



The Oslerian

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

1871, 1971, 2071...

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*Greetings, Fellow
Oslerians!*

President Herbert Swick, 45th
President of the AOS, installed
at the 2014 meeting at Oxford

1871

On August 8, 1871, William Osler made the following entry in his notebooks: "From a rat at Montreal General Hospital I obtained five *Taeniae* from low down in the intestine -- a small fine species with motor-vascular system very distinct" (Cushing H: *The Life of Sir William Osler*, p. 76). The following month, in September 1871, Osler's first published medical paper appeared in *Canada Medical Journal*. It was a series of five case reports, with pathological findings, of patients he had seen as a clinical clerk on the wards of the Montreal General Hospital. These two brief examples encapsulate what the young medical student discovered when he transferred in 1870 from Trinity College in Toronto, where he had begun his medical education, to McGill University in Montreal at the beginning of his third year: "the Montreal General Hospital was an old coccus- and rat-ridden building, but with two valuable assets for the student — much acute disease and keen teachers." William Osler took advantage of both. Throughout the spring and summer of 1871, Osler stayed busy as a clinical clerk on the wards of Montreal General Hospital. He had some of the worries characteristic of medical students. In a letter to his sister Charlotte on July 6, he wrote, "first

and foremost you may mention casually that I am 'too proud to beg too honest to steal,' yet I shall be reduced to one or the other remedy before long unless a check arrive soon." (Cushing, pps. 79-80). And he fretted: "much worried about the future, partly about the final examination, partly as to what I should do afterwards" (Cushing, p. 81). But such concerns did not deter Osler from pursuing other interests driven by his keen intellect and insatiable curiosity, including a lifelong bibliomania. He haunted the library of one of his best teachers, the scholarly R. Palmer Howard. It was there that he discovered the aphorism by Thomas Carlyle that came to define both his own career and his advice to others: "Our grand business undoubtedly is, not to see what lies dimly at a distance, but to *do* what lies clearly at hand." (Bliss M: *William Osler. A Life in Medicine*, p. 64). Over the next 48 years, Osler did what lay clearly at hand in Montreal, Philadelphia, Baltimore and Oxford, and thus reshaped medical education and practice.

1971

On April 1, 1971, the American Osler Society held its first formal meeting in Denver, Colorado. Nine members attended. Two papers were presented. The idea for a professional society dedicated to humanism in medicine had been fermenting for several years. The middle decades of the 20th Century were marked by an explosion of

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President's Message *(continued)*

(↓ Photo courtesy of Osler Archive)

cated to humanism in medicine had been fermenting for several years. The middle decades of the 20th Century were marked by an explosion of knowledge in the biomedical sciences. Such advances led quickly to the rapid development of new technologies and their introduction into clinical practice, renal dialysis, for example, or open heart surgery, or more powerful and specific pharmacological agents. Such important and salutary advances risked a less salutary side effect: a sense that the science of medicine distracted, sometimes even separated, the physician from the patient. In the late 1960s, John P. McGovern in Houston and Alfred Henderson in Washington, D.C., independently imagined a professional society that would keep alive a more humanist approach to patient care. They were brought together by Wilburt C. Davison, the founding dean at the Duke University medical school and a former student of Osler as a Rhodes Scholar at Oxford. A meeting on medical humanism in Galveston in the spring of 1970 brought together embryonic Oslerians, and the decision was made formally to found the American Osler Society. A statement of purpose read: "The purpose of the Society is to unite, into an organized group, physicians, and others allied to the profession, with a common interest in memorializing and perpetuating the lessons of the life and teachings of William Osler; to meet periodically for the purpose of presentation and



Osler as a student at McGill

discussion of papers on the life and influence of Osler upon the profession; to continually place before the profession a reminder of the high principles of life and humanism in practice of Osler, and to introduce these things to those entering the profession." The election of officers, the writing of a constitution, the election of Charter Members followed.

Now, four decades later, the AOS is a mature, healthy organization. Over the past five years, annual meetings have been attended not by 9 members, but by an average of 118 members, plus spouses, guests, and non-members. The initial two papers have grown to about 50 a year. The AOS fosters student research through the William B. Bean Award and sponsors an annual distinguished lectureship, the John P. McGovern Award. Next April, the AOS will hold its 45th annual meeting in Baltimore. William Osler would have been pleased, proud, and perhaps even a little surprised.

INTERESTED IN SERVING?

President Swick has proposed an ad hoc Task Force to consider how our Society – given the changes that have occurred in medicine since Osler's time – can best preserve and promulgate "the high principles of life and humanism" that Osler displayed.

If you would like to serve on such a task force, please contact him by e-mail at hmlswick@msn.com

2071

What will medical education and practice look like in 2071?

What will the American Osler Society look like in its centenary year?

Rapid advances in biomedical science and technology will certainly continue. In "Man's Redemption of Man," a lecture delivered in Edinburgh in 1910, Osler extolled the rapid advances in the science of medicine, citing anesthesia, asepsis, the 'abolition and prevention' of acute infectious diseases, and preventive medicine. What would he have said about genomic medicine, robotic surgery, even 3D printing to reconstruct body parts? Today, our ability to treat patients is better and more successful than ever. But is our ability to care for patients also better than ever? Have we seen the same increase in humanistic medical care that we have seen in scientific medical care? This is not a new concern. One hundred and twenty years ago, in 1894, Osler noted, "Science has done much, and will do more, to alleviate the unhappy condition in which so many millions of our fellow-creatures live.... but we are too apt to forget that apart from and beyond her domain lie those irresistible forces which alone sway the hearts of men." ("The Leaven of

President's Message (concluded)

Science," in *Aequanimitas* with other addresses..., p.93) But do such "irresistible forces" have any role in contemporary medical education and practice?

Such questions provoke important challenges for the future of the American Osler Society. Have changes in the profession of medicine driven -- tacitly but inevitably -- changes in the mission of our society? Is the founding statement of purpose still relevant?

My personal belief is that "the high principles of life and humanism [as exemplified] in practice of Osler" remain essential, and indeed become even more critical in today's climate of medical education and practice. The question then becomes how the AOS can best position itself to ensure their preservation. What should we, as a Society, do now to help ensure not only the nurturing of those principles but also a healthy future for the AOS?

For our Society, at this moment in its history, I think that these important questions comprise a key element of what Thomas Carlyle called "our grand business." Admittedly, to focus on 2071 would be "to see what lies dimly at a distance." But to focus on the next three to five years is "to do what lies clearly at hand." I propose creating a small ad hoc task force to think about these issues, to expand and refine them, to develop specific goals for the American Osler Society over the next few years, and to recommend practical strategies to achieve those goals. Depending on what progress is made by email (a means of communication that really would have surprised Osler, and possibly dismayed him!), we may plan to meet informally in Baltimore next April. If you are interested, please contact me. In the next two weeks, I look forward to hearing from Oslerians old and new.

— Herbert Swick hmlswick@msn.com

OSLERIANS IN THE NEWS: Jock Murray (Halifax, NS) jock.murray@dal.ca

On September 20, 2014, at the annual meeting of the **Samuel Johnson Society** in Litchfield, UK, Jock Murray was inducted as their president. Past presidents include Malcolm Muggeridge, Conor Cruise O'Brien, Dame Beryl Bainbridge and Nigel Rees; Jock is the first president from Canada.

Jock is Emeritus Professor at Dalhousie and served as AOS president in 2006-7. Over his academic career he has published articles on the illnesses of Dr. Johnson and medicine in the 18th century. His lucid presentations at AOS annual meetings are valued.



Charles S. Bryan (Columbia, SC) cboslerian@gmail.com

Charley has just published *Asylum Doctor: James Woods Babcock and the Red Plague of Pellagra* (U. of South Carolina Press © 2014), a study that offers a new perspective on the pre-Goldberger era of pellagra in the United States. Fellow Oslerian, historian **Michael Bliss**, calls it "a gourmet offering in the history of medicine." Long a spark plug of the AOS, Charley served as our secretary-treasurer from 2001-2009, and as president in 2010-11.



Attention: Alabama Students! (An Oslerian Invitation)

Professor Bert Hansen, Professor of History at Baruch College – whose McGovern Lecture on the **Art of Louis Pasteur** at the 2013 AOS meeting in Tucson was well received – has requested permission for the lecture booklet to be reproduced as a hand-out for a similar address to the University of Alabama Alumni on March 6, 2015. Dr. Hansen will be the 36th Annual Reynolds Historical Lecturer, joining illustrious former speakers, including Michael DeBakey, Victor McKusick and Bruce Fye.

The booklet's design is by AOS's Administrator, Renee Ziemer.

The Society's Board of Governors has endorsed Hansen's request with pleasure.



The American Osler Society Mourns the Passing of these Members and Friends

(4 April 2014) **MARY EMILY KINGSBURY, MLS, JD** [age 82] joined the AOS in 1986. She became professor of Information and Library Science at UNC, Chapel Hill, and was an expert in children's literature. Those who knew her remember her spunky personality, her long blond hair and her beloved schnauzers. Joe Lella writes: "She brought her enthusiasm to bear on her conversations with colleagues and students. She was curious about and completed biographical research and writing on Sir William Osler. Along with a strong interest in medical history, Dr. Kingsbury was one of the first female members of the American Osler Society." Please see the UNC tribute at <http://sils.unc.edu/news/2014/mary-kingsbury>.

(31 July 2014) **PAUL GEORGE DYMENT, M.D.** [age 78] A McGill medical graduate, Paul George Dymont joined the AOS in 1982 and had special interests in pediatrics and oncology. He served in the Canadian and the American armed forces and later taught at Case Western University, the University of Vermont, and Tulane. He published over 100 medical papers and research articles, principally in adolescent medicine, sports medicine, and pediatric oncology. Dr. Dymont volunteered his services as a pediatrician at the Albert Schweitzer Hospital Haiti.

(13 August 2014) **ARTHUR HOLMAN, M.D.** [age 91] was a renowned British Cardiologist and former president of the Osler Club of London. Lord Walton writes: "Not only was he a notable cardiologist, but he was also something of a medical historian, and, as you are well aware, he had a passionate interest in pharmacology, with particular reference to natural remedies derived from plants. He was the curator of the Royal College's garden, in which many interesting plants from which effective medicines could be derived were displayed and carefully nurtured." Bruce Fye writes, "Arthur's article 'The Wolff-Parkinson-White Syndrome: A Very Long Follow-Up' was published in the May 15, 2014 issue of the *American Journal of Cardiology*. Arthur is now with several kindred spirits who were also cardiologists, historians of cardiology, and members of the American Osler Society. He will be missed." For a glimpse at of Holman's outstanding historical collection (+ interview of Holman himself): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JNpVqh9vJkI>.

PETITE PIANO PIECES a la PADEREWSKI, Polish Pianist and Prime Minister (1860-1941)

In Beethoven's home in Bonn in an upper room is a piano on which Beethoven composed many of his great works. A Vassar girl, visiting the shrine with a party of American students, looked upon the instrument with awe and asked the guard, with the persuader of a generous tip, if she might play upon it for a moment. Permission was granted and she sat at the piano and strummed out a few bars of the "Moonlight Sonata."

Departing, she remarked to the guard, "I suppose that all the great pianists who have come here at one time or another have played on it."

The guard said, "No Miss, Paderewski was here two years ago but he said he was not worthy to touch it."

— A young lady, who recently acquired a large fortune, invited Paderewski to give a private concert at her home. Her knowledge was by no means as large as her newly found wealth.

Commenting on one of his selections, she exclaimed, "What a beautiful piece, Who composed it?"

"Beethoven, Madam," was the reply.

"Ah, yes," she said knowingly. "And is he composing now?"

"No," replied Paderewski gravely, "He's decomposing."

— ~~Paderewski arrived in a small Midwestern town during a concert tour and had time before the concert, so took a stroll. As he passed a house, he heard piano music and saw a sign in the window:~~

Pausing, he listened to PIANO LESSONS 25¢ AN HOUR. the woman playing one of Chopin's Nocturnes and not very well. He knocked on the door, came in, introduced himself and played the Nocturne over for her and spent ½ hour showing her her mistakes. Then he left.

A year later he was in the same town and took the same walk. He again heard music, and passing the same house, saw a different sign in the window:

PIANO LESSONS \$1 AN HOUR (PUPIL OF PADEREWSKI)

SOME PHOTO-MEMORIES OF THE OXFORD MEETING (Courtesy of Dr. Tonse Raju) *Center:* Lord John Walton, Baron of Detchant, sharp, entertaining banquet speaker at Green-Templeton College. *Clockwise from upper left:* Macdonald Randolph Hotel; Renee and Matt Ziemer; Rich Kahn; Paul Kligfield and Pam Abrams; James and Gretchen Ballard; Reception at Ashmolean Museum; Laurel Drevlow, Mike Jones, Professor Allan Chapman, Paul Mueller, Clyde Partin; Ruth Ward, organizer par excellence!



FIRST CALL FOR 2015 ART EXHIBITERS!

Oslerians and their spouses are invited to participate in The Fourth Annual AOS Art Exhibit, April 26-28 during the meeting in Baltimore. As in the past, a variety of forms of art will be featured, including painting, photography, sculpture, woodworking, needlework, collage and other media. Showcase your talent and creativity!

Guidelines for submission will be published in the next newsletter.

For questions, please contact Herbert Swick, hmlswick@msn.com.

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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

Final Call for Abstracts: 2015 Annual Meeting in Baltimore, April 26-29, 2015

Abstracts should be sent by e-mail to aosrenee@gmail.com with a copy to boes.christopher@mayo.edu and must be **received by 15 November 2014**. 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. (*Specifically request additional equipment.*)

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.

Abstracts will be accepted by e-mail up until 15 November 2014. Send with objectives and cover letter to: aosrenee@gmail.com with a copy to Secretary Chris Boes boes.christopher@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