

Accounting Hall of Fame

Testimonial to Oliver Paul Cormier,

BComm, MBA, CA, FCA, concerning his outstanding achievements in university education, professional education, and professional service.

Given by J. Patrick O'Neil, Partner, Price Waterhouse.

Inducted May 11, 1992.

Paul's educational and professional background help to explain his ability and capacity to contribute in these areas. Paul is a native Haligonian and except for four or five years has spent his entire 65 years in Halifax. Paul graduated from Saint Mary's University with a Bachelor of Commerce degree, awarded summa cum laude. That was 48 years ago, almost to the day, and knowing Paul as well as I do, I'd bet he could recall in detail the message he delivered in his valedictory address.

Unlike most Saint Mary's graduates who pursue a career in the C.A. field, Paul did not head directly to a CA firm to pursue his training. He went straight to industry and became Chief Accountant at W.H. Schwartz and Sons. After a three year career in industry, Paul attended Harvard University, graduating with distinction from the M.B.A. program. Upon returning to Halifax, Paul entered the C.A. program while articling with Lee and Martin, Chartered Accountants. In 1953, he earned his C.A. designation, and yes, you guessed it - the highest marks in the Province. After six years of public practice, Paul felt the pull of the real world again and returned to industry with J. & M. Murphy Ltd. in Halifax as controller for 4 years. For the next 4 years, Paul worked in Internal Audit with Burrough's Business Machines in Detroit and as Assistant Controller in Toronto.

This brief tour of the early years explains Paul's interest in and love for the areas of Management Accounting and Cost Accounting. For the next ten years, Paul contributed greatly to the education of students and fellow faculty alike in his role as Professor of Accounting at Saint Mary's University. For five of those years, Paul was the Chairman of the Department of Business Administration and during that time provided the leadership and vision which enabled the University's programs in Accounting, Business Administration and Commerce to blossom. When I use the word "blossom" I mean more than growth in numbers. I mean more particularly a growth in quality. Paul built upon the foundation so well established by the all-star Dean of the Faculty - Dr. Harold Beazley. Paul brought many courses here to the program for the first time and he restructured and trimmed those which were no longer appropriate.

There are many hundreds of graduates who can recall the challenge of having to pass Paul's "Cost" course in order to graduate.

Paul's contribution in professional education would make one wonder if he was not doing that full time. I am sure that Barbara can explain that Paul's best loved hobby was "work." Whether it was at the University of for APACA, Paul worked tirelessly to strengthen accounting education in Atlantic Canada. The strengthening was designed not only to make the program more comprehensive and more in depth so as to improve its quality, but also to ensure that students were better prepared to face the national exam standards. The real test, however, is the marketplace, and how well educated and trained young men and women are to be accountants, auditors, business advisors, etc. and we all know how well Saint Mary's graduates and APACA graduates have done over the years. These accomplishments of many are in no small measure due to the educational infrastructure, Paul, along with others, developed and established.

Back in 1965, Paul introduced one of the first final examination seminars in this region and that was the beginning of a major contribution by Paul to the whole APACA system and course of studies. Paul could be found teaching courses, writing course materials for correspondence courses, leading final exam seminars, preparing and marking exams. For several years, Paul served as the Educational consultant to APACA with responsibilities for program co-ordination, course development and liaison with universities.

I had the pleasure to work with Paul at Saint Mary's and in the APACA program and one of my most memorable experiences was to work with Paul, and others, on a presentation to the UFE Study Group of CICA when they were considering the introduction of the comprehensive type case exam. My recollection was of the effort that was made under Paul's direction to provide that committee with not only our concerns but also with possible alternatives and with suggestions for minimizing any negative impacts. We worked long and hard on that presentation even though it was very much a volunteer effort on our part. As full-time educators, Paul believed we had a responsibility to be doing our best to assist the profession in these matters. I remember how proud we felt, when later, word was passed along that the most helpful and insightful document the committee received had come from a few faculty members at Saint Mary's.

In 1974 Paul took a dramatic turn and left education to join the Office of the Auditor General of Nova Scotia. Paul became Auditor General in 1984 and recently retired after 17 years of public service to the people of Nova Scotia. In addition to carrying out responsibilities of that office, Paul initiated a number of changes within the office. Included among those changes

was the introduction of a comprehensive training and development program to ensure that professionals working in the office had experience and training on par with that offered by other practicing offices licenses to provide CA student training. Paul headed up all of the special assignments that were undertaken in the office and this later led to his initiatives in the areas of comprehensive and value-for-money auditing in the province.

In 1974 Paul authored a submission to the Independent Review Committee on the Office of the Auditor General of Canada. Once again Paul put quality at the top of the list - the best submission the Committee received came from the Auditor General of Nova Scotia.

The media would have us believe the role of the Auditor General is properly one of digging out the most notable examples of things gone wrong in the last twelve months. Paul had a great appreciation for the benefit that could be provided to all by trimming problems in the bud. The unheralded work of that office is the advice and recommendations that are given to senior government officials concerning weaknesses, etc. that can be corrected before things go awry. If there are no great horror stories, we can take comfort that they are being headed off early.

The list of Paul's contributions goes on and on. In the area of community service:

- Board of Governors - Saint Mary's University
- Alumni Association - Saint Mary's University
- Halifax Infirmary - Board of Governors
- St. Vincent de Paul Society - President
- Canadian Comprehensive Auditing Foundation - Board of Directors
- Waegwoltic Club - Board of Directors

Paul's love for education, accounting and professional matters has more than rubbed off on others. Paul and his wife, Barbara, have three sons and you can guess the career path and professionals they have chosen. Greg, David and Tom all have Bachelor of Commerce degrees. Greg is a C.M.A. working with Revenue Canada; David also is a C.M.A. with Nova Scotia Power Corporation, and Tom is a C.A. with the Bank of Bermuda. We are pleased that Barbara, Greg and David are able to be with us this evening and join with all of us in recognizing Oliver Paul Cormier's outstanding achievements in university education, professional education and professional service.

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