

Biology Symposium

March of 1996 members of the UPEI Biology Club attended the annual Atlantic Universities Undergraduate Biology Conference held on the campus of UNB in Fredericton, N.B. Accompanying the students (Johnathan Spears, Mark Grimmet, Cindy Radix, Sylvie Desormeaux, Andrew Walsh, Karen Schoenrank, Lisa Proffitt, Scott MacNeil, and Jennifer Morrison) were Kevin Bustard, Mark Powell, and Dr. Jim Kemp, who teach a variety of courses in the Biology Department.

Friday night was registration at the Biology headquarters on the UNB campus. It was an opportunity for the students and professors to meet fellow students and colleagues from the other Atlantic universities. Students and professors retired early in order to prepare for the next day's activities and student presentations.

There are two categories of student presentations. The first is a poster presentations. Basically the poster provides an overview of the area in which research was conducted, presents the results obtained and then comments on the significance of the results. Mark Grimmet and Johnathan Spears both prepared posters describing the results of experiments that they had been working on during the fall of 1995/96. Mark carried out his research under the guidance of Dr. Christian Lacroix in the Biology department. His poster discussed seedling development of white cedars as observed by scanning electron microscopy. Johnathan Spears prepared a poster of his research on trout with different sized red blood cells and the efficiency of their uptake of oxygen. Johnathan had been doing his research as part of a special studies course with Mark Powell, who teaches the cell and animal physiology courses at the university.

The second category of presentations was an oral presentation. This type of presentation involves the use of overheads and slides in order to describe an experiment to a group of students and professors. The presentations last 12 minutes and they are judged by a panel of professors. Scott MacNeil and Andrew Walsh both gave paper presentations at the conference. Scott had done work on kestrel feeding patterns on P.E.I. The work is part of Scott's honours thesis and the field work was

carried out in the summer of 1994 after his third undergraduate year. Scott works with Dr. Donna Giberson in the Biology Department. Andrew presented the results of experiments carried out in the lab of Dr. Marc Beauregard in the Chemistry Department. The research dealt with the stability of protein folding intermediates of urease, an enzyme used in diagnostic kits to test for kidney malfunction.

Saturday night there was a banquet for everyone, after which most of the students and professors went to the campus pub for a few drinks. It was a great opportunity to talk to other students about their courses, their plans upon graduation. Besides being a chance to make new friends, it was a great way to network and get a lot of information that can only be had from a wide variety of personal knowledge and experiences.

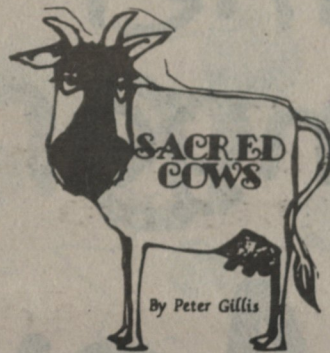
On Sunday there were more presentations and the farewell lunch. At the lunch awards were presented for the paper and poster presentations. Johnathan Spears won the second prize in the poster presentations. While Johnathan was the only prize winner, the other presenters did well and received compliments on their performance from professors and students from the other universities.

All biology majors should consider attending the 1997 conference. For anyone interested in research after undergraduate study it is a great way to learn about graduate studies and get in touch with professors who are doing things you are interested in and who are looking for students. Mark Grimmet was approached by a professor from Memorial University in Newfoundland and was offered a position in his lab for next fall. Johnathan Spears made contact with a professor doing research on the red blood cells of trout. Scott MacNeil met his proposed supervisor met some of the graduate students at UNB and learned more about graduate studies. Andrew Walsh had already decided on a lab in Guelph, but nevertheless enjoyed talking to people doing research in the area.

The conference also highlights the importance of undergraduate research. Given

the number of students trying to get into professional schools and the impending closure of some of these professional schools, students should give serious consideration to the possibility of graduate studies upon completion of the B.Sc. The best time to start getting research experience is at the undergraduate level. The Biology Department at UPEI offers an honours degree whereby biology students spend a part of the summer after their junior year doing research under the supervision of one of the

professors in the department. Doing an honours project is a requirement for admission to some of the graduate studies programs and it gives the student who has done the project the leg up on someone who has not. Not to say that you need this honours project to get into graduate school, but it certainly helps. If time will not allow for the summer-time commitment necessary for an honours project, there is always the one semester or full year special studies project, which once again requires the



I've been reading a lot about the abortion debate over the last few weeks. The main question these days seems to be whether Dr. Morgentaler is a new-age hero or the anti-Christ finally sent among us. It's a crazy debate, this little argument over abortion. There is no fence-riding here. You are either pro-this or anti-that; these are words that leave little room for shades of gray.

It's all part of a verbal arsenal each side has amassed in their fruitless efforts to dominate the other. The best weapons are the "rights", those indisputable catch-phrases, that each group pulls out of some bottomless bag and throws around like cheap cigars. "The right of the fetus to live" versus "the right of the woman to choose." "The right to life" versus "the right to freedom." Higher and higher this moral cyclone has twisted until it reached the frenzy of God and guilt that we have today.

Yup, quite the little argument. Almost as meaningless as it is worthless. You see, what the moralists and freedom-fighters have all forgotten is that abortion takes place in the "real world", where real facts and questions exist. Here are three of them.

Fact: it is common women and men who are affected by abortion. (Yes it does affect men too.) Not the priests who condemn them for their sins, and not the political activists who use them as a tool to win another point. It is your neighbour's sixteen year old daughter who is watching her dreams disappear before her eyes. It is the mother of five, trapped in poverty, who has watched her husband abandon his responsibilities; and the working woman who has prioritized career over family, removing the abortion debate from the people involved merely makes the whole process empty.

Fact: fetuses are being destroyed along with any potential future they have. Why? Is it guilt? Fear? Is it due to a society so fixated on success that it has sacrificed the family to material wealth and gain? Or does it stem from a society that has given up on the poor and accepted them as a necessary evil? Solve these riddles and you may find the abortion debate will disappear on its own.

Then there is the harshest fact of all: right or wrong, legal or illegal, women are going to have abortions regardless. Shall they do it in a world that protects their health

supervision of a professor in the department.

Another exciting feature of the conference is witnessing students present results and give talks on work they have done. It breaks down the barrier between student and professor and lets students know that they too are professionals. Fellow students become colleagues and the hierarchy of the academic world is somewhat softened for the weekend. Everyone with a love of science can enjoy the conference and add something to the other participants' experience. All the students who attended the conference found it a valuable experience and, of course, a lot of fun.

and offers to heal a broken spirit? Or shall we continue to make them sneak off to back-alleys and suffer degradation, pain, and humiliation? That is a question you will have to answer for yourselves.

The pro-life side may attack my morality, telling me that we must teach women who desire abortions the evil of their acts, and thereby eliminate the problem. I am a philosopher, one who has dedicated his life to the ethical search of right and wrong; and will try to teach my results to others. Yet, education combined with force and prejudice is a horror to be avoided at all costs. The pro-choice side may question my "right" to enter the debate at all, being that I am a man. My sex, though, in no way detracts from my arguments.

By the time you read this article, it will be exactly twenty-six years ago that my natural mother gave me up for adoption. I will never forget her willingness to allow me a chance to grow, to love, to hurt, and to experience all the wonders of this beautiful world. However, I will never, ever judge the women who choose to follow a different path. I leave judgement to God and the demagogues involved in this "little" debate. I am merely a man, one who lives in the real world.

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