



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association

Fall 2014

No. 29

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

We are writing this in the midst of extraordinarily beautiful, early autumn weather. After our rather cloudy summer, this change is a tonic.

The usual September activities – membership renewal, planning for our Annual General Meeting on Friday October 24, and preparing for Showcase which takes place on Tuesday, November 4 – are our focus these days. You have received or will be receiving information and reminders about each of these events. On your behalf, we want to thank Anne-Marie Ambert for the extra issues of the *YURA Newsletter* and *Person-to-Person*. These publications help to provide the Association with continuity throughout the year and Anne-Marie is very conscientious about trying to make each issue as interesting and informative as possible.

The Shaw theatre trip to Niagara-on-the-Lake took place on October 1. We enjoyed lunch at the Queen's Landing hotel and attended a witty and stylish performance of Shaw's *The Philanthropist*. The spring and fall theatre excursions are two of YURA's consistent activities during the year. Their success depends upon careful oversight and for that we owe Jean Levy thanks. She is meticulous in her attention to the details of the trip and to those who take part in it. On your behalf, we'd like to extend to Jean continuing thanks for ensuring that all is in order. We are very fortunate to have her interest and commitment to this aspect of YURA's annual calendar.

Our new office arrangement is fully functional. As you know, while the YURA office remains in 101 Central Square, much of what How Chee did is now situated in Human Resources and they are doing their best to ensure that the transition is as smooth as possible. In our various communications with you, we have tried to explain the new process as it pertains to membership renewal and parking. There will no doubt be glitches and we ask that you bear with us as we work them out.

We hope that you will mark the dates for the Annual General Meeting (October 24) and Showcase (November 4) in mind. The latter is the one day of the year when YURA becomes highly and literally visible to the University community. Our Attic Treasures and Bake Tables allow us to raise funds in support of the student awards sponsored by YURA. Showcase is – as we have said – the one day of the year that we can show ourselves as a dynamic campus organization which is contributing in a tangible, ongoing way to the work of the University. We need your support if only in your attendance at Showcase. There's strength in numbers. So, if you can, please come and share part or all of the day with your YURA colleagues and friends, and, if you're so inclined, spend some money on gift items or baked goodies. Some members will also be exhibiting their hobbies and that is always of interest.

As always, this comes at this point in the academic cycle with best wishes for a good year. If you have any problems, questions, concerns, please contact us at yura@yorku.ca or at 416-736-2100 ext. 70664. The office – still at 101 Central

Square – is open on the following days and times:

Tuesday – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Wednesday – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday – 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

NOTE: * AGM * Friday October 24 in the Underground. Lunch at noon and meeting at 1:15 p.m. Forms have been sent. We urge you to attend. Please let us know if you have not received your form.

-Janet Rowe & John Lennox

Life as it Was Back Then: Reminiscences

The author of our 9th reminiscence, Sandra Pyke, taught for 36 years in the Dept of Psychology. After retirement, she served as the Co-President of YURA from 2007 to 2011. She is currently the President of CURAC.

It was June 1952 in Saskatoon and my friend Judy and I had just completed grade ten. My mother, who was a proof reader for the local newspaper, the *Star Phoenix*, told us about a summer job opportunity at the Modern Laundry. Next morning, bright and early, Judy and I presented ourselves to the manager. Given that we were just 15 years old and too young to be hired, we lied about our age and also about our plans to return to school in the fall. After a few preliminary questions, we were administered some hand/eye coordination tests. Unfortunately, my performance was slightly better than Judy's so she got the cushy job of feeding sheets into the mangle while I

was assigned the more prestigious task of folding nurses' uniforms.

This establishment was a very large operation, covering most of a city block with a staff of about fifty plus. The main floor housed most of the laundry functions such as huge washers, a wall of dryers, the mangle, shirt irons in the shape of sleeves and collars. Delivery vans could enter the building directly into the basement. Most of the employees on the factory level were middle-aged, immigrant women while the van drivers were all men.

Overlooking the operation of the plant was the managerial office on the mezzanine tier: one wall was all glass and he would stand there perusing the hive of activity below with stop watch in hand. Closer to the action was the forelady--Soph, a most formidable figure. A lunch room for the female employees was located in the basement, right next to the toilets. The unpainted cement walls were decorated with cracks, lighting was an unshaded bulb hanging from a wire. Understandably, this luxurious facility was rarely used with most employees preferring to ingest their meal outside on the loading dock. Judy and I did not make friends with any of the other plant workers since few of the women spoke English and most were the age of our mothers or older.

My duties initially entailed going to retrieve the newly laundered and heavily starched uniforms which were pegged to an aluminum trolley, rolling them to my station which was across the aisle from the dryers, inserting a pin in the bodice, folding the garment, putting a paper tab

around it and placing it on a pile for pickup and wrapping. Putting a straight pin through the starched lapel was akin to pushing a nail through wood without the benefit of a hammer. In no time my thumb was bloody and required first aid. I was expected to complete this cycle at the rate of one uniform per minute in an environment that made Death Valley feel cool.

Since my performance was decidedly unsatisfactory, I was demoted to preparing shirts for ironing and in no time had accidentally rested my forearm on top of the sleeve iron and more first aid followed. A further demotion had me relegated to solitary confinement in the basement to roll down the muddy pant legs and undo the flies of the trousers from the solders in the nearby army camp. The smelly dungarees were dumped in a huge pile on the floor and my sophisticated technique for handling this demanding task was to clamber to the top of the mountain, pull a pair of trousers out from under me, unroll and unbutton and then toss the items onto a new adjacent pile. One afternoon, one of the younger van drivers struck up a conversation. It soon became apparent that he had more in mind than idle chit chat and I found myself racing around the basement, screaming for Soph who arrived in time to save the day. That was the end of my basement shift and I suffered a further demotion to floater.

I left the laundry after a month, deciding that, if what I had experienced there was a valid sample of the working world,

then I would go to school forever. And so I did.

-Sandra Pyke

Help YURA Support Students At York: Showcase 2014

Plan on attending Showcase on Tuesday November 4 from 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. in Central Square. All profits from the Attic Treasures and Bakesale tables are donated to three YURA-supported student awards

Attic Treasures donations: Drop them off at the YURA Office, 101 Central Square, any Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Bake Table donations: Drop them off (with a list of ingredients) at the YURA office on Monday November 3 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. or Tuesday November 4 from 8:30 a.m.

Many thanks for your support.

In Memoriam

Roxanne Marcus	April 8, 2014
Grace Bennett	July 9, 2014
Sylvia Williams	August 14, 2014
William Greaves	September 27, 2014

About Pensions

Members who retired before 2009 received a pension based on the amount of money in their money purchase account in most cases. Those that retired in 2009 or later almost all retired on the minimum guarantee which means they received a lower pension as a percentage of their final

salary. The minimum guarantee makes up for some of the losses suffered in the crash of 2008 but not all of them.

Increases to pensions are based on returns to the pension fund above 6% and are averaged over 4 years. Thus they are not a direct reflection of the market today but are based on what the fund earns. The fund has various types of investments including bonds so it is not tied to a particular market (see the Pension Newsletter for details).

Some members who retired post-crash have received a small increase this year. Whether they will continue to receive increases depends on fund returns in future years which are unknown. Thus there is no way to predict with any certainty if they will continue to receive increases and thus no way to say when they will have 'caught up'. But there is a possibility that this will occur.

While there is some hope that post-2009 pensioners will receive increases which will reflect in some measure the increases in cost of living, there is no hope for pre-2009 pensioners to receive such increases for many years, if ever. That is why I urge these people to live within their present pension in the foreseeable future.

-Al Stauffer

Nice Video on Health

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aUalnS6HIGo>

--Frances Frisken

Race to The Origin

When I first came to Canada in 1960 I found myself put in a box labeled WASP for the first time. I was basically white although liberally covered with yellow to brown spots we used to call freckles, proof of the presence of melanocytes that don't work properly. Anglo-Saxon, I wasn't sure about but had my doubts. Protestant, definitely not. I had been baptized into the Anglo-Catholic church set up by Henry VIII (the protestants came later according to my vicar).

Around age 8 during recess in the junior school playground I was told by an older trio of boys that I wasn't in the race. I wasn't too surprised because I was never very athletic, but it turns out they were talking about "the human race". The joke was on me, but it was very instructive because it gave me the concept of a "human" race and initiated a lifelong interest in language, and the clever use of wording to conceal meaning. I set out to discover why such a simple word could mean more than one thing.

The original "race" appears to come from Old Norse, meaning contest or struggle. It lives on phonetically today as wrestle, or wrassle in the southern US which is closer to old English. Later in the 1500's the second meaning came into English via the wine growing areas of southern Europe where it was used to identify the vineyard which produced the grapes for a particular brew. A useful word, it spread from its original meaning, into a general term for "origin" or "type" of anything and by the 1600's it was even being used to mean a trade or profession, which in most cases was

handed down from father to son and hence did have a sort of origin. Soldier sailor tinker tailor were all examples of race. Today the word “race” would be unlikely to conjure up physical activity as the immediate response, and the playground joke might well be met with legal activity.

Its more modern meaning became entrenched with the advent of the transatlantic slave trade. By then an unofficial agreement had been made within the general European area that, despite continuing wars, slaves would not be not be taken from within that area as had happened since antiquity. This did not stop the Barbary pirates from raiding coastal areas of Europe for white slaves. Nor did it stop a more systematic and organized enterprise being established between Africa, Europe and the New World to replace the potential slave original inhabitants of the Americas who were killed off by imported Old World diseases, to which Africans would be immune. During this period the concept of origin became confused with skin colour and “race” started to have darker and unfounded biological meanings.

In our 1940’s UK schoolyard. we were quite aware of the variety amongst humans. It was the latter days of the “Empire” and we were always reading and hearing about people in far off parts of it. Also, during the war we had black American troops billeted near our school. Unaware that the American military practised segregation (or even what that was) , to us they were “Americans” with chewing gum to hand out. During a postdoctoral stay in the USA I met one of those soldiers working in a garage on my car. I needed to ask

him something about a noise I was hearing, and he recognized me immediately. Like many areas in the UK, my area, Bristol, has a very distinctive accent and he knew immediately where I was from. We had an interesting chat about the war years, and I realized for the first time how strange it must have been for him to come from a place where he experienced discrimination to a place where white kids were asking him for chewing gum !

In retirement I was able to commit time to ancestry research, and I recently obtained a DNA test to detect possible ancestral origins. I was right about not being Anglo-Saxon. It turns out I am 50% Norwegian, 20% northern Mediterranean, and 30% offshore British islands (Celtic/Gaelic possibly). Official records only take me back to the 1830’s by which time all of my ancestors were firmly ensconced in the southern part of the UK. Who would have ever guessed ? And that is the problem with inventing labels for people.

--Clive Holloway

Amazing Grace

After having listened to the African-American version of Amazing Grace included in the Summer Newsletter, Elizabeth Watson sent a link to the Cherokee version which she also likes. It has nice nature photos. Lasts 6 minutes.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=r_-GBZ4UZk8

--Elizabeth Watson

Two Titanic Stories



Unknown Little Boy

On a recent tour of the Maritimes, my tour guide was a Titanic buff and took us to visit a segment of Halifax's Fairview Lawn Cemetery which is the largest Titanic cemetery in the world, with about 120 bodies buried there and about 30 others in the nearby Jewish cemetery. (Halifax had been the centre of the recovery of the bodies although Newfoundland was closer to the sinking: Halifax had rail and road connections to the U.S. and the Titanic's owners had an office in Halifax.)

One of the first bodies recovered was that of a little boy wearing a safety jacket. He could not be identified, even after exhaustive searches, and his tombstone was the top part of what you see above.

With the advent of DNA at the end of the 20th century, search for this little boy's origins began again and his DNA

took the search first to Finland and then to Great Britain and he was finally identified by a great-niece. Then, his name and date of birth were inscribed on the additional plaque placed at the bottom.

Survival Story

Two little boys aged 4 and 2 survived the sinking and were brought to New York. But no one could identify them through the registries of the ship, even though the older boy knew their own names and reported to have been on the Titanic with his father.

Photos of the boys were sent to European newspapers and magazines and a French woman thus came forth as their mother and reported that the father had kidnapped the boys.

Late in the 20th century, a Halifax guide was hired by two elderly men in wheelchairs for a visit to the cemetery. He was astounded when the men told him that they were the two rescued boys. The older one recalled that night quite clearly. Their father had woken them asking if they wanted to play a game. The boys were enthusiastic and the father explained that they had to put a special suit to go and explore a new world. He fitted them with safety jackets and then they all went out to play the "adventure." The father did not make it.

The guide asked them about their having been kidnapped by the father. The older man said that the story was not true, that their parents wanted to emigrate to the U.S., but their mother's own mother was adamantly against this and was one of the reasons why the parents wanted to get away in the first place. It had been agreed that the father and children would

take a fictive name, hence the reason why they could not be identified. The mother had to stick with the kidnapping story after but the boys knew the truth. (I am not sure if mother and boys later migrated to the U.S., as I did not take notes when this story was told by the guide!)

--Anne-Marie Ambert

Humour Department

About Old Age

If old age really did impart wisdom, there wouldn't be so many old fools

--Claudia Young

I'm at an age when my back goes out more than I do.

--Phyllis Diller

Youth would be an ideal state—if it came later in life.

--Herbert Asquith

I'm very pleased to be here, but of course at my age I'm pleased to be anywhere.

--George Burns

Life would be infinitely happier if we could only be born at the age of 80 and gradually approach 18.

--Mark Twain

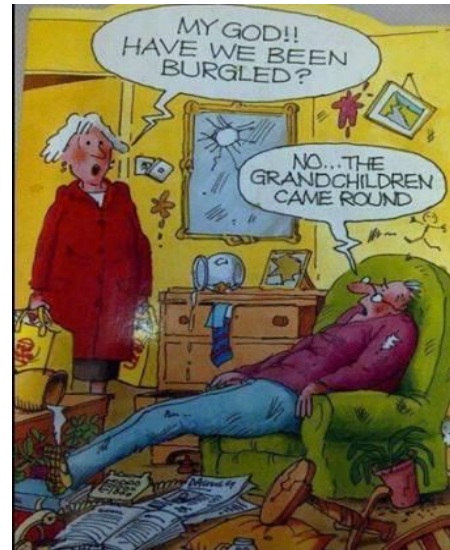
The older I get, the more clearly I remember things that never happened.

--Anonymous

My wild oats have turned to Shredded Wheat.

--Anonymous

(copied from the April *Monitor* of the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives)



YURA Executive

Officers

John Lennox, Co-President
jlennox@yorku.ca
Janet Rowe, Co-President,
janet-R@rogers.com
Sandra Pyke, Past President
spyke@yorku.ca
Gill Teiman, Secretary
gteiman@yorku.ca
Marilyn Cartmill, Treasurer
cartmim@yorku.ca

Members at Large

Sheila Creighton
sheilac@yorku.ca
Jane Crescenzi
gemma.crescenzi@yahoo.ca
Margo Gewurtz
mgewurtz@yorku.ca
Cliff Jansen
jansenc@rogers.com
Jean Levy
levyjr@yorku.ca
Billie Mullick;
bmullick@yorku.ca
Colin Deschamps
colind@yorku.ca
Mildred Theobalds
theobald@yorku.ca
Michelle Young
myoung@yorku.ca

Ex-Officio members:

Al Stauffer, AUCP
stauffer@yorku.ca
Fred Fletcher, ARFL
ffletch@yorku.ca
Anne-Marie Ambert, Editor
ambert@yorku.ca

YURA Office Hours

Tuesday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Wednesday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Thursday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The *YURA Newsletter* is published by the York University Retirees' Association.
Anne-Marie Ambert, Editor.

York University Retirees' Association

101 Central Square, York University
4700 Keele St., Toronto, ON Canada
M3J 1P3

Telephone: (416) 736-2100, ext. 70664

E-mail: yura@yorku.ca

Website: <http://www.yorku.ca/yura>