

COUNTDOWN TO BOSTON

48 DAYS

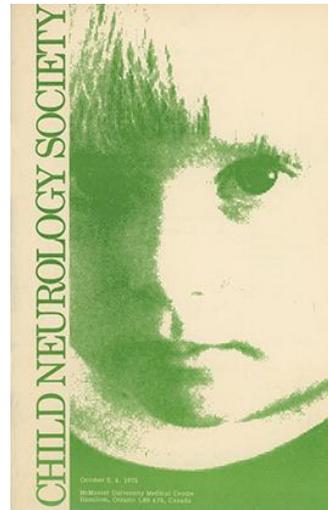


"C" is for Canada

If I could travel back to any season and year in my life, I might choose Fall of 1975. I was 21 years old, had a girlfriend, was on track to go to grad school in American Studies or History, and while hitchhiking from Minnesota to Boston somehow found myself waking up in a farmhouse in New Hampshire to the irresistible siren call of Bruce Springsteen's new album, *Born to Run*.

But aside from all that, and more in tune with my serial reflections on and your interest in "CNS: Past, Present, and Future," time traveling back to the Fall of '75 would give me the chance to meet the only CNS President I never knew: James Schwartz. And it would give me a chance to attend the only annual meeting out of the seven held in Canada that I missed: the 4th Annual Meeting in Hamilton, Ontario.

It must have been quite a meeting. Who wouldn't be impressed, paging through the program and seeing names like Alfred Brann, John Menkes, Ruth Mary Duel, Karin Nelson, Shaul Harel and Eileen Oulette pop out at you? But, still, who could have guessed an entire Broadway musical would come out of it, winning a bucket full of Tony Awards, becoming the toughest ticket in town, and wowing the entire world in the process? Kinda makes you wonder how anyone could still refer to child neurology as "medicine's best kept secret."



Fortunately, there have been six other CNS meetings in Canada, including my very first: Halifax in 1988. All of them have been special (although none have inspired Broadway plays like the 4th) and some will be looked at more closely later as the "Countdown to Boston" continues: Halifax (1988), Montreal (1998), Victoria (2001), Ottawa (2004), Quebec City (2007), Vancouver (2016). But, as is true of so much in life, nothing quite matches "The First". Looking back, I remember three first meetings from my first Canadian meeting:

- Meeting #1: Huda Zoghbi, the 1988 Young Investigator Award recipient who went on to be Sachs Lecturer in 2001 (in Canada again), and her mentor Marvin Fishman, who will come up again later in this series for special acknowledgment. What I most remember is being amazed that two people so incredibly bright and accomplished could be so sweet and kind, making a point of introducing themselves and thanking me, a veritable "nobody," for helping them (in what way or ways, I can't recall).
- Meeting #2: Looking out at the remarkable seascape through a window in a remote upstairs rotunda, I marveled aloud at the stunning vista: "Who could possibly take their eyes off this?" I asked. Whereupon a rich, deep voice on the other side of a row of 4 x 8 poster boards rasped irritably, "Good question! I want to know who's going to look at my poster?" The voice belonged to Harvey Singer, winner of the first CNS-PCN Training

Director Award in 2013, and the Hower Award in 2016. What seemed a “rasp” at first, became over time a welcome and comforting “golden growl” (not quite a “purr”), through my many years working with him on the BOD when he was CNS Secretary-treasurer. But long before all that, in an instant, he unwittingly taught me a lesson I never forgot: the main thing is to keep the main thing the main thing. Which is this *vis a vis* CNS meetings: my job was and still is to give CNS members the best opportunity possible to present their best work to their peers. Period.

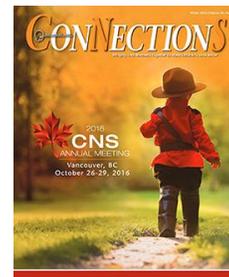


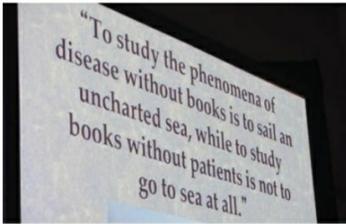
- Meeting #3: 2009 Hower Awardee, Peter Camfield and his wife Carol, winner of the 2019 Roger and Mary Brumback Lifetime Achievement Award, hosted a reception at their house. One of the few things I dread more than socializing in a crowded room is the feeling as I walk in a room that I am the dumbest person in attendance with nothing to bring to the conversation. I have learned over 30+ years of sitting through Scientific Planning Committee meetings and Executive Committee meetings to tamp that feeling down, but you can imagine the epic unease I felt at my very first CNS meeting. As luck would have it, however, a bubbly teenager was bobbing about the Camfield's abode. I could talk to her, I thought, and all would be well. But, as luck would have it, and as you no doubt guessed, I found myself cornered by the Camfield's brainiac daughter, Renée. She was sweet and kind, like Drs. Fishman and Zoghbi, but also funny and enthusiastic, eager to help and put me at ease. She still is.

As nearly everyone in the CNS of a certain age knows by now, running into the Camfields at CNS Meetings or at AES in December is one of the great pleasures in life. And matching Renée's enthusiasm and meeting her high standards is an ongoing, and endlessly rewarding challenge. What would the CNS be without them?

And what, one might ask, would it be without so many other Canadians – and Canadian meetings? Among the 49 previous CNS meetings this year's registrants had to choose from as their favorite, Vancouver easily took highest honors, with Halifax, Ottawa and Quebec City all cracking the Top 10. Right up there with them in that Top Ten list, appropriately for today's letter, “C”, is Columbus, OH, site of the 2014 CNS meeting.

Mentioning that might seem anomalous in the middle of busting out with “O Canada!”. Until you stop to realize that the two widely acclaimed and well-remembered marquee lectures at that meeting were delivered by Canadians: Toronto's Gabrielle deVeber and Montreal's Michael Shevell. I can't address the scientific excellence behind Gabrielle's selection as the Sachs Lecturer, but I can make mention of her signal achievement of taking the new idea introduced by Steve Ashwal in 2002--organizing Special Interest Groups (SIGS) at CNS meetings--and turning it into the legendarily robust and successful multi-center Stroke consortium that operates year round and still meets for a full day on the front end of CNS Annual Meetings. And I can't speak to Mike Shevell's leading role in cerebral palsy research and education, but I can attest to his invaluable wise and lively presence on the BODs of both CNS and ICNA, his magnificent Hower Award Lecture, and the sheer delight I have taken through the years talking to him about music, theater, literature, history and, of course, hockey.





My favorite “Maple Leaf moment,” in fact, centers on hockey, a hockey center, no less. It came in Quebec City, in 2007, when I had the chance to shake hands with and talk to the 2007 Lifetime Achievement Awardee, Gordon Watters (shown below, with that year’s Sach’s Lecturer, his colleague at McGill, Frederick Andermann, standing at his shoulder). As a lifetime fan of Minnesota Gopher hockey, I had spent the previous 15 winters looking up at a giant mural of past Gopher greats. Suddenly, at the President’s Reception, I found myself facing off with the biggest and most commanding figure on that mural, an older and wiser version of the 1951 Gopher All-American center (from Manitoba), who passed on the NHL to pursue a career in medicine. Dr. Watters studied under the first Hower Awardee, Douglas Buchanan, in Chicago, before putting in four years at Harvard/Boston Children’s with Charles Barlow and subsequently a quarter-century at McGill in Montreal. What a thrill!



Other Canadians come readily to mind. I remember in particular Alan Hill and William Logan, both of whom I worked with on the CNS Executive Committee. Dr. Logan received the Roger & Mary Brumback Lifetime Achievement Award in 2018 in Chicago, on which occasion I had the good sense to put him and four fellow Canadians in front of the camera and let them talk. You can catch their conversation on the CNS website by [*clicking here*](#).



(L-R): Steven Miller, Michael Shevell, William Logan, Alan Hill, Keith Meloff

Last, but not least, there is Elaine Wirrell, a classically gracious Canadian, who along with Renée Shellhaas and Phil Pearl launched and continues to masterfully organize the annual CNS Pellock Resident Seminar on Epilepsy. And how much more Canadian (or Canadian?) can a Montreal émigré get than Janet Soul, turning up at a CNS meeting a few years ago wearing a sling following her on-ice injury playing in a league hockey game in Boston?

"C" is also for Currey

One cannot talk about the past 50 years of CNS history without recognizing – without celebrating! – the 40 years of selfless service Mary Currey gave to the Society. Arriving in the Twin Cities in the mid-60s from Crows Nest Pass, Alberta, Mary was hired by Michael Blaw, head of the University of Minnesota Medical School's Division of Pediatric Neurology, then stayed on to work for his successor, Ken Swaiman, tirelessly choreographing the flood of correspondence coming in, first from the midwestern US, then from around the country as Dr. Swaiman



moved implacably forward in his determination to establish a national association of child neurologists. She saw many residents come and go at the U of M, including Steve Ashwal (shown with Mary above), Warren Lo, Bhuwan Garg and Mark Scher.

Mary hired me in 1981 following an interview that lasted about two seconds for every year I subsequently went on to work for the CNS. In 1989 she and I moved out of the University of Minnesota to establish the free-standing national office the CNS needed and deserved. I learned a great deal from Mary, not least the money-saving value of meeting in Canada and the matchless charm those northern cities retained, unlike their bulldozed counterparts in the US. There is an art to "dealing with" the variety of quirks and egos medical specialists of any kind can present at the upper levels. Mary mastered that art; watching her has served me well since succeeding her as Executive Director in 2012, humbly realizing each day since that I will never match her almost old-fashioned (Canadian?) variety of solicitude and kindness, her obsession with detail, and certainly not her unblemished record for showing up not just on time for everything and everybody, but obscenely early. Those who remember Mary fondly and well may look forward to an appreciation written by past-CNS President, John Bodensteiner for the Fall/Annual Meeting edition of *CNS Connections*.

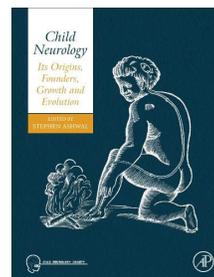
Until tomorrow (the letter "D"),
Roger

Roger Larson, CAE
Executive Director

— Quick Note —

"C" is also for a Copy of the Book

Anyone wishing to pick up a copy in Boston of the 2nd edition "Founders" book, edited by Steve Ashwal, must register for the meeting and order the book by **FRIDAY, AUGUST 13.**



On-line Registration is Open!

Registration is now open for the long awaited 50th Golden Anniversary Meeting of the Child Neurology Society in Boston. Registrants attending this milestone meeting live and in-person in Boston will want to register early (some sessions are limited and reservation-only). You will also want to book hotel rooms ASAP. A link and access code to the Sheraton Boston Hotel will be included in your registration confirmation email.

[Click to Register](#)

2021 CNS 50th Annual Meeting

For more information, click button below.

[Click for More Info](#)

