



<b>Inside this issue:</b>	<b>Pg</b>
<b>Meet New Oslerians</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>President's Message</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2 Oslerians to Speak at London Osler Club</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>OBITUARY P. Warren</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Poems from PHL Mtg</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>NEW AOS OFFICERS</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PHOTOS OF PHL</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>UPDATE: 13 NORHAM GARDENS</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1ST CALL ABSTRACTS</b>	<b>8</b>



**Michael Bliss, 42d President of the AOS, installed at the 2011 meeting of the Society at Penn's Landing, Philadelphia**

# The Oslerian

## *A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT*

### On Studies and Silos and Latch-keys

Greetings:

How quiet it's been in my study since we came home from Philadelphia. But what a lot of memories Liz and I brought back: One of the very best meetings ever, with huge attendance, splendid papers, Charley Bryan's sartorial tour de force with the new Society ties, and the literary and philosophical tour de force of his presidential address. The AOS's success in attracting Oslerians who want to present papers forced us into the interesting experiment with concurrent sessions, of which more below. There were also momentous outside happenings: The killing of Osama bin Laden in Pakistan (one of those events that causes you to remember where you were when you heard the news), and a national election north of the border that had we Canadian members talking to each other in strange political tongues. Sadly, we later learned that on the Tuesday of our meeting, May 3, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, our fellow Oslerian Peter Warren died suddenly of a heart attack.

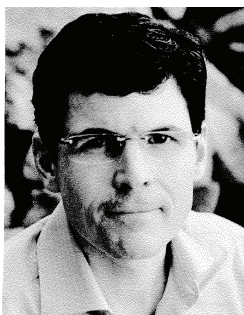
Now we're all continuing our conversations by email, that amazing innovation of the last quarter-century that we take completely for granted. (I think Osler would have emailed constantly; he would not have tweeted; and he would have had mixed feelings about the infernal distractions of cell phones). I write this

on the day that our officers and Renée are reporting that the Philadelphia meeting netted the organization a profit — the second year in a row of being solidly in the black, and yet another sign of the good health of the organization.

On our last day in Philadelphia a conversation began to develop about the possibility of Oxford, England, hosting us for our 2014 meeting, and the e-mails are continuing to fly. We do want to snuggle up with the AAHM again, but joining them in Chicago that year is problematic because we lack local arrangements capacity. The Board of Governors will consider the alternative of 13 Norham Gardens, Eweleme, the Bodleian, and the hospitality of our British colleagues. Perhaps it will be back to the AAHM in 2015.

The program committee and local arrangers for next year's Chapel Hill meeting will deal again with the concurrent session question. CME evaluations showed that 49 members liked the concurrents in Philly, 25 would have preferred single sessions only, and 2 had no opinion. My conclusion from this two-to-one majority is to suggest that the policy for North Carolina might be a version of an obfuscation well-known in Canadian politics: concurrent sessions if necessary, but not necessarily concurrent sessions. In any case, do start thinking about the paper you'll give next year - I want to

**Continued on pg 3 →**



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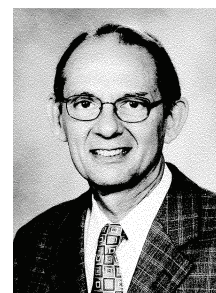


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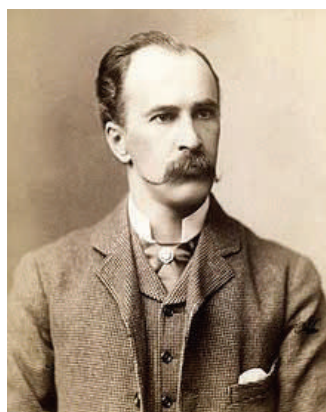
PLEASE WELCOME  
 THESE NEW 2011  
 INDUCTEES INTO  
 THE  
 AMERICAN  
 OSLER  
 SOCIETY!



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think I'm not alone as I begin to jot down notes for my 2012 presidential address.

\* \* \* \* \*

Which I'll give with considerable fear and trembling. The great honor of serving as your president is balanced for me by the anxieties I have had as a historian daring to presume to talk with physicians about medical history. Although I come from a medical family, I had turned my back on medicine and science in university, did my doctorate in history, and spent my formative professional years as a specialist in the business and political history of Canada. When I decided in 1978 to try to write a book on the discovery of insulin, the director of the then Hannah Institute (Associated Medical Services) seemed to quash that project by asking what made me think I was qualified to do what many people with much more medical knowledge had attempted.

I wondered that myself, but with good advice from our great Fisher Rare Books librarian, Richard Landon, among others, pressed on anyway. My first talks to medical audiences about my project were terrifying experiences, as I was certain that I would expose my ignorance of anything medical and disgrace myself and my profession. Of course that fear spurred me to try at least to master some of the technicalities of my subject (whereas some historians recreate explorers' ocean voyages, I found myself in an animal operating room assisting at pancreatectomies on dogs), and to always cultivate the company and advice of real experts. I came away from my first "insulin" talk in our physiology department exhausted by the stress, and had mixed feelings when an endocrinologist friend said I only gave myself away when I pronounced "glycogen" a soft 'c'.

Each talk about the discovery of insulin to medical audiences was an ordeal until a session in Winnipeg when my host at a grand rounds congratulated me on the success of my presentation. "If it was such a success", I replied, "why were there so few questions?" "Because they're afraid of you," he replied. "They don't want to appear to be foolish to a professional historian."

What an epiphany. The historian was afraid of the doctors; the doctors were afraid of the historian! How timid of us in our silos, a historian afraid to come out of his study, a doctor daunted by thoughts of the dark arts that must be needed to unlock the past. One is an "amateur," the other is a "professional". But which is which? Save for the few exotic MD-PhD's in our midst, we all seem to be

fragile vessels, not sure that we dare leave our safe harbors, worried about becoming all at sea.

Osler, I think, would have laughed at us. How could a student of medicine who learned by reasoning back from the evidence uncovered in a dead house ever find historical thinking difficult? How could a clinician whose first job was to take a patient's "history" be anything but a professional historian? How could a book lover and the friend of librarians ever have the slightest doubts about where to go to unlock the past that informs the present?

There's nothing arcane about doing history. Like much of medicine, it's mostly about gathering evidence, being resolutely critical, and spicing rationality with pinches of artful imagination. Generally, as with Osler and Cushing (and many members of the AOS), good physicians are natural historians. If only the reverse were true, and I could cap my historical career by going into private practice as, say, a brain surgeon.

In fact I never thought I would do more medical history after my insulin project. One of the first challenges put to me after I published *The Discovery of Insulin* in 1982 was to consider the need for a new biography of Canada's greatest doctor, William Osler. I considered and backed away, intimidated by what seemed an impossibly complex medical life – far too difficult for a mere historian to master. It would be another decade before I decided there was nothing to lose: either rise to the Osler challenge or vegetate intellectually even before bouncing up against the fixed period.

Very tentatively and with hardly any previous knowledge, I reached out during my Osler research in the mid-1990s to medical people known as Oslerians. The late Chuck Roland introduced me to the AOS, which was like discovering the mother lode. What a treasure the historian/biographer found in being able to exploit all the Osler scholarship the AOS had generated; what a benefit to have the manuscript biography critiqued by Bruce Fye and Charley Bryan, among others. What satisfaction it was to publish *William Osler: A Life in Medicine* and find out that Earl Nation and John Carson approved. And if there were one or two skeptics in the fellowship who wondered if the historian had been quite as successful as the more qualified Harvey Cushing, that too was appropriately healthy and humbling.

For fifteen years my membership in the AOS has given me insight after insight into the world of medi

Continued on pg 4 →



**(President's Message Continued)**

cine and the way William Osler's spiritual descendents make it work. It's been an enormous privilege. And now in 2011-12 the presidential latch-key of the American Osler Society hangs in my study, near my desk and just below my well-used copy of *Taber's Cyclopedic Medical Dictionary*. The symbolism is so obvious – how the key unlocks the doors that divide us, how it opens us to new colleagues, to new friends, and to good times as we celebrate a common heritage and our common interests. As I think about my presidential address ten months from now I tell myself that no one, amateur or professional or intellectual hermaphrodite should ever be nervous presenting to the fellowship of Oslerians.

No fear and trembling. Never. None. Certainly not.

Enjoy your summer everyone!

— Michael Bliss

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## TWO INTERNATIONAL OSLERIANS TO SPEAK AT THE LONDON OSLER CLUB

This July (2011) **Professor Alfredo Buzzi** will give the Oslerian Oration to the Osler Club of London. The Osler Society of Buenos Aires is the only Spanish speaking society in the world, launched by 3 doctors: Professor Alfredo Buzzi, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Buenos Aires, Dr. Adrian Thomas, President of the Osler Club of London and Juan Jose Alva, MD,FACP,AGAF, principal founder and Secretary/Treasurer of the Osler Society of North Carolina. For more information, contact Dr. Alva at [jjalvamd@jhu.edu](mailto:jjalvamd@jhu.edu)

**Professor Terence Ryan**, Fellow of Green Templeton College, who is also responsible for the running and improvements of the Osler McGovern Centre (see page 7), will be giving the 2012 Oslerian Oration to the Osler Club of London at the Royal College of Physicians on 12th July 2012. AOS members wishing to attend can contact either Richard Osborn at [richard.osborn@cheerful.com](mailto:richard.osborn@cheerful.com) or Peter Simpson at [old.trees@virgin.net](mailto:old.trees@virgin.net) to obtain more information about the meeting and the Osler Club of London.



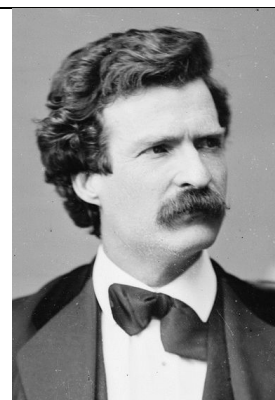
### MEMORABLE QUOTES FROM WELL-KNOWN WRITERS

← Sir William Osler  
(aka E. Y. Davis)

"Scrod!" replied a puzzled Dr Mac-Callum, "I never heard of it." In the most serious manner Osler explained, "You know what a capon is, scrod is codfish that has received the same treatment. The production of scrod has become a thriving industry along the New England coast."

Samuel L. Clements →  
(aka Mark Twain)

"I made the great discovery that when the tank runs dry you've only to leave it alone and it will fill up again in time, while you are asleep – also while you are at work at other things and are quite unaware that this unconscious and profitable cerebration is going on."



**AOS Mourns** the passing of **C. Peter Warren**, a member of our Society since 1996. He trained at Cambridge and Guy's Hospital and was Professor of Medicine and Associate Dean for Undergraduate Medical Education at the University of Manitoba at the time of his sudden death from a heart attack May 3. Recipient of several awards for outstanding teaching, he ran the student teaching program at the Medical Faculty at Manitoba. He was a specialist in pulmonary medicine, and was also a world class historian. Peter was President of the Canadian Society for the History of Medicine at the time of his demise. His many friends in the AOS will miss him sorely.

*"Oh, do not let us wait to be just or pitiful or demonstrative toward those we love until they or we are struck down by illness or threatened with death! Life is short and we have never too much time for gladdening the hearts of those who are traveling the dark journey with us. Oh, be swift to love, make haste to be kind!"*

— H. F. Amiel (1821-1881)

**POEMS SHARED BY AOS MEMBERS & GUESTS (at the Recitations Session @ the PHL Meeting)**

**Philadelphians Art Whereat, M.D. and his wife Susan attended the AOS 2011 meeting. She offered this poem, composed in Africa.**

**"GABARONE, BOTSWANA 2009"**

Rising, the sun's a plump yolk of an egg  
quicken a deeply bruised sky,  
thorn bush and desert – the Kalahari

Women emerge from round houses  
with stick brooms to stroke patterns in the pink dust –  
tracings as brief as dawn's dew and their lives.

Once menses begin,  
girls yearn to conceive.  
It's comely to prove one's fertility.

On hospital cots one meter apart  
lie patients resigned to their illnesses –  
sequelae of AIDS; sarcoma, herpes, fungi, t.b.

Still the most painful result are the orphans.

We rock them and sing mama's lullaby –

"O lala robala, nana, nana.

O lala robala, nana."

**(Ken Swan shared)**

**Whitman's "O Captain! My Captain!"**

O CAPTAIN! my captain! our fearful trip is done;  
The ship has weathered every rack, the prize we sought is won;  
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,  
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring.

But O heart! heart! heart!

O the bleeding drops of red!

Where on the deck my captain lies,

Fallen cold and dead.

O captain! my captain! rise up and hear the bells;  
Rise up for you the flag is flung for you the bugle trills  
For you bouquets and wreaths for you the shores a-crowding;  
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning.

O Captain! dear father!

This arm beneath your head;

It is some dream that on the deck

You've fallen cold and dead.

My captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still  
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will.  
The ship is safe and sound, its voyage closed and done:  
From fearful trip the victor ship comes in with object won!

Exult, O shores! and ring, O bells!

But I, with silent tread,

Walk the spot my captain lies

Fallen cold and dead.

**Bob Rakel shared a sample of some of his favorite Haiku poems:**

(About the Mississippi River:)

Under the low grey

Winter skies water pushes

Water on its way

**Phil Leon gave a paper about one of Osler's favorite poems, composed by poet Thomas Hood (1799-1845), on his deathbed.**

**"STANZAS: FAREWELL LIFE!"**

Farewell, Life! My senses swim;  
And the world is growing dim;  
Thronging shadows cloud the light,  
Like the advent of the night, –  
Colder, colder, colder still  
Upward steals a vapour chill –  
Strong the earthy odor grows –  
I smell the Mould above the Rose!  
Welcome Life! The Spirit strives!  
Strength returns, and hope revives;  
Cloudy fears and shapes forlorn  
Fly like shadows at the morn, –  
O'er the earth there comes a bloom –  
Sunny light for sullen gloom,  
Warm perfume for vapour cold –  
I smell the Rose above the Mould!

**(Joe Lella shared)**

**Yeats' "Cloths of Heaven"**

Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.

**Wendell Berry's**

**"The Peace of Wild Things"**

When despair for the world grows in me,  
And I wake in the night at the least sound in fear  
Of what my life and my children's lives may be –  
I go and lie down where the wood drake rests in his  
beauty on the water,  
and the great heron feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things who do not tax their  
lives with forethought or grief.

I come into the presence of still water.  
And I feel above me the day-blind stars waiting with  
their light.

For a time I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

I said to the plum tree

Speak to me of God

And the plum tree blossomed

Empty mailbox

I pick wildflowers

On my way back

## New AOS Officers and Committees

**President: Michael Bliss**

**First Vice-President: Sandra Moss**

**Second Vice-President: Pamela Miller**

**Secretary: Paul S. Mueller**

**Treasurer: R. Dennis Bastron**

**Oslerian Editor: Joseph B. VanderVeer, Jr**

**Historian: Richard Golden**

### 2011-12 Committees + BofG\*

(Chairs are in **bold type**)

(Committee functions in *italics*)

**Bean Award** (*screens & proposes*)

**L Drevlow**, S Podolsky, M Fuller, C Boes, J Erlen

**McGovern Award** (*Proposes name*)

**C Bryan**, J Lella, J Noble

**Lifetime Achievement Award** ( " " )

**C Partin**, R Kahn, M Bliss, B Fye

**Nominating** (*Proposes new committees*)

**C Bryan**, J Lella, J Noble

### **(COMMITTEES—Continued)**

**Finance** (*Oversees finances of AOS*)

**M Stone**, D Canale, B Cooper, D Morgan

**Membership** (*Screens new applicants*)

**P Miller**, BofG [See Below \* ]

**Publications** (*Oversees AOS Publications*)

**C Partin**, F Neelon, J Lella, M Jones, R Golden,  
J VanderVeer, W. Roberts, P Miller

**Annual Meeting** (*Selects Program papers*)

**S Moss**, P Reynolds, M Jones, P Miller,  
P Leon, D Bastron, P Mueller

**Local Arrangements** (*Sets up 2012 NC Meeting*)

F Neelon, M Jones, C Fulkerson

**\* Board of Governors – M Bliss**, S Moss

P Miller, P Mueller, D Bastron, P Berman

L Drevlow, C Bryan, J Noble, J Lella,

B Silverman, J VanderVeer, R Golden

C Boes, J Molina, C Pitcock, A Date,

M Jones, A Weisse

## **SNAPSHOTS OF AOS MEMBERS FROM THE MEETING IN PHL**



CLOCKWISE FROM UPPER LEFT: Presidential Key is bestowed by Bryan on Bliss; Reception at the CPP; Ken and Betsy Swan; CSB and Rosemary Lindley; Sandra and Robert Moss; Administrator Renee Ziemer receives gift; Charley Bryan explains the newly created AOS ties; Four handsome models for new beau ties (Lella, Carson, Bryan, and Neelon); Sandra Moss modeling the new AOS scarf; Kirsten Betterman and James Toole.







## — UPDATE —

### 13 NORHAM GARDENS, OXFORD *former* HOME OF SIR WILLIAM OSLER (and how you can support it!)



A number of members of our Society have visited Sir William's Oxford home that once was known as "The Open Arms" from Sir William and Grace Osler's kind hospitality. It's become the **Osler-McGovern Centre** and part of the **Green Templeton College** at Oxford. Your editor visited the home in 2003; he has since discovered that several significant happenings led up to the preservation of this worthy landmark:

In 1969 **Templeton College** was founded by an endowment bequest from Sir John Templeton to the Oxford Centre for Management Studies, which was then re-named in his honor. It focused on issues related to human welfare and the college had a definite international flavor.

In 1979 **Green College** was established following a bequest from Dr Cecil H. Green, one of the founders of Texas Instruments. (Though by Oxford standards both Green College and Templeton College were relatively young colleges, they each had their own individual history and established culture. Neither College was formed as a 'traditional' Oxford college.) Green College was primarily a medical school.

In 2007 these two Oxford institutions were merged to form **Green Templeton College (GTC)** which opened its doors at the site of Green College on 10/1/08. On campus is the famous Radcliffe Observatory and the historical Radcliffe Infirmary building, and a short walk away is "The Open Arms" (13 Norham Gardens).

Generous contributions from friends close to Green College, including Dr John P McGovern himself, enabled Green College to purchase 13 Norham Gardens, undertake major internal refurbishment, and equip and launch the **Osler-McGovern Centre**.

**GTC** is committed to maintaining education and research in medicine, management and related social scientific fields. It has a commitment to understanding and improving human welfare. Of its 500 students, about 20% are medical students, and 40% of the PhD students are working in clinical medical fields. You can review a video about **GTC** at [www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/collegefilm](http://www.gtc.ox.ac.uk/collegefilm).

**GTC** has invested heavily in the restoration and development of the **Osler-McGovern Centre**. At present, donations are being solicited to support renovation of this lovely home; one goal is to provide rooms for visiting Oslerians, particularly those doing research at the University related to Sir William. *Doesn't that sound appealing?* (The timetable for this development will depend on success of funding.) They are seeking, in addition to financial support, bona fide Oslerian artifacts, including first editions of Osler's works.

All US donations to the University of Oxford are eligible for tax relief, channeled through Americans for Oxford, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. AOS membership donations should be directed to Green Templeton College, marked for the Osler McGovern Centre. See [http://www.northamerica.ox.ac.uk/giving\\_americans.htm](http://www.northamerica.ox.ac.uk/giving_americans.htm) for information on giving from the US or Canada. You will see on this site that gifts can be given by credit card.

You may have noticed that Michael Bliss, in his "President's Message" (see page one), has alluded to the AOS possibly meeting in Oxford in 2014. *Wouldn't it be fabulous for our membership to support the completion of the Osler-McGovern Centre, and then get to visit it, by meeting in Oxford in 2014?*

The minutes of the Board of Governors and of the 2011 Annual Business Meeting in Philadelphia will be published in the next issue of the **OSLERIAN**

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## Aequanimitas

*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. Its OSLERIAN is published quarterly.*

We're on the Web!  
 √ us out at:  
[www.americanosler.org](http://www.americanosler.org)

## CALL for ABSTRACTS for 2011 Annual Meeting in Chapel Hill, April 22-25, 2012

Abstracts should be sent by e-mail to: [aosrenee@gmail.com](mailto:aosrenee@gmail.com) with a copy to [mueller.pauls@mayo.edu](mailto:mueller.pauls@mayo.edu) and must be received by **15 November 2011**. 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.

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.

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. (Timekeepers are dedicated and strict!)

Abstracts will be accepted by e-mail up until **15 November 2011**. Send with objectives and cover letter to: [aosrenee@gmail.com](mailto:aosrenee@gmail.com) with a copy to: [mueller.pauls@mayo.edu](mailto:mueller.pauls@mayo.edu). Please make submissions in Microsoft WORD format.

**AOS Members** — Please forward to the editor information worth sharing with one another for MEMBERS IN THE NEWS column, including awards and publications for yourself or other Oslerians. - JBV