

American
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President's Corner

G. Randall Bond, MD



I am 8 weeks into my term as President and feel like I am in the fast lane as I had a such an abbreviated President-Elect term. In addition, transition in two key positions—Secretary/Treasurer and Education Committee Chair—has made for a steep learning curve.

Highlights of the last 8 weeks include:

New committee appointments: Matt Sztajnkrzyer and Greene Shepherd replace Jim Mowry as co-Chairs of the Education Committee. This committee must keep up our ability to grant CME and Pharmacist CE as well as accredit each lecture and grant CE to individuals. Giant shoes to fill. It takes two to replace Jim. Ruddy Rose replaces me as Chair of the Fellowship Committee. Dan Cobaugh continues as Chair of the Research Awards Committee. (Of note, the Board is considering a new proposal to replace the little applied for multi-center research award with a young investigator award.)

The Nominations Committee (consisting of the Executive Committee and a Past-President) is preparing for a special election (under our newly approved bylaw revision) to fill the vacant President-Elect position (I occupied it for a nanosecond). We expect the vote to be electronic.

The most active committee is the NACCT 2007 Planning Committee. The Committee is comprised of Lewis Nelson (Chair), Donna Seger, Mike McGuigan, the two Education Committee Chairs (Sztajnkrzyer & Shepherd), Suzanne White (representing ACMT), Sandy Giffin (representing AAPCC), Leigh De La Torre (representing Con-

temporary Forums) and myself. Chris Holstege will serve as Abstract Review Chair. Feel free to give any input to any one of us. We are also looking to involve more people and younger people—if you have an idea or want to serve, we want to hear from you! We met in New Orleans last month to hammer out timetables and venues. The city, at least the French Quarter where we will meet, has weathered well. It is essentially untouched—but “under touristed.” Everything is open but no crowds. The hotel looks great. The restaurants were delightful. The airport and transportation logistics were also a breeze. I am sure we will thoroughly enjoy it. I have also heard great reports from those who attended ACEP there in October.

The special interest groups are thriving, especially Herbals and Dietary Supplements, led by Alan Woolf and Elaine Yum. The other groups continue to be led as follows:

- Acute and Intensive Care—Tony Scalzo
- Forensics—Cynthia Morris-Kukoski
- Envenomation—Dan Keyler
- Occupational and Environmental Toxicology—Michael Greenberg
- Pediatrics—Gary Wasserman

Contact any of these individuals with ideas ASAP as they are in the process of planning symposia this month and next.

Other Board and executive actions and continuing activity include:

- The Board approved free AACT membership, with journal, for fellows in training.
- We are reviewing our association management and website needs.

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Johnny Appleseed: Folk Hero or Toxic Legend?

Timothy B. Erickson, MD, FACEP, FACMT, FAAC



The story of John Chapman, better known as the bare-footed folk hero Johnny Appleseed, is intimately associated with the history of America's expanding frontier. He was born in Leominster, Massachusetts in 1774. His father, Nathaniel Chapman, was a farmer and carpenter who later became one of the Revolutionary War's "Minute Men" and fought at the Battle of Bunker Hill. In the early 1800s, John Chapman wandered west planting apple seeds in order to help cultivate the wilderness for advancing pioneers. He allegedly planted

over a hundred thousand square miles of apple orchards in Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. Tradition has it that he had a tin kettle that served as both hat and cooking pot. Other accounts describe him carrying a woodsman's rifle, tomahawk, and knife. He was a strict vegetarian and preferred to sleep outdoors and avoided most towns and settlements. He thought it cruel to ride a horse, chop down a tree, or kill an animal.

In the 1700s and 1800s, most apples were grown not for eating but for making hard cider. In reality, Johnny Appleseed didn't bring fresh fruit to the frontier; he brought the alcoholic drink of choice. An apple tree grown from a seed bears little resemblance to its parent, and the fruit normally is almost inedible, very sour or bitter (similar to a crab apple). To get edible apples, grafting of trees is necessary in order to produce a clone that will bear a more palatable fruit, rather than planting from seeds. In Johnny's era, cider was safer, less toxic, and easier to make than traditional moonshine or corn liquor. The apples were pressed to produce a juice, the juice would ferment in a barrel for a few weeks, producing an alcoholic beverage, about half the strength of wine. For a stronger concoction, the cider could be distilled into brandy or frozen into applejack (about 66 proof). Applejack was very popular among the New England colonies. Barrels of apple wine would be set out in sheds during January and February when the temperatures were sub zero. By the first thaw, the liquor would be well fermented and ready to drink. In rural areas, cider took the place not only of wine and beer but was preferred over coffee, juice, and drinking water.

Johnny was an entrepreneur and businessman. He tried to predict where the pioneers were likely to settle, and would get there first with a "canoe loaded with apple seeds." He looked for a fertile piece of land, and planted apple seeds. By the time the settlers arrived, he would have young apple trees ready to sell, "at five or six cents apiece."

In addition to the apples, he carried the seeds of many medicinal plants. He befriended the local Native Americans, bringing them hard cider medicinal plants for healing. Legend has it he freed a wolf he found snared in a trap, nursed it back to health, and raised it as a pet. There are several tales about Johnny Appleseed showing mercy to venomous creatures such as rattlesnakes, spiders, and yellow-jackets.

According to an account by Henry Howe in 1830, "One cool autumnal night, while lying by his camp-fire in the woods, he observed that the mosquitoes flew in the blaze and were burnt. Johnny, who wore on his head a tin utensil which answered both as a cap and a mush pot, filled it with water and quenched the fire, and afterwards remarked, 'God forbid that I should build a fire for my comfort, that should be the means of destroying any of His creatures.' Another time he made his camp-fire at the end of a hollow log in which he intended to pass the night, but finding it occupied by a bear and cubs, he removed his fire to the other end, and slept on the snow in the open air, rather than disturb the bear."

By 1806, John Chapman had been officially nicknamed "Johnny Appleseed" and legends about him began to spread far and wide. There are first-hand accounts left by many settlers who welcomed him into their homes. They gave him a meal and a place to sleep in exchange for apples, apple trees, and tales of the new frontier. By the 1830s, he was operating a chain of nurseries that reached from western Pennsylvania through central Ohio and into Indiana.

With the religious Restoration Movement of the 1800s, conservatives preached the evils of alcohol, and encouraged prohibition. As a result, American settlers stopped drinking apples and started eating them in the early 1900s. The apple industry wisely saw the need to re-publicize the apple. "An apple a day keeps the doctor away" was made into an advertising slogan, promoted by apple growers fearful that prohibition would drastically cut sales.

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President's Message

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- The Academy, with our European partners, is negotiating our renewal agreement with Taylor and Francis, publishers of *Clinical Toxicology*.

Greg Gaar is closing out the books on his time as Treasurer and, as is routine, we will have an audit. I hope that Marty Caravati will be able to provide an end of year 2006 statement in the Spring, after approval at the mid-year Board meeting. From the 2005 statement, the current account statement we saw at the 2006 Board

meeting, and the huge success of NACCT 2006 San Francisco, I think it is safe to say that we are in good financial shape. The board is looking for input from the members on how to put your money to work for the good of our members (the broadest constituency) and our profession.

Thank you for the trust you put in me as AACT President. Please contact me, or the individuals named above, if you have comments or ideas about any of our activities or goals.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah and Happy New Year!

Johnny Appleseed: Folk Hero or Toxic Legend?

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It has been suggested that Johnny may have had Marfan syndrome because of his slim appearance and extra-long limbs. Harper's described him as "small and wiry". Johnny

however, did not die of cardiac complications but from "winter plague"—presumably pneumonia. Who knows if Johnny ever masticated a sample of his apple seeds unknowingly producing a toxic exposure to cyanogenic glycosides? At age 70, he was buried in Fort Wayne, Indiana in 1845.

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