



# OACETT and engineering technology are about people

by Dennis Furlan

Every year, a number of OACETT members pass away, some after retirement and some before. Among this fine class of talented individuals are Bruce Wells, C.E.T., honorary member, and William Lobb, C.E.T., who, like the others, gave extraordinarily to their profession. We recently learned a little more about Bruce and William and are celebrating their accomplishments with you now.

## Bruce Wells, C.E.T.

Bruce Wells, C.E.T., was an active OACETT member for 29 years, having served as executive director from 1998 to 1999, was the president of the Fletcher Foundation from 1999 to 2001, as well as being involved in overseeing government affairs, OACETT services, administration, strategic communications and PEO/OACETT management.

“Bruce was a stabilizing force within OACETT for decades,” says Arjun Rana, C.E.T., who served as president of OACETT from 1994 to 1995 and worked closely with Wells. Rana continues, “I was a short-term elected official responsible to the members, but Bruce knew long term what could and couldn’t be done. His guidance was incalculable.”

One of Wells’ greatest attributes was his ability with people. His wife of 53 years, Dorothy, provides some insight. She says, “Bruce came from an accounting background, but when he started meeting people in engineering technology, he became hooked. He loved the diversity in the field and meeting people within it from across Canada.”

### A way with people

Rana concurs that Wells had a way with people that was almost unmatched in the industry and told a story to demonstrate just that. He says, “I’ll never forget the time that Bruce introduced me to the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, Hal Jackman. Here we were in the Lieutenant Governor’s office. It was incredible. And the Lieutenant Governor ended up being an honoured guest at OACETT’s first standalone awards gala. It’s something I’ll never forget.”



Bruce Wells, C.E.T. at the OACETT headquarters.



From left to right: Bruce Wells, C.E.T., Walt Spence, C.E.T., past-president and life member, and David Holmes, C.E.T., life member.

Rana continues, “Bruce’s way with people was crucial for OACETT. It wasn’t just about the Lieutenant Governor. Bruce was able to raise the profile of our industry that grew the Association, and brought meaningful development to the field of engineering technology. We all know that engineering technologists can be somewhat introverted. But Bruce was the opposite. He was the perfect guy for us.”

But appearances can often be deceiving. We all have our flaws, and Dorothy Wells sheds some light in that regard on her husband. She says bluntly, “Many years ago, Bruce was an alcoholic. You wouldn’t know if you worked with him, but it definitely affected him personally.”



One of Bruce Wells’ (left) greatest assets was providing continuity to OACETT by establishing important relationships with the association’s presidents such as Bruce Foden (right).

### A life-changing moment

Wells continues, “So, we gave Bruce an intervention. We needed the permission of OACETT at the time because the intervention involved Bruce having to take some time off his duties with the Association, and OACETT was terrific in that regard. The intervention ended up being successful. I ended up getting back the man I had married.”

Making use of his rehabilitated and rejuvenated self is something Wells did for many years until his passing. Rana says, “Bruce was a wonderful man who worked extremely hard, provided consistency from one president to the next, and ensured that the actions of OACETT always benefitted the membership.”

His wife, Dorothy, provides some more personal insight into Bruce Wells, the man. She says, “He was a very caring person. He was concerned about people and very family-oriented.”

“And he was really my biggest supporter. No matter what I did, he always put me in the best light. That’s something I’ll never forget about him.”

**William Lobb, C.E.T.**

In 2013, William Lobb, C.E.T., received recognition for having served in OACETT for 40 years, having joined in 1974. During his decades of work in the industry, Lobb specialized in construction, specifically in project supervision, inspections and contract administration, having notably served in various capacities on projects in Africa that brought preciously-needed water to communities in need.

The work Lobb was a part of in Ghana in the late 70s and early 80s was considered pioneering for its time. Alan Foy, who worked for W.L. Wardrop & Associates with Lobb in Ghana, explains. He says, “At that time, in the late 70s, the state of rural hand pumps was abysmal.”

Foy continues, “We would get the pumps, install them, and they’d only last a few weeks. So we ended up doing the largest field test of rural hand pumps at the time, and Bill supervised that. The results were so successful that, in about 1980, the World Bank instituted a similar field test. So, this was truly pioneering work at the time to bring fresh water to people in poor, rural areas around the world.”

**Pioneering work, and more**

But the work didn’t merely involve hand pumps, William’s wife Angela Lobb says, “In 1976, William packed us all up, including his six-year-old daughter, Kirsten, for the water-supply project in the upper region of Ghana in West Africa. The project scope included a large-water treatment plant, water



Daily activity at a village well site near Bolgatanga, Ghana, where even the animals came for drinking water, and William Lobb (left) was more than happy to oblige.



A water drilling rig in operation near Sokoto, Nigeria, was a major source of attraction, and hope for local villagers.

storage tanks, management, and technical support and implementation.”

Angela provides some insight into the kind of manager and person William was. She says, “Bill was a strict ‘abide by the contract’ man on the job. He did not tolerate shoddy workmanship. The job was to be done the best way possible under the circumstances, even if it was only a concrete pad for the village hand pump.”

Angela adds, “We went back to Ghana in 1997, accompanied by Mr. Foy, and Bill saw the water treatment

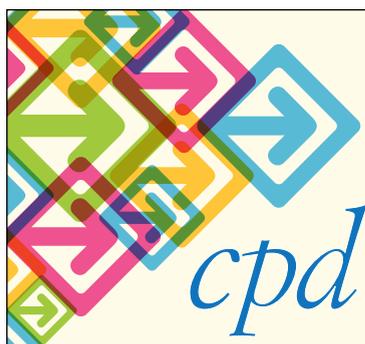
plant in full operation. One of the staff members recognized him and saluted him in appreciation. What a wonderful and kind gesture.”

**A professional, a husband, and a father**

Kirsten Porteous is the daughter of William Lobb, who passed away in August 2020. Porteous has fond memories of her “Papa,” as she used to call him. She says, “When he was first presented with the opportunity to go overseas, he was kind of ahead of his time. He consulted his wife, and even me as a child, before saying yes.”

Porteous continues, “He was simply a great guy, always encouraging, and would rarely get upset but, when he did, it’s because he wanted me to take responsibility and be independent. He wanted to make sure that I learned everything in life, I needed to take care of myself, and I certainly learned from the best.”

*Dennis Furlan is a contributor with The Ontario Technologist.*



**NEW CPD AUDIT BEGINS**

The end of another year means the beginning of a new Continuing Professional Development audit. **This audit affects members belonging to the January 1, 2018 – December 31, 2020 cycle who would have earned certification in 2017.**

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