. For all of these (and not a few I suspect), Tom Dooley's dying words conveyed "perspective" to a younger colleague like a clarion:



Dedicate some of your life to others. Your dedication will not be a sacrifice. It will be an exhilarating experience because it is intense effort applied towards a meaningful end.

**Minutes
American Osler Society Board of Governors Meeting
Via Videoconferencing
April 26, 2020**

President Molina called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m. PDT.

Present were Laurel Drevlow, William Evans, Maria Frank, Thomas Frank, J. Gordon Frierson, John Harris, Mike Jones, C. Ronald MacKenzie, Michael Malloy, Robert Mennel, J. Mario Molina, Clyde Partin, Rob Stone, Herbert Swick, Barbara Thompson, Henry Travers, Michael Trotter, Joseph VanderVeer, and Renee Ziemer. Absent was Douglas Lanska.

A moment of silence was observed to honor those members who passed away in the past year: Charles Ambrose, Richard Caplan, James Goodrich and Robert Joy.

President Molina asked for additional agenda items. No additional agenda items were stated.

The minutes of the May 2019 and March 2020 meetings of the AOS Board of Governors were reviewed. A motion was made by Herbert Swick to approve the minutes; the motion was seconded by Joe VanderVeer; and the Board approved the minutes.

Secretary's Report: Renee Ziemer provided the secretary's report on behalf of Doug Lanska, who resigned from the Society. The group reviewed the minutes of the December 2019 Executive Committee Teleconference.

Treasurer's Report: Gordon Frierson presented the treasurer's report. He shared that there are 202 members in the Society. The total income for 2019 was \$247,000 and expenses \$145,258. Income exclusive of dividends and equity changes was \$132,709 and dividend and equity change in value \$114,889. The year-end balance was \$758,223. It was noted that 14 members have not paid dues. A notice was sent to remind individuals to pay their dues with a deadline of May 31st, or they will be removed from membership until dues are paid. It was recommended that a year-end balance sheet be shared with the Board and that a review of the finances be done annually. Mike Jones and Gordon will select someone to do the review. The Board did not think a full audit of the Society's finances was necessary.

Financial Committee Report: Mario reported that the Society continues to have 54 percent of its investments in stocks and 45 percent in bonds and has a conservative investment plan. The Finance Committee met and recommended to keep the current level of investments. With the pandemic, the Society's investments dropped 6.5 percent.

The Oslerian Editor's Report: Mike Malloy shared that the next edition of the newsletter will go out in June. However, with the annual meeting being cancelled, there is not as much to report. He will include information on the student presentations given by videoconferencing, and several Board members agreed to write articles pertaining to the history of plagues and pandemics putting it into context with the current pandemic.

The Nominating Committee: The committee recommended the following changes to the membership of the AOS Board of Governors for 2020-2021:

Rotating off the BOG: Joe VanderVeer (Past President 2016-2017), Doug Lanska (Secretary), Ronald MacKenzie, Barbara Thompson

Staying on: Mike Jones (President), Bob Mennel (First Vice President), Gordon Frierson (Treasurer) Mario Molina (Past President 2019-2020), Clyde Partin (Past President 2018-2019), Laurel Drevlow (Past President 2017-2018), William Evans (2021) Gaby Frank (2021), Thomas Frank (2022), Skip Harris (2022), Pete Travers (2021), Mike Trotter (2022), Michael Malloy (ex officio), Rob Stone (ex officio), Herbert Swick (ex officio)

Recommendations of the Nominating Committee for Board vacancies: Second Vice-President: Chris Boes, Secretary: David Burkholder, Members-at-large: Jack Coulehan, Scott Podolsky, Steve Schabel.

The Board approved the nominations as presented. Since the annual business meeting will not occur, voting by the membership will be done electronically.

Membership Committee Report: Bob Mennel reported that the Membership Committee would like to propose seven new members to the Society. Applications supported by the committee were Katie Kuccera Ray and David Wolf for Active membership. For student membership Priya Dave, Carly Sobol, and Raoul Wadhwa membership through the Bean Award and Daniel Garcia and Kellen Murphy submitted applications. The Board approved all the candidates for membership.

Program Committee: Mike Jones shared that a nice number of abstracts were submitted with 52 being accepted for presentation. With the cancellation of the meeting, videoconferencing was utilized which allowed seven students the opportunity to present. A total of 41 individuals participated in the meeting and positive feedback was received from many of the participants. The Program Committee should continue to look at this technology to enhance and market the Society.

Local Arrangements Committee: Mario expressed disappointment that the Pasadena meeting was cancelled but indicated that the right decision was made with the current pandemic occurring. He hopes the Society will consider coming to Pasadena in the future.

William B. Bean Student Research Award Committee Report: Barbara Thompson thanked the committee members for their review of 17 applications for the Bean Award. The three selected for the award: Brendan Ross from McGill University with his project title, "The Chinese Apotheosis of Dr. Norman Bethune: The Making of a Medical Folk Hero"; Liam Butchart from Renaissance School of Medicine at Stony Brook University with his project title, "Questions of Psychiatric Nosology: Using *The Sound and the Fury* to Compare Literary Psychoanalysis, the DSM-II and the DSM-V"; and Elizabeth Card from the University

of Pennsylvania Perelman School of Medicine with her project title, "The Impact of a Novel Life Drawing Course on Medical Student Clinical Observational Skill and Functional Anatomic Knowledge". The Board approved the candidates.

Renee Ziemer will send out the acceptance and denial letters to the applicants. John Harris suggested the criteria of medical humanities be better defined by the committee. The incoming Bean Committee is charged with reviewing the criteria before an announcement is sent out to the medical schools next month.

McGovern lecture Committee: Clyde Partin indicated that Jeremy Norman was scheduled to present in Pasadena but will be deferred until the 2021 meeting in Galveston.

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The Board approved the following committee appointments for 2020-2021.

COMMITTEE	CHAIR	CURRENT MEMBERS
Bean Award	J. Harris	K. Bettermann, M. Flannery, G. Sarka
McGovern Award*	M. Molina	L. Drevlow, C. Partin
Lifetime Achievement Award	D. Canale	K. Ludmerer, S. Peitzman, B. Silverman
Nominating*	M. Molina	C. Partin, L. Drevlow
Finance	M. Molina	F. Bernadett, B. Cooper, M. Stone, J. VanderVeer
Membership†	C. Boes	R. Fraser, B. Hoekstra, S. Patel
Publications/Media	P. Travers	C. Bryan, R. Del Maestro, M. Jones, M. Malloy, R. Stone
Annual Meeting - Program Committee#	R. Mennel	C. Boes, M. Cater, S. Kelen, D. Wentz
Annual Meeting - Local Arrangements Committee	J. Richardson, B. Thompson	J. Alperin, D. Burkholder (Executive Committee liaison), M. Malloy

*Chaired by the most recent living Past President and comprised of the 3 most recent living Past Presidents

†Chaired by the Second Vice President

#Chaired by the First Vice-President

TO AOS MEMBERS: The job of AOS Treasurer will be available in the Spring of 2021. If anyone is interested in this position, please contact Clyde Partin at wpartin01@emory.edu.

OSLERIAN NEWS

Oxford Events on 26th January 2020 Commemorating the Centenary of the Death of Sir William Osler.

By John Ward

These events of commemoration involved two years of planning and involved many people. The organising group from the Osler Club of London comprised John and Ruth Ward and Richard Osborn. Professor Terence Ryan and Professor Denise Lievesley facilitated the use of 13 Norham Gardens for the morning session and the events in Christ Church in the afternoon and evening went smoothly thanks to the cooperation and skill of the Sub Dean, the Revd Canon Dr Edmund Newey. In all about ninety people were present including members of the Osler Club of London and local Oxford academics. The AOS was represented by three Americans, two Canadians and four Australians.

The day started at 13 Norham Gardens with a welcome by Terence Ryan who showed attendees round the building and its many treasures. At 11.30am a new painting of Sir William Osler commissioned and donated to the "Open Arms" by Professor Charles Bryan was unveiled by Charley and Donna Bryan and the Principal of Green Templeton, Professor Denise Lievesley. Charley gave a short tribute to the South Carolina artist, Tarleton Blackwell and in her reply the Principal spoke of the importance of 13 Norham Gardens to the College and her gratitude to the donor. A sandwich lunch then followed.

The afternoon sessions at Christ Church started with tours of the college, dining hall and cathedral by Blue Badge tourist guides, Ruth Ward and Annetta Harvie. At 2.45pm the company moved to the Sir Michael Dummett Lecture Theatre where two lectures were given. The first was moderated by Dr William Dinning and given by Dr Allan Chapman, the distinguished Oxford historian of medicine and science. His presentation was entitled *Burton, Willis and*



Professor Allan Chapman

Locke: three influences on Osler. He briefly outlined the lives of these three Christ Church men. Robert Burton (1577-1640) was the incumbent of St Thomas the Martyr, Oxford and the college has the original

copy of his *Anatomy of Melancholy* in its Upper Library, where his collection of books, reshelved by Osler, are now kept. Burton called himself Democritus Junior. In the preface to his book Burton refers to Democritus dissecting animals to determine the cause of melancholy and explains his persona and pseudonym. He believed in keeping busy to avoid melancholy. The book is partly medical but often digresses into Latin and Greek quotations. Despite the topic of melancholy Dr Chapman stated that Burton himself seemed to have been very sociable with a good sense of humour. It has been alleged that Burton hanged himself in his chambers but Dr Chapman disputes this because of his memorial in the cathedral; a suicide would not be so commemorated but would result in burial at a crossroads to confuse his spirit.

Thomas Willis (1621-1675), a founding member of the Royal Society and describer of the Circle of Willis, had a difficult early life since his father lost much of his money so on entering Christ Church he lived in the home of Canon Thomas Iles, a distant relative, while working there as a servitor. Iles' wife, Martha, was an amateur chemist and Willis assisted her in preparing medicines, and this work helped to finance his medical studies. He remained poor and advertised his medicines in Abingdon market. He became a member of the Oxford Philosophical Club and worked with Richard Lower (1631-91), another Christ Church man, in blood transfusion experiments on a dog. Later Robert Hooke (1635-1703) described by Allan Chapman as "England's Leonardo" became his assistant for a short time.

John Locke (1632-1704), the philosopher and physician, was admitted to Christ Church in 1652 and should be regarded as one of the most influential Enlightenment thinkers. While at Oxford he knew and worked with Willis and Lower. Later in London he continued his medical studies under Thomas Sydenham who had a major influence on his philosophical ideas which were to lead to his *Essay Concerning Human Understanding*. He postulated that the mind of a newborn was a *tabula rasa* without innate ideas, and that knowledge is determined only by experience derived from sense perception, a concept now known as empiricism. Everyone at Dr Chapman's lecture was rapt at his erudition and his characteristic speaking without notes and finishing exactly on time.

After a tea interval, Professor Adrian Thomas took over the role of moderator and Charles Bryan lectured on *Osler: what was he really like and what does he mean to us today?* He addressed three ques-

OSLERIAN VIEWS

tions: Why is Osler so nearly emblematic of medicine's "heroic age" (roughly 1880-1920)? What was he really like? What would he say to us were he alive today? Concerning the first question, Osler's life illustrates certain commonalities of unusually high achievers as identified by Malcolm Gladwell in *Outliers*. These commonalities include at least 10,000 hours of goal-directed work spread over at least 10 years; a favourable family of origin; and a fortunate series of fortunate events (lucky breaks). Here Osler's second Montreal period (1874-1884), during which he led a semi-monastic life while concentrating on autopsy pathology, accords perfectly with Gladwell's paradigm. Concerning the second question, analysis of published reminiscences of, or tributes to, Osler by 205 of his contemporaries using the framework of the Values in Action Classification Project disclosed Osler's signature strengths to be vitality and kindness. Some considered him a saint, but it is possible that beneath the sunny exterior lay a deep sadness resulting from a prolonged affair with a first cousin that resulted in a "surrogate" son, William Willoughby Francis. Concerning the third question, Osler's interests evolved especially in the wake of the Great War (1914-1918). He became less interested in shoring up medicine as a "profession" and more concerned about human survivability, the question whether science would ultimately prove a force for good or evil. In his last published address he alluded to the "New Humanism" being developed by George Sarton (1884-1956), a meliorist who championed "humanized science" as humanity's best hope. After questions, a vote of thanks to the speakers, Christ Church, the catering staff and the organisers was given by Graham Kyle, the President of the Osler Club of London.

The company then moved to Christ Church Cathedral for a Choral Evensong. This was an uplifting experience. There was a special welcome for members of the Osler Club of London and the American Osler Society, with friends and guests, as they commemorated the cen-



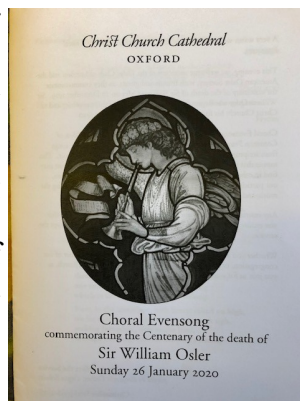
Dr. Charles Bryan

tenary of the death of Sir William Osler on 29th December 1919 by the College Chaplain, the Revd Clare Hayns. It was noted that Sir William was Regius Professor of Medicine in Oxford and that his funeral service took place in Christ Church on 1st January 1920.

The Choral Evensong followed the order of the sixteenth century Book of Common Prayer and used medieval patterns of chanted psalms, songs from scripture and prayers. The service was largely sung by the magnificent mixed choir. The hymns were those sung at Osler's funeral. The first reading, Ecclesiasticus 38, verses 1-8, was read by Richard Osborn of the OCL, and the Gospel, Luke 13, verses 10-17, was read by Dr Milton Roxanas of the AOS. A sermon with an Oslerian theme was preached by the Dean of Christ Church, the Very Revd Professor Martyn Percy and prayers were led by the Sub Dean, the Revd Canon Dr Edmund Newey who had been closely involved in the planning of the afternoon events.

The service ended what was a most fulfilling day of commemoration and an opportunity for Oslerians from round the world to come together.

Note: Dr Pete Travers has obtained permission for the Dean's sermon to be inserted in the Ask Osleriana section of the AOS website.



From left to right: Terence Ryan, Charles Bryan, Donna Bryan, and Denise Lievesley.

MEDICAL HUMANITIES

Diseases in the District of Maine 1772 – 1820: The Unpublished Work of Jeremiah Barker, a Rural Physician in New England. By Richard Kahn. New York: Oxford University Press, 497p. (Publication date, August 2020.) \$35.00

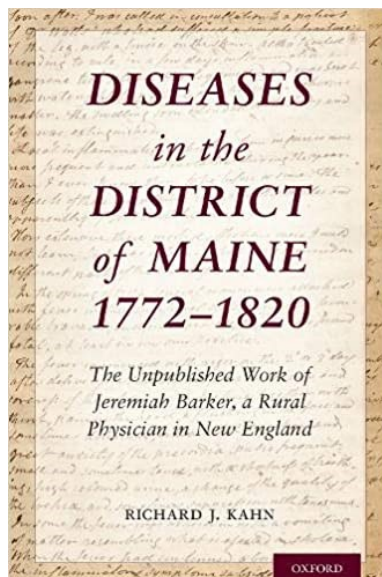
Review by Joe VanderVeer

Most Oslerians are history buffs and most are also physicians, an ideal combination to enjoy Rich Kahn's new book about an historical physician, Jeremiah Barker, who manifested many Oslerian qualities. Thirty years ago, Kahn was alerted by the Maine Historical Society to an unpublished book manuscript, which he began to work on. The present, finished volume is (to use the words from the Foreword by John Harlan Warner, Avalon Professor of the History of Medicine of Yale) "made accessible to general, medical, and scholarly readers alike through the meticulous editing and annotations" of Dr. Kahn.

I found Kahn's footnotes especially instructive, for they amplify and explain Barker's text. Examples are Kahn's citing the dates and education of other practitioners with whom Barker corresponded – including Benjamin Rush – or his elaborations about the treatment of disease (e.g. Barker's alkaline therapy) used in that era. Moreover, Kahn appends to his work a glossary of terms (that I would urge the reader to become familiar with first), and an extensive bibliography.

Barker was born in 1752 and lived 83 years, practicing medicine from 1772 to 1820, initially seven years in Barnstable, MA (on Cape Cod), then forty years in Gorham in the district of Maine, retiring from practice in 1820 (the year Maine became a state, separate from Massachusetts). He trained as an apprentice to Dr. Bela Lincoln in Hingham, MA. His mentor Lincoln was well trained: Harvard College, preceptorship with Ezekiel Hersey, and an M.D. from Kings College, Aberdeen.

Maine medical historian James Spalding, writing about Barker over a century ago (in 1909) said he "was the pioneer medical writer in Maine, at a time



when even American medical literature was nothing but a reflection of the fashions of London and Paris. Barker's medical essays will stand comparison with many of today... they tell us what he did and why. He was, I repeat, our first literary practitioner." Spalding notes Barker's library of books, journals, ledgers and financial records was reported to be nearly 2000 volumes at his death. But documentation of the fate of his library was not possible, and probate records for the region were destroyed in a fire.

Kahn notes that most medical texts in Barker's time came from Europe and were obtained with difficulty. He asserts that "newspapers were a frequent conduit of medical information, and Barker's story serves to illustrate the fluid boundary between medical and lay journals in the early nineteenth century." At the time Barker began his medical practice there were but two medical schools and two medical journals in the colonies.

It is fascinating to read Barker's case descriptions of patients with puerperal fever or throat infections in a time before the septic nature of these afflictions was known, and frustrating to read of the various prescriptions and treatments (including bleeding) given for them, in light of current knowledge. (Barker's notes on his patients with puerperal fever were made 25 years before O.W. Holmes wrote about the contagiousness of that malady, 47 years before Lister developed antisepsis.) In a footnote, Kahn also reminds us that "most now agree that improved socioeconomic factors, rising living standards, better nutritional status, and cleaner water and food combined with sanitary reforms and immunizations to provide most of the increased longevity through the 20th century." Such things were just getting underway in Barker's day.

Although they practiced in different circumstances – Jeremiah Barker in a rural setting, William Osler in an urban, academic environment – Barker manifested a number of "Oslerian" traits that made both appealing to me: both were curious; both desired to teach; both were good describers of illness; both kept in touch with colleagues; and both kept up with the literature.

Kahn summarizes much of the book with this quote. "From the days of his preceptorship, 1769–1772, Barker recorded his medical cases in case books and commonplace books and subsequently transferred many of them to his manuscript, *A History of Diseases of the District in Maine*, which contains over 100 case reports, with Barker's findings, treatments and outcomes, a few autopsies, and observations on matters of diet and public health. He often included his

MEDICAL HUMANITIES

(Continued from page 8)

thoughts about accepted medical philosophies and ideas on various illnesses and epidemics, and described changes as he saw them. He cited cases from contemporary medical texts, letters, and medical journals including the Medical Repository, to which he contributed at least twelve articles between 1797 and 1818. Barker documented his constant efforts to use the contemporary medical literature to support his therapies, trying always to be a "scientific physician" at a time of great changes in medicine. Thus, his manuscript is an unusually complete example of the day-to-day practice of an ordinary rural physician, a man unaffiliated with a university, hospital, or medical school, a person whose scholarly efforts were entirely of his own making. As such, it should further expand our understanding of medicine, disease, and public health in the new republic."

Richie Kahn's new book is a well-researched, enjoyable read.



POETRY CORNER



Who Loves the Trees Best

Who loves the trees best?
 "I," said the Spring.
 "Their Leaves so beautiful
 To them I bring."

Who loves the trees best?
 "I," Summer said.
 "I give them blossoms,
 White, yellow, red."

Who loves the trees best?
 "I," said the Fall.
 "I give luscious fruits,
 Bright tints to all."

Who loves the trees best?
 "I, love them best,"
 Harsh Winter answered,
 "I give them rest."

—Alice May Douglas
 Circa 1888

Alice May Douglas was born in Bath, Maine in 1865 and spent her entire life there dying in 1943. She had no formal education in writing, but was led by inspiration. She began writing poetry at an early age and had her first poem published at the age of 11. She worked for several papers as an editor and wrote several volumes of poems. She was also the author of juvenile books for boys and girls. During her later years she became involved in the peace and arbitration department of the Women's Temperance Union.

"https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Alice_May_Douglas&oldid=940231186"

OPINION

Looking for Inspiration

In the darkness through which we seem to be living, where do we look for the inspiration to carry us forward? Where is the sun rising? Where lies the hope for tomorrow? Perhaps, as our President, Mike Jones, suggests in his President's Message for this edition, it is simply a matter of "perspective". But, as it has become so terribly apparent in the last couple of months the perspective with which one views the world varies by the individual, the race/ethnicity by which they identify, the residential neighborhood within which they reside, the city and state within which they reside, the nation in which they reside, the place where they may or may not be working, the political party they identify with, the house cleaner they swear by or at, the beer/wine/soft drink/water they drink, etc., etc., etc. There are so many facets to our perspective it seems quite facetious.

As Farhad Manjoo in an op-ed in the New York Times (7/23/2020) lamented today, "the United States has come to feel like a failed state. The coronavirus is spreading, the economy is crumbling, society is fragmenting, our infrastructure is falling apart, health care is inadequate and costly, child care is impossible, and life expectancy is declining." Holy mackerel, it appears we are doomed and we have yet to colonize the Moon or Mars, so we cannot bail off the Earth to some safer haven. The reality is we must figure out some way to get along with each other and do the best we can to preserve the planet.

And what better way to find hope and inspiration than on Opening Day of Major League Baseball (MLB). As Jason Gay of the Wall Street Journal (6/25/2020) commented, "They figured it out. After threatening to spend the summer snoozing in a hammock, baseball has decided to shave, put on a decent pair of pants and make an appearance." Granted its only a 60 game season, but what the heck, that should make for a more "intense?" season. Can baseball really be "intense"? And as Gay observes, "a baseball season has historically been a slow roll, slow to the point that even the sloths nibbling leaves in the trees are like, *Hey that's a pretty slow season*, and there's a whole mystique around this languidness. You've heard it a zillion times: Baseball has no clock. It does not rush. Baseball evolves." Well, this is going to be one of the most rapid evolutions in the history of baseball, and the question is, what if we like this shorter season?

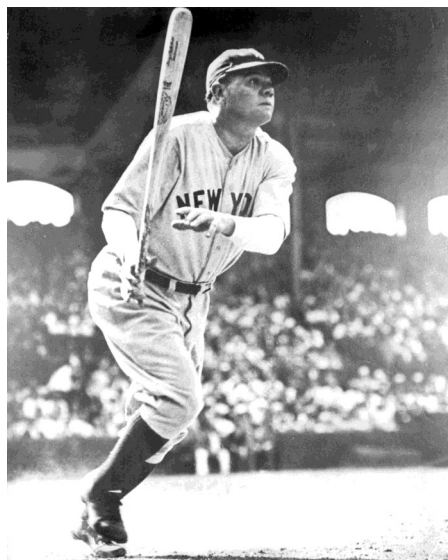
Articles expressing opinions on contemporary issues related to the medical humanities, ethics, and practice of medicine will be presented in this section.

As I watched the Yankees and Nationals start out the season last night, I saw Gerrit Cole, the former Astro (traitor) pitching to the Nats. What a pitcher, the Astros should have never let him go. Fortunately, Cole did not have to face Juan Soto of the Nats who tested positive for Covid-19 (asymptomatic). Soto had taunted Cole during the World Series with the Astros last year and had tagged him for two homeruns. Cole though was flawless through five innings and had the Yankees ahead 4-1. And then just like everything else happening this year, somehow Covid put a damper on things with a deluge of rain. Nevertheless, the game goes on the books as a win for the Yankees.

And of course there were no fans in the stadium. But just as Yogi Berra said under very different circumstances, "if the fans don't want to come to the ballpark, nobody is going to stop them," Covid has put the halt sign up for fans in the ballpark. Yet, playing in empty stadiums is not a unique phenomenon. Roger Cohen in the Wall Street Journal (7/23/2020) relates his experience as "bat boy" with the Cleveland Indians from 1967-1969 as, "three hours on a folding chair surrounded by 70,000 empty seats. That's how I know baseball can survive without fans in the stands." As I moved over to watch the Dodgers and Giants later in the evening, however, I was pleasantly surprised to see cut-out figures occupying the seats behind home plate. That made it look a little more "normal"?

Oh yeah, and did you catch that MLB backwards is BLM (Black Lives Matter)? How prescient could they have been? Hope springs eternal. Play Ball!

Michael H. Malloy



LETTERS -OBITUARIES-NOTICES

Continued from page 5

Lifetime Achievement Award: Bob Mennel, on behalf of the committee, shared the name of the recipient of the 2019 Life Time Achievement Award. With the cancellation of the annual meeting, this award winner will be announced at next year's meeting along with the recipient of the 2021 award.

Historian Report: Herbert Swick provided a written report to the Board. He is working with Mary Hague-Yearl to confirm what is currently in the collection and what should be in it. Several boxes of the Society's materials are ready to be shipped to the Osler Library at McGill University, but due to a fire at McGill University in 2018, the library remains closed. The materials will be sent sometime in the future.

According to the international standards for archives, it stipulates that archival documents should be kept as hard copies rather than electronically. This is the current practice of the Society but digital collections are also saved. Rob Stone previously interviewed members regarding Osler and will work on obtaining video interviews with current members regarding the 50th anniversary of the Society, history of the Society, and experiences regarding the annual meetings. These types of interviews could be used on the website with trailers of the interviews to expose more people to the Society. It was noted that

McGill is updating its digital software, and Rob will follow up with Mary regarding it. The Ask Osleriana database could also handle adding these digital files to it.

Publications & Media Activities Committee (PMAC) Report: Henry Travers shared a written report with the Board. He shared that there were several issues regarding the audio-video for this year's meeting and the Society would not have used the hotel audio-visual service due to the price. Once another services was contracted, the hotel's convention manager made it difficult for the outside service to have setup time and allow the equipment to be in the meeting room through the duration of the meeting. A clearer clause in the hotel contract regarding audio-visual should be reviewed before it is signed.

The committee is working on verifying publications in the Ask Osleriana Database. It was confirmed that the invoice for EFileCabinet was paid.

The Board discussed whether to purchase AV equipment and the pros and cons of it. The Board decided not to purchase equipment at this time.

The presentations given via Zoom went well but the participation by membership was disappointing. Those who did attend expressed positive comments on using this technology and found the presentations interesting.

PMAC will be setting up a Zoom meeting with Herbert

Swick, Mary Hague-Yearl and Rob Stone regarding the goals of each group in archiving the Societies materials.

Charles Bryan submitted a proposal to create a *Persisting Osler V*. PMAC would be sub-editors of this edition. The approximate cost of the previous edition was \$10,000. The Board approved this project.

President's Report: Mario conveyed it was a great honor to serve as president of the Society. He regrets that the Pasadena meeting was cancelled but offered to host a future meeting.

Old Business: Mario thanked Charles Bryan for his heroic effort in publishing *William Osler: An Encyclopedia*. Mario shared that the Molina Family Foundation would be making a donation to the Society to cover the cost of the book. The Society will reimburse Charles and Jeremy Norman the publisher. The Society will retain the copyright and receive any royalties from the sale of the book. A motion was made by John to approve receiving funds from the Foundation and that the Society would reimburse Charles and Jeremy. The motion was seconded by Maria Frank. Mario abstained from voting and the rest of the Board approved the motion. The Board thanked Mario and his family for their generosity.

An official book launch for the encyclopedia will be coordinated by Henry and Renee over the next several months.

New Business: The Society has talked about having an insurance policy but no action was taken over the past year. Mario will explore options and report back to the Board.

An endowment campaign was discussed. Several questions were posed such as what item(s) do we want the endowment to fund in the future and if the Society dissolves, where the funds would be distributed. Possible items to be funded were the Ask Osleriana database and student annual meeting registration fees. Mike Jones, as incoming president, will delve into this further.

It was noted that many members volunteer a lot of time on special projects and whether the Society could provide an "in-kind" donation letter to these members for tax purposes. Mario and Renee will investigate whether this is feasible.

Future meeting dates:

The Society will be meeting April 11-14, 2021, in Galveston, Texas. The Board accepted the offer of the Osler Club of London to host the 2022 meeting in London. Kansas City, Missouri, will host in either 2023 or 2024 depending on when AAHM plans to meet there. Pasadena, California, will be an option for whichever year Kansas City does not host.

AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY

President

Mike Jones

hmikejones40@gmail.com**Secretary**

David Burkholder

burkholder.david@mayo.edu**Treasurer**

Gordon Frierson

gfrierson@gmail.com**The Oslerian: Editor**

Michael H. Malloy

mmalloy@utmb.edu

The AMERICAN OSLER SOCIETY exists to bring together members of the medical and allied professions, who by common inspiration are dedicated to memorialize and perpetuate the just and charitable life, the intellectual resourcefulness, and the ethical example of Sir William Osler, who lived from 1849 to 1919. The OSLERIAN is published quarterly.

Looking Forward to Galveston, TX



Save the dates of April 11-14, 2021 for the AOS meeting in Galveston, Texas. The planning committee has selected an enticing venue at the San Luis Hotel along the Seawall and put together inviting extracurricular and banquet experiences. More information will be forthcoming.

Call for Abstracts for 2021 Annual Meeting in Galveston, TX, April 11-14, 2021

Attention: Because the majority of abstracts scheduled for presentation at the 2020 AOS Meeting are being carried over to the 2021 meeting there will be a limited number of new abstracts accepted. Nevertheless the Program Committee encourages submissions, particularly from students.

Abstracts should be sent by e-mail to: aosrenee@gmail.com and must be received by **15 November 2020**. Abstracts submitted by e-mail will be acknowledged. 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.

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"). The learning objectives are required for Continuing Medical Education credit.

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.

Each presenter 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 speakers. Although 20 minutes might seem quite short for a paper in the humanities, our experience with this format has been overwhelmingly favorable.

We're on the Web!√ us out at: www.americanosler.org

AOS Members — Please forward to the editor information worth sharing with one another as well as "Opinions and Letters". - MHM (mmalloy@utmb.edu)