



The CFPC's Mount Rushmore

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Philatelists, take note. If Gracie Allen was right that "The President of today is just the postage stamp of tomorrow," the College of Family Physicians of Canada has an extremely valuable stamp collection. From the first President, Murray Stalker in 1954, we have been blessed with 55 outstanding family physicians and human beings holding the highest office in our organization.

To become President, one must be recognized by one's peers as an exceptional leader and an outstanding physician for whom patients are central to every task; someone who will represent the interests of family medicine, family physicians, and patients with intelligence, skill, wisdom, honesty, integrity, strength, compassion, humour, a sense of fairness, an appreciation of collaboration, and a belief in and commitment to our principles.

The first President I had the privilege to work beside when I became the College's Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer in 1996 was Jean Pierre Despins. J.P., as he was known, embodied the characteristics noted above to a T. When he passed away suddenly in 2000 at the young age of 44, the College established the Jean Pierre Despins Award, which is now presented in his memory each year to an outstanding family physician who has represented the issues or concerns of family doctors and their patients with attributes that defined J.P. Despins.

Each of the Presidents since 1954 has contributed something unique to the history of our College and our specialty. They have brought a range of perspectives to the leadership table gleaned from solo practices in remote and rural communities and multiphysician groups in our largest cities. Some have been academic leaders, dedicated to undergraduate or postgraduate teaching and research; others have been trailblazers, introducing innovative strategies to models of primary care and family practice. All have been medical doctors loved by their patients. All have been compassionate, caring people who have never forgotten their primary commitments to their families and friends. All have been role models for our discipline. Our College has been fortunate and proud to have them representing Canada's family doctors. Their accomplishments are too numerous to include in this

article—but they are archived in our files and some are highlighted in books like *Strength in Study: An Informal History of The College of Family Physicians of Canada*¹ and *Patients First: The Story of Family Medicine in Canada*.²

Before serving as national Presidents, most have contributed substantially within the College by serving on national or chapter boards and committees, as teachers and researchers in departments of family medicine across the country, as leaders in other medical associations or health care settings, and as busy doctors caring for patients. There have been Presidents from every province with an almost even split between urban and rural physicians.

Identifying our Presidents begins each year with the Nominating Committee seeking nominations from across the country. The individual selected by the committee is presented first to the board and then the members at the Annual General Meeting—where further nominations are also accepted. Most often, the physicians elected as Presidents by the members have already served on the board and the national Executive Committee for several years, which helps them gain important experience and confidence to address the priorities of our members. Once in office, our Presidents commit between 130 and 160 days per year away from their practices and homes.

As a long-standing family physician member of our College, I am indebted to every one of our 55 Presidents. As Executive Director since 1996, I recognize how fortunate I have been to work beside those who have been our Presidents during my tenure. Thank you to J.P. Despins (St-Léonard-d'Aston, Que), Cheri Bethune (St John's, Nfld), Nick Busing (Ottawa, Ont), Francine Lemire (Corner Brook, Nfld), Peter Newbery (Hazelton, BC), Don Gelhorn (Hudson Bay, Sask), Dominique Tessier (Montreal, Que), Peter MacKean (Kensington, PEI), Rob Wedel (Taber, Alta), Alain Pavilanis (Montreal, Que), Louise Nasmith (Toronto, Ont), Tom Bailey (Victoria, BC), Ruth Wilson (Kingston, Ont), and Sarah Kredentser (Winnipeg, Man).

What an incredible collection!



References

1. Woods D. *Strength in study: an informal history of the College of Family Physicians of Canada*. Mississauga, ON: College of Family Physicians of Canada; 1979.
2. Solomon S, Taylor P. *Patients first. The story of family medicine in Canada*. Toronto, ON: Key Porter; 2004.

Cet article se trouve aussi en français à la page 1639.