

## From an outgoing co-president

There are just three areas or subjects which seem to me to have had some significance for YURA during the years that I have been, first, a member of the executive, and then president and co-president.

YURA was only seven years old when Bill Small invited me to join the executive in the fall of 1993. Meetings were held, when space could be found, in a room in the East Office Building. Space was a spare commodity, as were the opportunities for any kind of social activity. The membership was small and YURA hardly seemed to exist between its bi-monthly meetings and its AGM.

Things began to change about 1995, when Virginia Rock became president and was succeeded by Ken Thomson. Both had ideas that were encouraged and supported by Karen Gray. It was Karen who found a small space adjoining the RPC, which led a few years later to formation of a YURA office. Pearl Kroll, who took on the organizing of the first Showcase under the direction of Karen and Ken, gradually turned this small space into both an office and a centre for YURA activity. Though merely a physical development, the office has been crucial in making YURA visible and accessible to both employees and retirees on the university campus.

Secondly, when ARF (now ARFL) was formed in the early 1990s in close association with YUFA, a degree of tension arose, based on the tendency of some retired faculty to think of YURA as little more than an innocuous company union. As president after 1999, I felt this charge was unfair, and I encouraged discussion of pension issues in the interest of all York retirees. The outcome was real debate in YURA on issues such as the rejection of any kind of holdback of pension increments, and support for more effective communication on subjects such as the "shadow pension". There is now an implicit but working collaboration between YURA and ARFL, with ARFL members sitting on the YURA executive. Throughout this period, for both groups the studies and charts of Ken Thomson have been invaluable.

The third change is related to the broad Canadian university scene. The executive of YURA was well represented on the steering committee that created CURAC in 2002, and we found then and since – in wider discussion with representatives from other universities – that York has created structures for pre- and post-retirement employees, both academic and non-

academic, which place it among the most responsive and creative institutions in the country.

Even the best of structures, however, do not work without willing volunteers. It was gratifying to me when Nancy Accinelli joined the executive as co-president in 2005, and I feel an equal pleasure in having joined with Nancy and all members of the executive, in now welcoming Sandra Pyke to function as the new co-president.

*Albert Tucker*

## Comments from the co-president

This has been a busy year for YURA and its members, thanks to the volunteer office staff who keep communications lines open and manage the business of our daily life, to the organizers of our theatre trips, dinner outings, cultural walks like the sculpture tour and the upcoming literary tour of Pioneer Village, and computer and fitness activities. Those who serve us in roles within the university committee structure have been well occupied this year also – representing us by monitoring and contributing to discussions related to pensions and benefits. At our annual AGM we'll be able to acknowledge all of our volunteers in person but now let us just say that they have enhanced our experience as YURA members – and we are all thankful.

Great good thanks also to our friend and mainstay How Chee Un who manages to make life easy for us every day in her administrative role at the Retirement Planning Centre; even more important to us is the friendly face and warm welcome she offers to all members of YURA throughout the year.

As we approach a year-end and a year-beginning which will be noted at the AGM on October 12, there are two changes coming up that affect us all and which I want to take particular note of here: Albert Tucker's term comes to an end as of the AGM on October 12 when he moves into the role of Past President, and Karen Gray (as of September 1) has retired from the Retirement Planning Centre – and York – after 17 years, taking on an active role (we hope) as a YURA member.

Albert Tucker has served YURA since 1993 as a member of the executive, and for the last eight years as its president. As president, Albert has encouraged diversity of opinion, commitment to the highest principles of community spirit and generosity, and the development of new programs to meet our needs. Anyone who has experienced his welcoming remarks or closing statements – at meetings or dinners with the gourmet club, for example – knows that he can elevate

the tone of any event with just the right quotation or anecdote delivered with elegance and warmth.

Karen Gray has eased the way for – perhaps – all of us, if not directly through consultations pre-retirement, then certainly through the programs she has developed for the Retirement Planning Centre over the past 17 years. Karen's inspirational programming has made York's RP Centre not only a success for York, but a model for all universities in Canada (and elsewhere). Karen has had the vision to develop long-range planning, constant reviews of effectiveness in programs and assessment of pre-retirees' needs. Thanks to Karen, York staff can even view best-practice sessions on the web site, if they can't attend a program offering in real time. More importantly to us, she has been a friend and advocate for YURA, and it is really thanks to her that we have an active office, receiving constant support from the Centre.

I know that all members of YURA are grateful to both Albert and Karen for the many ways they have served our needs, filled our minds and delighted our days over the past many years. We're very happy that they will continue to be with us in their new roles.

Your YURA executive looks forward to seeing you at the AGM luncheon and meeting on Friday, October 12.

*Nancy Accinelli*

## **YURA Showcase & Sale**

A Good Reason to Visit the York Campus  
on Wednesday, November 28, 2007  
9 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Location: East Bear Pit,  
just outside the YURA office.

Mark your calendars now!

The Ninth Annual YURA Showcase and Sale will allow you to complete your Christmas shopping early. York retirees will display and offer for sale many unusual items that you simply can't find in stores.

A Hospitality Table will be available to returning York retirees. Get a group of friends together and take time to renew some old contacts. See how dramatically the campus has changed in a few short years.

The Showcase and Sale has attracted a large and enthusiastic following over the years. Our exhibitors thank you for your continued support and encourage you to come and discover the treasures they have held in reserve for this special day.

This year's event will feature:

- Canadiana Antique & Country Furniture
- Original Works of Art

- One-of-a-Kind Jewellery and Hand-Knitted Items
- An Incredible Teddy Bear Blow-Out
- An Exciting Array of Arts and Crafts
- Health regulations permitting, the ever-popular Bake Sale
- And for budget-conscious shoppers, a Garage Sale Spectacular

Since Labour Day, we have been actively planning. Here are some things we could use to make the day a rip-roaring success:

- "Santa's Little Helpers", i.e., volunteers, to perform such onerous tasks as helping with the hospitality table, taking photos, or handing out flyers to promote the event
- Your previously loved quality items for the Garage Sale
- Your suggestions for exhibitors and/or performers whose special talents could add extra lustre to the day.
- And, most importantly, *your presence* and that of your friends to make this annual event a truly authentic family reunion.

For inquiries, contact Noel Corbett at ncorbett@yorku.ca or 905-833-6714, Nancy Accinelli at nacc@yorku.ca, or Mildred Theobalds at theobald@yorku.ca. The YURA office telephone number is 416-736-2100, ext. 70664.

*Noel Corbett*

## **Annual General Meeting and Luncheon**

October 12, 2007  
The Underground Restaurant  
York University Student Centre

YURA members are reminded that the Annual General Meeting will be held Friday, October 12, at 1:15 p.m., preceded by a buffet luncheon (note that reservations are required for the luncheon). Parking passes for The Arboretum parking lot will be available to members who drive at the Registration Desk in the luncheon/ meeting area.

The lunch (served at 12 noon) will be a hot and cold buffet, including coffee/tea and desserts, with a cash bar. The subsidized cost to members is \$10; guests and friends pay \$20.

The full agenda, together with registration information for the luncheon, was sent to YURA members in September.

For further information or to confirm a reservation, please phone the YURA office, 416-736-2100, ext. 70664, or send a note to yura@yorku.ca.

## New Members

YURA is pleased to extend a hearty welcome to 43 new members who have joined since our last Newsletter:

John Allett, Beverly Altberg, Janice Anderson, Ken Anderson, Margaret Banks-McCullough, Gwyneth Buck, Paul Busby, Kathleen Copping, Jane Couchman, Cynthia Craft, Doug Fenwick, William Found, Donald Freeman, Catherine Gartner, Judy Ginsberg, Karen Gray, Fred Hickman, Arlene Hiemstra, Laila Houston, Teresa Iaboni, Ellen MacLean, Edelgard Mahant, Sam Mallin, Roxanne Marcus, Mahmoud Marzouk, Beverly McKee, Sherma Mitchell, Martin Muldoon, Donald Newgren, Norm Noddle, Barry Olshen, Iryna Ostapchuk, Anne Pilgrim, Donald Pilgrim, Janis Roy, Catherine Seedig, Alan Shapiro, Ann Shteir, Patricia Stamp, Susan Swan, Manuela Tatilon, Gill Teiman, Grover Whiten.

## CURAC Annual Conference report

*The College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) held its annual conference in Windsor in May. York retirees were represented by Nancy Accinelli and Janet Rowe from YURA and Chester Sadowski from ARFL. For more information, see the Proceedings on CURAC's web site at <http://www.curac.ca>.*

Nancy Accinelli and I attended the annual conference of CURAC held in Windsor May 23 to 25 and enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas and information with a host of others. The presentations were very well done and we thoroughly enjoyed the banquet at St. Clair College. The two days focused on two of our most pressing issues, Present Trends and Issues in Pension Plans and Strategies for Improving Benefits.

We heard that the same concerns for pension plans affect most people across the country. Defined benefit plans are suffering funding deficits due to the negative returns of 2001-02 and it takes a long time to wipe out the impact. Canadians are living longer which equals higher pension costs and the change to accounting rules affects balance sheets. There is continuing pressure from employers to download the risk associated with pensions from the plan sponsor to the members of the plan.

At one time defined benefit plans were the mainstay of the Canadian pension scene but today pension sponsors see DB plans as less attractive than they were in the past. As always I was very pleased to be a member of a hybrid plan that provides the best of both worlds.

Regardless of the type of plan the presentations at the conference stressed that good governance of a pension plan is key to good performance and creates a sense of confidence in the plan. William Miller of the University of Windsor gave an excellent presentation outlining fiduciary responsibilities and best governance practices. He stressed that, although complex and demanding of our attention, good governance assures that the plan provides the members the expected returns without confusion or mistrust.

On the second day the issues relating to health benefits were addressed. In general we heard that the OHIP system will be able to sustain the baby boomers and that there will not be a long-standing drain on the system, as the boomers will live long and stay in relatively good health until we sicken and die. We heard that the elderly can help reduce the stress on the system by recognizing potential hazards endangering their well-being. Falls and driving with deteriorated vision were seen as two areas that create a burden on the system and both can be avoided.

When the presenters addressed extended health benefits the idea of a flexible plan for retirees was really discouraged. This type of plan requires a large number of people with differing health needs. Retirees often have very similar needs and therefore this strategy for funding should not be considered for retirement health and dental benefits. It was a good point.

With respect to Collaboration and Strategies for Improving Benefits, it was suggested that we talk to YUFA and the governing bodies of the university to keep our issues at the forefront. If we can find a champion within the university to support our cause, one that can apply pressure to the governing bodies, this will improve our chances of changing or upgrading our benefits. And if necessary we can use the media, MPs and MPPs to support us.

There is little to say about retirees' centres: York has it all. Our Centre is held up as an example that all others can strive to achieve. It was an excellent way to end the conference. We left knowing that York really was ahead of all other universities in the country when it came to providing for retirees' needs. In all it was an excellent conference and well worth the drive to Windsor.

*Janet Rowe, June 2007*

## New facility named for Gordon Shepherd

Gordon Shepherd, member of YURA and Professor Emeritus of space science, has been recognized by York and its Centre for Research in Earth and Space Science (CRESS) for his pioneering work in Canadian atmospheric research and leadership in CRESS. Named in his honour, a new facility for air quality research -- the

Gordon G. Shepherd Atmospheric Research Facility -- was formally opened on August 27 this year.

The facility is equipped with laboratories that will allow researchers to test new instruments while measuring the properties of the sky, adding to scientific knowledge about air quality in the lower atmosphere.

Gordon Shepherd came to York as a professor of physics in 1969 and was appointed director of CRESS in 1995, an appointment he still holds. Although he was required to retire in 2000, under policies in effect at the time, he concedes that his retirement has been "unusual." He continues an active research program of developing methods of observing the atmosphere remotely from space. As part of this program, he has a long-standing association with the Research Institute for Sustainable Humanosphere at Kyoto University, where he spent three months as Visiting Professor in 2004. At present he and his wife, Dr. Marianna Shepherd, are spending another four months in Kyoto. Marianna, an Adjunct Professor of Earth and Space Science in CRESS, is currently Visiting Professor at Kyoto, and Gordon continues to pursue his research links there and is completing his second book.

Responding to York's recognition of his achievements, Gordon Shepherd paid tribute to the vision and achievements of his CRESS colleagues Ralph Nicholls, Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus, and Jack McConnell. He added, "I am overwhelmed, very happy and humbled. As honours go, this is the best of the best for there is no greater tribute than to be honoured by peers and graduate students. I thank them and my research colleagues."

Gordon's continuing academic activities do not allow time for many YURA activities, but he acknowledges one important exception – the YURA fitness program. He says:

"It may be noted that I am working, part-time, well beyond the normal retirement age. I do this because I enjoy doing it, and because I'm in good health. In my opinion my good health is due in significant part to the YURA fitness class for seniors that takes place twice per week in our gym. It seems impossible for me to maintain a fitness regime independently, but it is most enjoyable and beneficial to be doing this with like-minded colleagues."

*--with information, in part, from Yfile, York's Daily Bulletin online, August 29, 2007.*

## **Fitness group for retirees**

Many retirees think about getting fit – but do little about it because fitness clubs are both expensive and youth-related. For YURA members, there is the solution chosen by Gordon Shepherd (see story above) -- a

sensible program of gentle exercise designed especially for retirees. A small but enthusiastic group of retirees and spouses turn out each term for the classes, which are led by Rosie Carusi, Manager of Fitness and Lifestyle Programs.

The program consists of two parts: strength training followed by dynamic stretching and postural techniques. Classes meet Mondays and Thursdays from 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m., in the Tait McKenzie Fitness Centre. Spouses, partners, and friends are welcome to join as well as YURA members.

For the current term, classes begin October 1 and will continue through December 10.

Free demonstrations are being held on Monday, September 24, and Thursday, September 27, for people who may be interested in learning more about the program. For further information, call the YURA Office, 416-736-2100, ext. 70664 or e-mail [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca).

## **Thanks to YURA volunteers**

YURA's activities are made possible by the efforts of many volunteers. Among those we thank are the following.

In the office: Pearl Darlington, Ulla Purdye, Barbara Rowe, and Mildred Theobalds. The YURA office is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

The Gourmet Club: Rosemarie Nielsen. Rosemarie organizes a variety of dining experiences throughout the year.

Annual Showcase and Sale: The advisory group includes the office staff, Sheila Creighton, Rosemarie Nielsen, Deanna Jubas, and central organizer Noel Corbett.

Conducted Walking Tours: Pearl Darlington. This year, the tours included John Warkentin's downtown Sculpture Walk in the spring and John Lennox's literary tour of Pioneer Village on October 17.

Theatre Trips: Virginia Rock and Barbara Rowe (trips to the Shaw Festival and Stratford) with Pearl Darlington and Mildred Theobalds.

Fitness and Computer Classes: Mildred Theobalds.  
Newsletter: Barbara Tryfos, editor.

Committee Representatives: Mort Abramson and Janet Rowe (Pension Board of Trustees), Al Stauffer (All University Committee on Pensions), Ken Thomson (Retirement Planning Centre Advisory Board)

Web site: Barbara Rowe.

Our greatest help and assistance comes from How Chee Un, our support person in the Retirement Planning Centre, who gives us continuing help and assistance well beyond the call of duty!

## **A Literary Walk in Pioneer Village**

The next walking tour for YURA members will be "A Literary Walk in Pioneer Village," to be led by English professor John Lennox on October 17. John Lennox is well known to many YURA members for his wide service to the university as well as his eminent scholarship in Canadian literary history. At the time of printing, details for this walking tour are still being arranged. Watch for further information, or contact the YURA Office for details.

### ***Call for information...***

#### **Achievements by YURA members**

Your YURA Executive is interested in knowing if you have recently successfully completed a project: have you published a book, completed a long-term project, or had a gallery opening of your art? Will you share that information with us? We would like to celebrate your achievements in various ways that could include organizing a reading, a book launch, a reception, or whatever is most appropriate to the occasion. Please send a note to [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca) and let us know about your success.

### ***Call for information...***

#### **Data base of volunteers**

YURA is attempting to establish a data base of members who have volunteered or are currently volunteering. The intent is to provide all members with an opportunity to discuss the specifics of volunteering within a particular agency with someone who has actually provided this service. If you are willing to participate in this exercise please send your name and contact information, along with the name of the setting in which you have volunteered, to Sandra Pyke, [spyke@yorku.ca](mailto:spyke@yorku.ca), or to the YURA Office, 101 Central Square, phone 416-736-2100, ext. 70664.

### ***Your suggestions invited ...***

#### **York's 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary**

YURA's executive invites your suggestions for how YURA might mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of York University in 2009. The University is beginning to plan for year-long celebrations with the establishment of several committees.

The committees are exploring a broad range of centrally organized and faculty/department/graduate program-based activities and initiatives with a view to engaging internal and external audiences. Also, York has launched its largest-ever fund-raising campaign, York to the Power of 50, with the aim of raising \$200 million leading up to the anniversary celebrations.

## **Seminars on retiree health benefits**

York's post-retirement health benefits will be the subject of special seminars offered by the Pension and Benefits Office in October and December. Terisa Ducharme, Associate Director of Pension and Benefits, will present an overview of York's health benefits and what happens after retirement. Time will be provided for questions.

On the Keele campus, a session for non-academic employees will be held on Wednesday, October 17, from noon to 1:00 p.m. A session for academic staff and librarians will be Friday, December 14, 10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. On the Glendon campus, a session for both academic and non-academic employees will be held Thursday, October 25, from 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Current employees, retirees, spouses, partners, and guests are all welcome to attend the seminars. For recent retirees who may still be assessing their need for supplementary health insurance, these seminars may be a useful starting point. Programs are designed to fit your needs. When registering, please indicate what you would like to learn.

To register, contact the Retirement Planning Centre at 416-736-2100, ext. 66228, or by e-mail at [retire@yorku.ca](mailto:retire@yorku.ca). Online registration is also available at [www.yorku.ca/retire](http://www.yorku.ca/retire).

## **Post-retirement supplementary health insurance**

Retirees often ask us to address questions about health insurance. Do I need extra travel insurance? Should I consider other kinds of supplementary health insurance? There's no simple answer that applies to everyone. If you have questions, where do you begin?

First, understand your present coverage -- both OHIP and York's post-retirement health benefits. Note that some York employees do not have any retirement health benefits; and for those who do, the coverage is different for each employee group. The Pension & Benefits Office is offering seminars on York's post-retirement health benefits in October and December (see separate story on this page). Also, to review your York retiree benefits, see the benefits coverage booklets, which are posted on the Pension and Benefits web page (or access these from the links on YURA's web page).

Second, be aware of the different types of supplementary coverage that are available. In addition to travel insurance, these include life insurance, disability (for people under age 65 who are still employed), medical and dental, critical illness, long-term care, accident, and best doctors. (Note that in many cases insurance may be available only for people under 70 years of age.)

Third, evaluate your own requirements for supplementary insurance; and finally learn the factors to consider when comparing various plans.

The Retirement Planning Centre offers two informative e-learning seminars: "Topping Up York's Post-Retirement Health Benefits," Parts 1 and 2. These may be accessed on the RPC web site.

All retirees of educational institutions in Ontario are eligible (until the age of 70) for RTIP, the Retired Teachers Insurance Plan, which is offered by OTIP (Ontario Teachers Insurance Plan). For further information, brochures may be picked up in York's Retirement Planning Centre, or see [www.otip.com](http://www.otip.com).

## In Memoriam

The Department of Human Resources has received word of the passing of the following York retirees.

Peter Alley, December 29, 2006  
Douglas Butler, May 20, 2007  
John Buttrick, July 15, 2007  
Gerardo de Bartolo, April 16, 2007  
Donna Cappon (date not reported)  
Richard Cornell, June 22, 2007  
Helen Degutis, December 18, 2006  
Muriel Dodgson, June 2, 2007  
Lloyd Duncan, September 19, 2006  
Pierre Fortier, January 30, 2007  
Alda Gomez, May 24, 2007  
Lorna Goodfellow, March 9, 2007  
Henry Harris, March 13, 2007  
James Hori, May 14, 2007  
John Illek, July 6, 2007  
Pierre Jacot de Boinod, October 5, 2006  
Elizabeth Lander, June 8, 2007  
Joseph Little, August 7, 2007  
Justine Magerman, January 23, 2007  
Gwennyth McLachlan, October 25, 2006  
Alexander McLeod, February 25, 2007  
Phyllis Meredith, January 18, 2007  
Eileen Mooney, July 21, 2007  
James Mavor Moore, December 18, 2006  
William Myers, January 29, 2006  
Chris Paraskevopoulos, May 19, 2007  
Elsie Portelli, November 19, 2006  
Claudette Roberge, October 27, 2006  
Heinz Sammer, September 29, 2006  
Jean Smith, December 9, 2006  
Anne Stretch, July 10, 2007  
James Tenney, August 24, 2006  
Peter Tite, April 5, 2006  
Isabel Williams, February 24, 2007  
Louise Young, July 3, 2007  
Warren Yule, May 9, 2006

## YURA Executive

For information about YURA, contact any of the members of the Executive Committee, or the YURA office.

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