

17th Biennial Congress Gleanings

G. Maurice Belanger

From Sea to Sea — now that Newfoundland has hosted the 17th Congress it can truly be claimed that C.A.O. has realized Canada's Coat of Arms motto "From Sea to Sea."

The 17th Congress offered a unique opportunity to combine business and pleasure. For most registrants it was a first visit to Newfoundland. Truly, to most visitors this was a newly found land for few of us could have imagined what this visit would offer. Post card pictures or even provincial publicity publications could not accurately foretell what most visitors would encounter, particularly the genial friendly open-hearted character of the Newfoundlanders themselves — no photograph or printed word can describe their character. It must be experienced on a person to person level. Let us hope that the expected boom of the 80's will not change that charm and openness.

Registrants really discovered Newfoundland either before or after the Congress as most first time visitors spent three to four days exploring the "Rock" from Port aux Basques to Cape Spear and from St. Anthony to Cape Race with all the picturesque and quaint villages and outposts between. Yes, a Newfoundland of charming vistas, magnificent scenery, breathtaking views and last but not least, of charming hospitable folks.

A few Congress delegates even managed a visit to St. Pierre and Miquelon, but these islands cannot be considered Newfoundland in attitude or character.

History dogs one's steps, particularly in the Avalon peninsula and Buenavista. However, all coastal areas of the North coast and northern peninsula offered local points of interest to the history buffs and nature lovers. And of course, the whole province is a sport fisherman's



St. John's area photos courtesy Dr. Kevin Halleran

paradise. It was not uncommon to see cars parked by the road near a bubbling creek or small river and observe people of all ages readying their fishing gear.

Those hearty ones who braved the wind and the fog on Tuesday evening were rewarded on their trip to Cape Spear — the most easterly point of North America — the old Mariners cry of "thar she blows" was repeated as a school of whales accommodated the mainland landlubbers by staying close to shore and blowing their spouts.



The charm of old St. John's however old and weatherworn in some spots contrasted spectacularly with some of the newer and more renovated sections of the city. With a population of 140,000, St. John's was astir with activity, especially the port area with its assortment of ocean-going vessels, from small fishing boats to oil drillers and cruise ships.

The beauty of wooden houses, plain or with ginger bread designs emanated a certain attractiveness, which brick homes almost certainly fail to render and which only those very old stone houses can come close to matching for a feeling of hominess and nostalgia.

Congress registrants were treated to a fine performance of "1881," in fact a premier performance, honoured by the presence of the Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland, the Hon. John Paddon. "1881" was a collection of amusing and somewhat satirical sketches depicting life in 1881 on the rock. These scenes included a courtroom re-enactment, a post office line-up, the ladies sewing circle and its undercurrent of gossip, a

temperance meeting, the turning of a spade of sod for the Great Newfoundland Railway, later to be known as the Bullet for its lack of speed while for years existing as the only transportation to be had except by boat around the coast.

The costumes were typical of the era and the cast's presentation was lively. They may not have exhibited the polish and finesse of a Stratford Festival but are these attributes really essential for one to enjoy an evening at the theatre? In this case, emphatically no! Many thanks to the organization committee for offering such an evening of wonderful relaxation.

St. John's performing arts facilities are excellent. The Arts and Culture Centre could shame many other larger cities. It is not a lavish building but is well designed for acoustic performance, the seating is comfortable and the stage fully visible from all seats in the house.

The weatherman was really good to all, offering almost a full week of beautiful sunshine right up to Saturday evening. The skies clouded over intermittantly on the Sunday and Monday and did interfere with the Junior programme and also with part of the spouses activities but alternative arrangements allowed the programs to continue without major interruption. While central Canada sweltered in 90°F heat, temperatures in St. John's remained on the cool side, even making outdoor swimming uncomfortable.

The lobster boil was a success despite the inclement weather — lobster, whether eaten indoors or outdoors is still an enjoyable delicacy.

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Registration was better than expected. A total of 328 including optometrists, their guests, spouses and children registered — the block of rooms at the Holiday Inn was filled and the overflow had to be accommodated at the nearby Battery Inn.

On a provincial breakdown of practitioners we counted:

From	B.C.	14	Que.	4
	Alta.	20	N.B.	15
	Sask.	10	N.S.	17
	Man.	12	P.E.I.	2
	Ont.	54	Nfld.	21

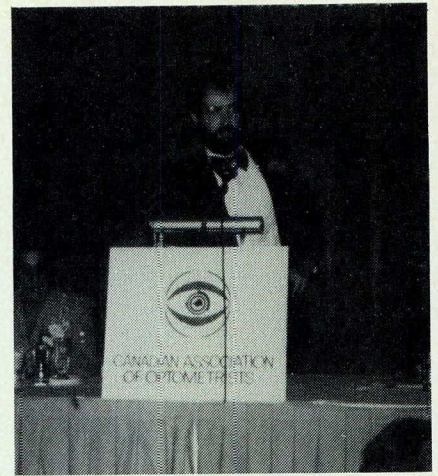
Spouses 104 Guests & Lecturers 10
Children 45 Exhibitors 75

No one class year appears to have had an overwhelming number in attendance. Even the big classes of 1949, 50 51 failed to dominate the registration but all in all, though 198 optometrists does represent a very high percentage of our Canadian membership — proportionately we do better than medicine at their national congress.

Had our Quebec colleagues attended in proportionate numbers, overall attendance could have reached 20 per cent of our membership.

A sure sign that time marches inexorably onward — the old guard, including this writer, searched in vain among a sea of new faces and names for friends of many years standing. Identification tags were not needed not so many years ago but they are indeed essential today as the old give way to the new!

Another sure sign that things are changing. Dr. Reid MacDuff becomes the 24th C.A.O. President. Not only is he the first Newfoundland to occupy this post, he



CAO President-Elect Dr. R. MacDuff addressing Banquet guests.

is the first Waterloo Graduate to do so.

For those who may be confused by the unequal number of congresses and presidents one must recall that C.A.O. became a chartered group only in 1948 and it held its first Congress in Ottawa in May 1949. C.A.O. history goes back to 1924 when Herb McLung of Regina first proposed a national body. It took until 1942 to organize and until 1948 before obtaining a charter of incorporation. Prior to 1948 five people held the office of president⁽¹⁾.

Past Presidents in attendance included Jack Huber, Regina; Garson Lecker, Sydney; Roy Brown, Virden; Elwood Spearman, Killarney; William Lyle, Waterloo.



Junior delegates at the "Screech-In".

⁽¹⁾Editorial — a Silver Jubilee — C.J.O. Dec. 1973

The number of young children attending the Congress seems to increase at each occasion, testimony to the interest of younger practitioners in their national association. This is an encouraging sign for the future — Leaders are not formed overnight, they develop over time with continued exposure to the business of the association.

Dr. Jack Huber's masterful presentation of the 1981 President's Award to recipient Dr. Elwood J. Spearman of Killarney Manitoba was a highlight experience. In responding, Woodie, in his usual humble manner denied any responsibility for his many accomplishments, reflecting instead that his good spouse Marion and his colleagues, particularly Roy Brown, should be cited rather than he.



Dr. J. Huber (left) presents 1981 Presidents Award to Dr. E.J. (Woodie) Spearman (right).

Previous award winners in attendance were William Lyle, Ted Fisher, Fred Attridge and Maurice Belanger. The award was first instituted in 1965 and presented to John J. Mulrooney of Halifax, C.A.O. President in 1952-53 and then C.A.O. treasurer for 9 years.

The prestigious award is given no more frequently than once every two years. Deserving practitioners can be proposed by any C.A.O. member. The award committee is composed of the three most recent C.A.O. past presidents.

The theme of the educational programme "Etiology of Refraciton" was excellent. Unfortunately three half days of lecturers are hardly

enough to cover such a wide field, basic to the development of optometry as a distinct and autonomous health care discipline. Dr. Avrum Richler and Dr. Allan Richardson are to be congratulated for developing the theme.

Dr. Ernst Goldschmidt, a Danish Ophthalmologist and Director of Ophthalmology at the University Hospital of Odense was the featured speaker. It was evident from his enthusiasm and his delivery that he is very knowledgeable on this subject, a topic he admits receives far too little attention by all eye care professions. He stressed that we are still far away from a thorough understanding of refractive errors, their causes and evolution throughout human life. He encouraged his audience to engage in longitudinal studies of refraction although he admitted to the difficulty of maintaining an adequate sample of patients due to lack of interest, displacements and death. He suggested that buried in the files of every refractionist's office were records covering the life span of a number of patients. Data such as this collected from numerous offices would be of great clinical significance in understanding refraction.

As a token of our appreciation he was presented with a copy of the illustrated book "Treasures of Canada" by Samuel and Stevens.

Dr. Indra Mohindra, from New England College of Optometry, described in detail an examination routine she recommends for use with children. This retinoscopy technique is simple and results are accurate. Her presentation was basically an illustrated lecture of each step in the routine which was next best to an actual demonstration in a clinical setting.

Dr. Ted Grosvenor is a recognized authority on contact lenses but proved his versatility as a teacher of clinical topics. His lecture was a slide presentation of 50 pathological fundi and externa. Each person in attendance was given a list of four conditions numbered for each slide. Each member in the audience was to indicate which condition of the four listed was the proper diagnosis. This self evaluation test required just about the full lecture period. In the final few minutes Dr. Grosvenor listed the diagnosis for each slide commenting on the decision when needed.

Dr. John Bear and Dr. Avrum Richler added to our knowledge of refractive errors by reporting on their studies of the refractive states of Newfoundland natives and Labrador Inuits. The lecture on the use of computers in optometric offices was a basic presentation with examples chosen to illustrate typical uses in the office.



(l) Newfoundland MLA for the Opposition, Mr. Steve Neary advises CAO Delegates on Lobbying Tactics, (r) President-Elect MacDuff

The lecture on clinical photography was more a report of historical aspects than a technical presentation on the use of photography as a clinical tool for recording normal or abnormal visual conditions. However entertaining the lecturer proved himself to be it was a disappointment from a clinical aspect.

Thanks is due to the many firms who accepted C.A.O. invitations to participate in the Congress exhibit. The industry and the profession are mutually interdependent. Sympathetic cooperation by both parties is essential to meeting the needs of the Canadian public.

To optometrists who take pride in their prescribing skills it was gratifying to note a resurgent interest by some firms in offering a wide range of lense types including strip segment prism bifocals and bicentric grinding of plastic lenses (back surface only).

Also in evidence were the newer multi-coat anti-reflection coatings and RLX treatment and polycarbonate lenses for racquet sports.

The display of objective and subjective auto refractors leaves one perplexed as to their ultimate effect on the vision care professions. They can be so readily abused and their findings taken for the final say when such is not the case.

An initiative which needs to be repeated and emphasized is the photograph contest for practitioners. It must have been disappointing to have so few entries when so many optometrists are photography addicts. Less than 5 entries did not make for a large display. If the quantity was missing, quality was evident in all entries. Ralph Rosere of Dartmouth kindly provided an exhibit of his own work to inspire future contestants. In 1983 in Vancouver let's have quantity and quality!!

The Saturday evening reception really provided an opportunity to talk, renew acquaintances and get in the mood. Authentic Atlantic head gear in the form of the famous "Sou'Wester" hat was worn by everyone. Herve and Jackie Landry



CAO "Screechers" line-up for the traditional "Fish and Brewis" welcome to Newfoundland.

policed the door and nobody attended the "Screech In" without one (see pictures). A hearty musical lead from a genuine "Newfie Band" and a liberal hand on a keg of "Newfie Screech" supplied by the Government of Newfoundland helped fuel this favourite event.

On the more serious side, the General Business meetings were reasonably well attended. The various activities of C.A.O. were described and reported on and registrants were able to question committee chairmen to clarify any point they wished. It is unfortunate that these meetings are not attended by all registrants — the opportunity to hear about and question C.A.O. activities and policies comes only once every two years.

Fortunately the two days prior to the Congress is given over to the Provincial Presidents and Secretaries meetings and National Board meetings. These deal with the more routine administrative affairs and permits a wide ranging discussion of topics leading to concrete policies and action plans.

The President Elect of the American Optometric Association, Dr. Harold F. Demmer was in attendance as our guest and spoke briefly but emphatically to the assembly. He remarked how similar problems affecting the profession exist both in

Canada and U.S.A. He also described in some detail the effects of consumerism, the Federal Trade Commission decision and the effect they will have on the practice of optometry. In particular he cited chain optical outlets, the return of uncontrolled advertising, price cutting, the emphasis on frames rather than service. This, he said, places a great responsibility on ethical and professional practitioners to take on junior associates so that the commercial chains do not attract the new graduates by their well equipped offices and high salaries.

He noted that consumers are ready to pay more for proper service but the patient must be educated as to the nature of the services rendered.

The decision of the Quebec Association to renew its membership in C.A.O. was enthusiastically applauded when President Landry made the announcement at the Sunday afternoon session of the business meeting. Although neither Jacques Vinson representing the Order of Optometrists and Jean Marie Rodrigue, President of the Quebec Association were present at the time of the announcement, their presence at the Congress augurs well for the future.

Professor Emerson Woodruff was recognized by the profession for his

unrivalled contributions to Canadian optometric education and was presented with a suitably inscribed copy of the text *Treasures of Canada*. In his reply Dr. Woodruff paid homage to Ted Fisher as his mentor for his dedication and example and to the faculty, people and staff for their constant support, help and counsel in his duties as Director of the school.

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Dr. Roland des Groseilliers in his Trust Fund report made the important point that the Waterloo Development Fund and the Canadian Optometric Education Trust Fund should not be considered antagonistic. Both need the unfailing support of optometry. Those who do make contributions to the WAT fund can be assigned directly to the needs of the School of Optometry.

The success of any Congress is a measure of the efforts put forth by the various Congress committees from the general chairman down to the rank and file. Our heartfelt thanks to:

Dr. Avrum Richler, Dr. Allan Richardson, Dr. Luc Boulay, Dr. John Snow, Dr. Sandra Taylor and all the other Newfoundland members who helped. Particular thanks must go to Roslyn MacDuff who



Dr. Avrum Richler—Congress Arrangements Chairman at the helm!

ably ran the Congress Registration and Information desk.

To paraphrase one of our banking institutions, "when they succeed, the Congress succeeds."

O.D.'s must be an emotional group for it has occurred before and it happened again at the Congress. Eminent optometrists losing the power & speech as mist wells up in their eyes is not uncommon. Herve Landry whose vocal chords refused to vibrate as he attempted to thank his good spouse for her dedicated support and patience during his term of office was one. Yes, and even the phlegmatic Dr. Woodruff could

not evade his emotions about Canada and Optometry. He too cut short his words of thanks as he responded to the presentation made to him.

Even Ray Corbin, our M.C. at the Banquet became confused in his routines of "Grace" and "Toasts," excusing himself by accusing optometrists preference of drinks over prayer.

The banquet is an occasion of joy and festivities and conversations between friends — during the meal we could do without music from the band — voices were hard enough to hear without the music. It could save a few dollars for the finances committee, but more importantly, attendees could hear themselves talk!! — not that the band was not good. On the contrary, those saxes really had it!!!

Fortunately for optometry, Don Larkworth ran the Ontario College more efficiently than he did the "49" class reunion. Imagine Table 5 in one corner of the hall and Table 6 in the other!

And so we will see you again at the Bayshore Inn in Vancouver, July 2-6, 1983. Au revoir till then.

G.M.B.



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