

The Canadian Identification Society Conference 2005

Shirley's case has taken me across the world to a number of conferences but '**Ridges 'n' the Rockies**' in Calgary will remain in the memories of my wife Mairi and myself for a very long time to come.

We had hardly landed when we were off to the world renowned '**Calgary Stampede**' a breathtaking celebration of Canada's past and present. This spectacular event must be unrivalled for its sheer scale and excitement.

After a couple of days settling in **presentation day** arrived and I faced a packed house. Any apprehension I was feeling was soon dispelled as my audience displayed a remarkable knowledge of Shirley's case and overwhelming support for my argument that SCRO's failure to speak the truth and admit its mistakes represented a much greater threat to the profession than did any outside critics. As the Canadians work towards developing **national standards for fingerprint identification** it was made clear to me that Shirley's experiences are an important motivation for ensuring that **openness and accountability** are central to any national system.

Such was the level of support that I was moved to comment that given that it was fingerprint 'experts' who had caused Shirley's trauma it was remarkable that with the conference experts I felt among friends. The warmth of support for Shirley was clear and there was a determination that the **cultural, philosophical and methodological weaknesses** shown by SCRO have no place in a modern fingerprint service.

The conference boasted a number of internationally renowned experts including **Pat Wertheim**. In addition to livening up my session with his knowledge of the **Shirley McKie and Marion Ross misidentifications** Pat gave an illuminating presentation on how the '**Daubert**' ruling had affected expert testimony and made it absolutely essential that all experts were, '**knowledgeable and articulate in the scientific bases of fingerprint identification**'.

A few hours after my presentation ended and just as I was looking forward to attending some of the other conference presentations I rather quickly exchanged the peaceful ambience and luxury of the **Coast Plaza Hotel** in Calgary for the somewhat more urgent and austere surroundings of the emergency room in the **Peter Lougheed Centre**. Diagnosed with a serious blood infection I was soon enjoying the services of the Calgary Ambulance Service as they delivered me to the **Rockyview General Hospital** for specialist treatment.

Six days later I emerged into the Canadian sunshine shaken if not stirred and very thankful for the skills of the Canadian Health Service and for the **support of the conference organisers**. From the moment I entered hospital Mairi's every need was taken care of. She found a new 'home' with 'Olive' and transport was on hand as she travelled to and from the hospital.

While passing on our sincere thanks to everyone at the conference special thanks are due to **Mary Beeton** the CIS President and conference organisers **Bruce Saunders, Doug Phillips and Bill Sturgeon** who were unstinting in their support of Mairi and myself. Thanks for the flowers, thanks for the hospitality but above all thanks for your **kindness and humanity** at a very difficult time.

Mairi and I are sorry our conference involvement was limited but we saw a side of **Canada and the Canadians** that perhaps only adversity can reveal. We look forward to returning to Canada, renewing the friendships made and to seeing the wonderful scenery that was so tantalisingly viewed from the hospital windows.

As we move towards settlement negotiations and hopefully revelation of what really happened within SCRO Shirley and all our family continue to value the support received from Canada and across the fingerprint world. **Please continue with that support** and ensure that lessons will be learned and that the important crime prevention and detection potential of fingerprinting is not jeopardised by the actions of a few experts within SCRO.