

H. D. "Buzz" Woods
NAA President 1976

Remembrances by Rolf Valtin
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Soft-spoken Canadian with a keen intellect. Not as tall as Cy Ching (the first FMCS Director and a Canadian by birth who was 6'7" – or 5'19" as Peter Seitz used to refer to it), but I saw them as alike in that each of them was a very good listener to whom one intensively listened when he finally spoke because his comebacks were brief and trenchant.

He was the first of three Canadians who have served as Academy President, and he was President-Elect in "my" year, allowing me to get to know him well. I greatly liked and admired him, and I have the following story to tell: "my" year saw a major departure in Academy affairs when the fight for mandatory dues versus the voluntary selection of one of three dues tiers succeeded after protracted debates both in Board-of-Governors meetings and the general membership meeting; the winning fight came together with the adoption of a generous waiver clause; but whether or not to grant one or another waiver application became a new source of controversy; and on one occasion on which Buzz and I were in a telephone conversation, he said: "I did not anticipate that I, a Canadian, would be presiding over the second American civil war."

The following is an excerpt from Michel Picher's Presidential Address in May 2009:

I am the third Canadian to be honoured with the presidency of this Academy and, believe me, I have had very large shoes to step into. The first Canadian president was H. D. "Buzz" Woods. I think most would agree that his greatest contribution was heading up the massive Canadian Task Force on Labour Relations, which became known as the Woods Commission, whose report in 1969, a report coauthored by a number of others whose names I am about to mention, actually reshaped the Canadian industrial relations and labour law as we know it to this day.

For example, things we now take for granted, like the reverse onus in unfair labour practice complaints and the union's duty of fair representation both came in the wake of the Woods Report. From his chair at the Faculty of Industrial Relations at McGill University, Buzz Woods clearly made a difference, a difference that was well underway by the time he became president of the Academy in 1976.