

The Robert Burns Association of North America AGM & Annual Conference.

The Halton / Peel Burns Club and the Robert Burns Society of Doon jointly hosted the RBANA Annual Conference and AGM in the Novotel Mississauga on the 29th, 30th & 31st May 2009. The attendance was lower than expected. The recession, badly affected pensions of many US members, and commitments to “Visit Scotland” were the reasons regular attendees gave for passing on this year’s meeting. We had 49 registered delegates with a turnout of 71 at the Friday evening Ceilidh and 64 at the Saturday formal dinner.

We were honoured by the attendance of The World Federation President Bill Dawson and the first Vice President Mike Duguid, as well as former President, Jim Robertson and his wife Eileen. We had representatives of clubs from Halifax Nova Scotia to San Diego California. The weekend began with the usual round of golf for the “keener types” and the winner of the day was Alex Crawley, who made great “sport” of **not** “fudging” the numbers, even though he was the handicapper. The Friday night dinner took the form of a Burns Supper and our Guest of Honour was the speaker of the Ontario Legislature the Rt. Hon. Steven Peters, who also had been the Ontario representative at the Scottish Govt. Burns Supper in Edinburgh. The Immortal memory was delivered in grand style by Leslie Strachan.

Tony Grogan addressed the haggis & the toast to the lassies & the reply were humorously delivered by Alex & May Crawley. Following the meal the entertainment took the form of a Ceilidh. Many of our registrants performed their “party pieces”, with music provided by our own folk trio “Itsjustus”. We were fortunate to have 3 pipers registered and each played a selection for the company, Bob Ritchie from Halton/Peel, Eileen Robertson from London Ontario and Ian McIsaac from Halifax N.S.

There was a raffle held during the evening, the main item being a 250th anniversary special edition bottle of Robert Burns Whisky, donated by Frank Campbell our RBANA President. On Saturday morning the AGM was held in the hotel. Responsibility for the RBANA website was transferred from Jock Smith of the Milwaukee Club to Ron Ballantyne of the Halton/ Peel Club.

The ladies were able to visit the huge Square One shopping centre close by the Hotel



Rt. Hon Steven Peters & Itsiustus



David Murray Receiving the Jim Connor Memorial trophy from Elma Connor. Jim Cunningham was M.C.

In the afternoon, two study sessions were presented by Halton/ Peel: “Burns and the French Revolution” by Alan McKenzie and “What did Burns really say when he addressed his troops at Bannockburn” by David Murray, and also the Jim Connor memorial Burns Quiz. There had to be a lengthy quiz tie-breaker, between David Murray and Leslie Strachan to determine the winner, David. Ronnie O’Byrne then offered a preview of the CD provided to each registrant. It contains 18 Powerpoint presentations developed for Halton/ Peel club meetings and were offered as a sharing with other Burns Clubs for their programming. The Formal dinner on Saturday evening was well received. We had entertainment from two well known singers from Toronto, David Campbell and Kathryn Domoney. Joan Ballantyne Hynes, provided the musical interludes and music for dancing. Frank Campbell, President of RBANA thanked the organizing committee: Chairman Jim and his wife Jean Cunningham, Chrys & Ron Ballantyne and Ronnie O’Byrne, for their efforts in putting the conference together.

A bottle of special 12 year old whiskey, donated by Famous Grouse, was raffled for charity. A cheque for \$600 Canadian was given to the President of the Scottish Studies Foundation, David Hunter. The Foundation Supports the Scottish Studies Program at Guelph University in Ontario

On Sunday Morning a special service was held in the Hotel, led by Rev Sheila Murray, a United Church of Canada Minister, from Toronto, who is of Nova Scotian heritage and a Burns Lover. She brought her own organist and led us in a moving and appropriate worship service with appreciative references to Burns.

The service was followed by an excellent sandwich lunch before we all dispersed.

The final accolade to the weekend was a comment by an American Director of RBANA, Ted Hirtz, "As we say in Texas: You Done Good –you Done Good !"

The 2010 RBANA conference will be hosted by the San Diego club and will be aboard the Royal Caribbean Cruise Liner *Radiance of the Seas*, a 5 night cruise to Cabo San Lucas Mexico from May 3rd. to 8th.



RBANA President Frank Campbell (left) & the Organizing Committee



The Famous Grouse Prize is awarded to Alan McKenzie by Chrys Ballantyne, David Hunter, President of the Scottish Studies Foundation, looks on.