

REPORT ON DR. CHARLES SIMPSON'S INVOLVEMENT WITH THE IFDS MEDICAL COMMITTEE

By Charles Simpson

I was first made involved in IFDS by David Cook of Victoria, who had been a patient of mine. When I retired he said that as I was a sailor and a neurologist, I should get involved. He pointed out that sailors with neurological diseases were not fairly classified under the system existing then. He was right, and I wrote a detailed letter to IFDS explaining why. It turned out that IFDS was also not happy with the system and was considering revising it. I was phoned and asked at short notice to attend a meeting in the UK, which I did. At the next world championship I was appointed as an International Classifier and to the Medical Committee. I was very involved with the writing of the 2000 Functional Classification System (FCS), particularly as the Dock Test, included in the FCS for the first time, was developed by me and modified by the Medical Committee after three other members came to a meeting in Victoria BC to see the test I had developed. The Silver medal won by David Cook in the Atlanta Paralympics, and my involvement in the Dock Test, significantly raised Canada's profile in IFDS.

In 2001, the Chairman of the Medical Committee, Dr Peter van Aanholt (NED), resigned. Dr Jürgen Schwittai (GER) should have taken over, but did not want to do so at that time for personal reasons, so I was appointed Chairman. I was very involved in the re-writing of the FCS for the 2005 quadrennium. I chaired the Committee until the end of 2006, when Dr Schwittai, took over as I was finding the administrative load too much. However I remained on the Committee as a consultant, because, being retired, I had the time to spend hours reviewing lengthy documents. This was particularly necessary as with IFDS signing an intent to adhere to the IPC Classification Code in Beijing (not signing means not being in the Paralympics), there was a great deal of change needed to the administrative side of the IFDS FCS in order to comply with the IPC Code. The workload was not helped by the IPC producing several versions of the Code, unaccompanied by notes on the changes made between versions and necessitating comparing the whole of two large documents several times. The draft FCS 2009 document was presented by me at the recent IFDS AGM. There are some final revisions to be made and it will be again circulated to the RNAs. The essence of the Functional Classification System is unchanged, but the administrative and documentary side of it is considerably more formal and different in order to comply with IPC.

I trained several National Classifiers, including Dr Jenny Molson of Kingston, whom I encouraged to become an international classifier. This she did a few years ago and she has remained as one and as a member of the Medical Committee since. She has classified at several international events, including the Beijing Paralympics. I will be withdrawing completely from IFDS at the end of this year (too old at 73, too deaf, but not quite too old and deaf to still race my Laser as "visual signals will prevail"!). Canada's presence in IFDS has been stronger than most countries with the two of us involved, and it will still remain as Jenny remains involved.

I shall soon be writing a further report giving my ideas on where Canada should be going in terms of national classification and disabled sailing events.