

# OSLER LIBRARY NEWSLETTER

McGILL UNIVERSITY, MONTREAL, CANADA

No. 43 — JUNE 1983

## OSLER SOCIETY OF MCGILL UNIVERSITY

Report for the Academic Year 1982-83

**A** LONG TIME has elapsed since that chilly autumn evening of 1920 when four medical students, standing on the corner of University and Prince Arthur Streets, decided that the Osler Society should be created. Since that day, the Society, like many similar social groups, has had several ups and downs, many great moments and some less spirited. Animated by an enthusiastic and curious student membership, it managed to survive in spite of high turnover. The original object of the Society: "reflecting Osler's ideas of a liberal medical education", as chosen by its founders, gave enough leeway to accommodate the various interests and concerns of the students of the different periods.

The 1982-83 season, we hope, will serve as another example of the "ups" of the Osler Society, and furthermore we hope it will be a launching pad for a time of feverish activity.

### General plan of program for 1982-83

During the year, two ideas were put to trial, one completely new and one rather old. The old was to reinstate the "traditional" format of Osler Society meetings. In essence these meetings involved having one or two papers read by students followed by a question period where fellow students, members of the staff, and guests could comment and engage in a friendly discussion. The second and innovative project was to organize what we like to call our "Medical Hero Week Trilogy".

The trilogy was a suite of three independent weeks where individual medical figures, or heroes, associated at one point or another of their careers with McGill's Medical Faculty, had their lives presented, analyzed and, even in one case, psychoanalyzed, for the benefit of students and the public at large. The underlying question of each biographical week was: "Why is his memory still so much alive today?" The selection of Norman Bethune, Wilder Penfield, and William Osler as the figures to be presented was made by a group of students who thought that, as McGill graduates, they should know something about each of them. The general format of each of the three weeks was almost identical. It included the presentation of one or two biographical films, the display of a student-built biographical exhibit at the Osler Library, and last but not least, a "hero evening" where guest speakers presented different facets of each man and usually participated in an open discussion. An effort was then made to answer the question stated above. These ideas, old and new, along with the success of the 1983 Osler Lecture and Banquet, made for a very active and enjoyable year.

The initial letter on this page is reproduced from Andreas Vesalius, *Icones Anatomicae* (1934). This volume was originally the property of Dr. Thomas Archibald Malloch, who was the subject of articles in earlier issues of the *Newsletter* (nos. 35 and 36). It was presented to the Osler Library in June 1983 by Dr. Malloch's son, Professor Archibald E. Malloch of McGill's Department of English.

This year for the first time, the annual report of the Osler Society of McGill University forms the leading article of the *Newsletter*. During the academic session of 1981-82, it became clear that, through the imaginative vision and hard work of Bernard Brais, the Osler Society would be undergoing a renaissance in 1982-83. This proved to be true and Bernard Brais was invited to prepare for the *Newsletter* a report, much lengthier than any previous one, with the expectation that it would be the leading article in the June 1983 issue. This he has done and we, the members of the Editorial Committee, are grateful to him for his report and, still more, for his stimulating and innovative leadership of the Society.

E.H.B.

### "Traditional" Osler Society Meeting

The first and only "traditional" meeting was held on the evening of Thursday, November 25th in the Dean's Conference Room of the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building. The papers presented were: *Shaman, the First Physicians* by Christian Lynge, Med. II, and *Antiqua Institutio McGilliensis: A short history of the Osler Society* by the author of this report. The meeting was attended by an enthusiastic group of over 35 students, who came, so we hope, not only to drink the promotional glass of Osler Society Cognac but also to enjoy a pleasant change from the laborious study of medical sciences. Also a group of nine members of the staff and guests attended the meeting and, by their comments, helped to make the discussion period most informative and interesting. On the whole this experience was judged to be extremely worthwhile and we hope that these "traditional meetings" can be reinstated on a more regular basis in a near future.

### "Medical Hero Week Trilogy"

The first week of our trilogy, entitled *Norman Bethune, a Chinese Hero and a Canadian . . . ?*, was held from October 4th to 8th. It included the presentation of the National Film Board film *Bethune* and a videotape prepared by the Bethune Foundation entitled "Update on Bethune." An historical exhibit was shown from September 27th to October 12th at the Osler Library. It was prepared with the indispensable help of Miss Marilyn Fransiszyn, Reference and Manuscripts Librarian of the Osler Library.

Our first "hero" evening was held on Thursday, October 7th. Two exposés of different facets of Norman Bethune were presented: Dr. Maurice McGregor discussed the medical contribution of Bethune, followed by Dr. Pierre Delva who talked about Bethune's Sacré-Coeur Hospital period. These talks were followed by a lively panel discussion, in which our speakers were joined by Mrs. Irene Kon and Dr. Wendell Macleod, both friends of Norman Bethune. The discussion was moderated by Warren Kearney, Med. II. We would like to thank again our panelists who made that evening a memorable one. Special thanks go to Dr. P. Delva, President of the Bethune Foundation, who contributed much to the overall success of the week. Also important to point out is that Louise Pilote, Med. II, was largely responsible for the organization of the different events. The popularity of this week was an unequivocal demonstration that the "hero week" concept was a good one.

The Wilder Penfield week was held from January 24th to 28th. Before enumerating the different activities, I must state that the immense success of that week was largely due to the enthusiastic support of the Montreal Neurological Institute, and especially of two benevolent friends of the Society, Dr. William Feindel, Director of the M.N.I., and Dr. Victoria Lees, Associate Director, Publications of the M.N.I. The events included the presentation of the NFB-CBC film *Something Hidden: A Portrait of Wilder Penfield* and the display of a biographical exhibit entitled *Dr. Penfield, the man and his work*. The exhibit was mostly prepared by Michael Libman, Med. II, and Michel Wapler, Med. II, with the indispensable help and guidance of Dr. Lees. The material for the exhibit came chiefly from the M.N.I.'s biographical treasure, *The Penfield Papers*. The highlight of the week was the Biographical Symposium presented at the Institute on Wednesday, January 26th, Dr. Penfield's birthday. Three facets of Wilder Penfield were presented: first by Dr. William Feindel: *Penfield the Oslerian*; second by Dr. William Gibson, Chairman, Universities Council of British Columbia: *Penfield the Physiologist and Cytologist*; and third by Dr. Theodore Rasmussen, Director Emeritus of the M.N.I.: *Penfield the Surgeon*. We must thank again the speakers for their interesting and inspiring addresses and, in particular, Dr. William Feindel who took upon himself the organization of the symposium.

The last week, from May 9th to 13th, was a very special one, being centered on Sir William Osler. The videotape, *Palpable Osler*, lent by the Hannah Institute of Toronto, was shown. The climax of the week was the world première of the play *Willie: a Dream, a Dramatic Monologue portraying Sir William Osler*. The monologue was written and interpreted by Dr. Joseph Lella, Chairman of the Department of Humanities and Social Studies in Medicine of McGill University. The presentation of this socio-historical-psychological interpretation of Osler was held on the evening of Wednesday May 11th in the Osler Library. The Library was kindly made available to us by Dr. Philip Teigen, Osler Librarian, for this special occasion. The play was an acclaimed success and we are indeed grateful to Dr. Lella for presenting such an inspiring and revealing monologue. The audience numbered 65 persons. Students who were especially involved in the preparation of that evening were Frank Vona, Pamela Lenkov and Stuart Hutchison, all in first year medicine. The play was followed by a panel discussion when an attempt was made to find out why the memory of William Osler is still alive. The panelists were Dr. Marian Francis Kelen, daughter of Dr. W.W. Francis; Dr. Don Bates, Professor of the History of Medicine; Dr. Edward Bensley, Honorary Osler Librarian and Editor of the *Newsletter*; and Dr. Joseph Lella. This week, like the two previous ones, was crowned with success.

### Osler Lecture and Osler Banquet

The Osler Lecture and Osler Banquet are the last events that have to be reported for the year. Osler Day 1983 was held on April 20th. The Osler Lecturer and guest of honour at the Banquet was Professor Michael Bliss of the Department of History of the University of Toronto. Professor Bliss is the author of the award-winning book, *The Discovery of Insulin*. The Lecture, held in the Palmer Howard Theatre of the McIntyre Medical Sciences Building, was attended by an audience of over 225. The address was entitled *The Place of the Discovery of Insulin in the History of Canadian Medical Research*. Professor Bliss elegantly refuted as half-truths some of the common beliefs about the Canadian discovery, namely that the discovery of insulin in Toronto was the first great stimulating event in the history of medical research in Canada, caused the first wave of public support for medical research, and served as a source of inspiration for further research in Canadian universities. The alternative conclusions Professor Bliss offered were that the discovery was in fact an effect, not the cause, of the first wave of public support for medical research in

Canada, and that the misunderstandings and mishandling associated with the discovery substantially reduced the effectiveness of the inspiration the discovery might have given to medical research in this country. Professor Bliss concluded by discussing what he called the "symbolic significance" of the discovery. He stated that the discovery brought hope at a time of post-war depression and elevated the medical profession by demonstrating the great powers of modern medicine. The illuminating lecture was followed by the traditional Osler Banquet which was held at the McGill Faculty Club.

### Acknowledgements

Before concluding, I must thank a group of individuals who contributed greatly to the overall success of the year. Dr. John F. Seely, Honorary President of the Society, must be thanked for assisting us all year and in particular for his participation in the different discussions. I would also like to thank old and new friends of the Society who supported us throughout the year: Dr. Don Bates, Dr. E.H. Bensley, Dr. William Feindel, Dr. Victoria Lees, Dr. Joseph Lella, Dr. Wendell Macleod, Dr. Maurice McGregor, Dr. Jessie Boyd Scriver, Dr. Philip Teigen, Dr. Harold Segall, and Miss Irena Straszak.

Also important to underline is that this year's activities were the result of the work of an active group of students: Susan Kahn, Warren Kearney, Colette Lachaine, Michael Libman, Christian Lynge, Louise Pilote, Jane Stewart, George Volpe, and Michel Wapler.

### Concluding Remarks

One may wonder if, on that chilly autumn evening of 1920, the idea that the Osler Society would live to have its sixty-third season crossed the mind of any of the four founders. Probably not. But the Society did live! Furthermore, next year is full of promise and hopefully the sixty-fourth season will be even more active.

Bernard Brais, Med. II  
Chairman, The Osler Society  
1982-83



## BEQUESTS TO THE OSLER LIBRARY

In an article entitled "Fund-raising for the Osler Library" (*Osler Library Newsletter*, October 1982), several bequests to the Library were listed. Since then two further bequests have been received. These were from the estates of William F. Gough and Carleton B. Peirce. Dr. Gough was a McGill medical graduate (1934) who spent most of his career in Drummondville, Quebec and had been a generous supporter of the Friends from 1978 until his death in 1982. Dr. Peirce, who died in 1979, was a former Professor and Chairman of the McGill Department of Radiology and Radiologist-in-Chief of the Royal Victoria Hospital. These bequests are here gratefully acknowledged.

## AUSTIN FLINT COLLECTION

The Osler Library has recently received from Edmund E. Simpson of Placerville, California, a collection of materials by and about Austin Flint (1812-1886). Flint has been labelled the Laennec of American medicine, chiefly for his advocacy of the binaural stethoscope, and the Nestor of American medicine, for the extensive experience and wisdom gained from a long and peripatetic career as a practitioner and teacher of medicine. After graduation from Harvard University in 1833, he practised in Boston, Buffalo, Chicago, Buffalo again, Louisville, Buffalo for a third

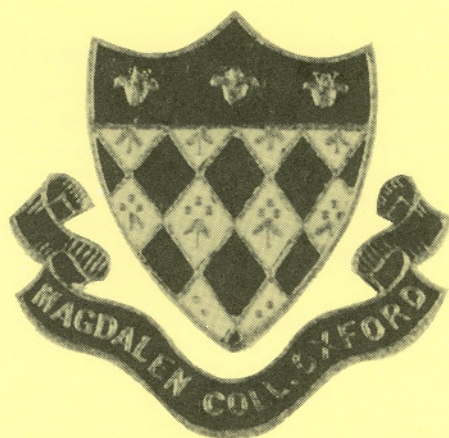
time, New Orleans, and finally, at the age of 48, he settled permanently in New York, teaching and practising at Bellevue Hospital.

Flint was a prolific writer. His bibliography (*Medical Classics*, 1940, 4:843-859) lists 200 articles, 16 books (many of them published in multiple editions), and five pamphlets.

The gift of Dr. Simpson consists chiefly of books by Flint, as well as several serial volumes, in which some of his articles appeared, together with a manuscript and a couple of books relating to the history of the Flint family. Among the books are six editions, all the ones published during Flint's lifetime, of his *Treatise on the Principles and Practice of Medicine*; two editions of *Physical Exploration of the Chest and the Diagnosis of Diseases Affecting the Respiratory Organs*; two editions of *Practical Treatise on the Diagnosis, Pathology, and Treatment of the Diseases of the Heart*; and four editions of *Manual of Percussion and Auscultation*.

This gift is a good example of scholarly book collecting: a subject has been narrowly defined and then developed in great detail, a full range of editions and issues being gathered. For that reason, the collection is a particularly welcome addition to the Osler Library.

Philip M. Teigen,  
Osler Librarian



1913

*With Best Wishes  
for  
A Merry Xmas  
and  
A Happy New Year*

*For Sir William Osler*

*from  
Edward.*

## Greetings from the Prince of Wales

In October 1912, Edward, Prince of Wales, came into residence as a student at Magdalen College, Oxford, and Osler had word from court officials that the King wished him to look after the Prince's health. The following year Osler received greetings from his royal patient at Christmas. The card has been preserved and is now in

the Osler Library. The cover bears the crest of Magdalen College and inside are the conventional printed message and the Prince's handwritten note. These are shown in the accompanying illustrations. Eventually the Prince became King Edward VIII who later abdicated to assume the title of the Duke of Windsor.

### FRIENDS OF THE OSLER LIBRARY

The appeal to the Friends for the 1982-83 academic year concluded at the end of May and the Library is grateful to have received about \$11,450 contributed by 300 Friends. Most of the contributions have come from Friends in Canada and the United States of America. However, very welcome contributions have come also from Friends in Australia, Chile, Denmark, England, Holland, India, Switzerland, and West Germany. The Library acknowledges with thanks the support of all its Friends. The following have been added to the list since the publication of the February *Newsletter*.

C.W. Adams	E.R. Kerr	Suffolk Academy of Medicine
P.G. Ashmore	†R. Lemery	Health Sciences Library
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*R.J. Kahn	J.A.F. Stevenson (in memoriam)	

The appeal for the 1983-84 academic year will be made in the October *Newsletter*.