



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association

Spring 2015

No. 31

Contents

Message from the YURA Co-Presidents.....	page one
Attending the AGM.....	page two
In Memoriam.....	page two
Life as It Was Back Then, Mildred Theobalds.....	page three
CURAC Annual Conference.....	page five
Presenting Shawnette Bankasingh	page six
A True Story Told About Gandhi.....	page six
Good Reads.....	page six
Why Are so Many Children in China Myopic?.....	page seven
Humour Department.....	page seven
YURA Executive.....	page nine
YURA Office Hours.....	page nine

Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

As we write this on a sunny, ice-melting March day, we send congratulations to everyone for surviving this frigid winter – especially February -- and we hope

that the cold and snow are now truly behind us. It’s a fervent hope centred on an unsure certainty (March being what it

is), but hope it is and we're grateful for it.

This will be a short message. We are happy to report on a healthy current membership of 500. Late in January, a letter was sent to all unrenewed members asking them to renew and there was a good response. However, we still have numbers of individuals targeted by that mailing from whom we have not yet heard. Please do take a few minutes to renew your membership. Membership fees represent the only source of revenue for YURA so we need every last member.

As you probably know, YURA supports three student awards: The William Small Award, the Mature Student Award, and the new Graduate Student Award. In this newsletter, you will find a letter of thanks from Shawnette Bankasingh, a recipient of the YURA Mature Student Award, who spoke to the Annual General Meeting in October. Her words articulate the goal of our student award: financial support and personal encouragement. We are grateful that Shawnette has permitted us to publish her remarks in this newsletter.

Shawnette is one of many students who have been the recipients of our student awards. Continuing that support is one of the big reasons for YURA's annual Showcase. All the money raised from the Baked Goods table and the Attic Treasures table goes to these three student awards. Support for Showcase from our members is, therefore, very important to the role of YURA as a contributing, engaged campus organization.

Please accept our best wishes for a warming spring and don't forget to let us know by April 1st if you intend to be part of the group that will be going to Stratford on Tuesday May 19 to see Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Carousel*.

Please feel free to get in touch with us at yura@yorku.ca or at 416-736-2100 ext. 77064. Happy spring.

-Jane Crescenzi & John Lennox

Are there YURA members who would like to attend our October AGM and luncheon **but cannot do so because they would need a ride?**

Perhaps it is too exhausting for you to come by TTC? Or perhaps you use a walker or a wheelchair and a ride would be helpful?

Please let us know and we would try to find volunteers who live in your area so that you can attend. We are a group of retirees and do not want to exclude any of our members from joining us at our AGMs and luncheons.

Please phone the office and leave a message at 416 736-2100, ext. 70664 or email us at yura@yorku.ca

In Memoriam

Arthur Knowles	December 10, 2014
Robert Howard	December 16, 2014
Beryl Vince	December 27, 2014
Dorothy Tanaka	January 2, 2015
Eileen Healey	January 4, 2015
Emil Greflund	February 25, 2015
Fran Bonisteel	February 28, 2015

Life as it Was back then: Reminiscences

The author of our 11th Reminiscences is Mildred Theobalds. Before she retired, she was Co-ordinator of the University's Licensing Program. She has also been a volunteer for YURA and now is a member of the Executive Committee. She has entitled her reminiscences, "My childhood on a tropical island."

I was born on the island of St Lucia, one of many in the beautiful Caribbean chain of islands. In those days St. Lucia was still a part of the British Empire; independence was attained in 1979. St. Lucia is mountainous but the extreme north and southern areas are relatively flat, and most of the towns and villages are located in the coastal regions.

We lived outside the capital Castries, in a very historic area named (Morne Fortune) or The Morne as it is referred to locally. Under British rule the area was considered War Department lands. Located approximately two miles from Castries and 900 ft. above sea level, Morne Fortune back then was a fort overlooking the city. Growing up few families lived in the area with some residing in barracks built by the British soldiers, who occupied St. Lucia in the long running war between the French and Brigand armies for territories in the region. St. Lucia reportedly changed hands between the English and French 13 times and the final handover to Britain was in 1814. French names are commonplace throughout the island and these were never changed by the British.

Living at such a high elevation had many advantages as the scenery was spectacular. I often sat on the verandah

of our home looking out at sea to watch a lovely sunset. We had a panoramic view of the central and northern part of the island. The nearest island was Martinique, which was 30 kilometers away. On bright sunny days I could clearly see the southern part of Martinique with its famous volcanic peak. I would often look out to see the ships steaming across the channel in the direction of Martinique to destinations beyond. In those days ship traffic was minimal and most of our goods came from Canada or the U. K. Small vessels connected the islands, and carried mainly passengers and local or transhipped goods from the ships from overseas.

I enjoyed my weekly Saturday shopping with my mother. Her first stop was always "M & C" (Minvielle & Chastanet), a store dating back to 1905, occupying a city block. Over the years the store has been modernized, and looking back it was indeed a "one stop shop" much like the Superstores of today. I was always attracted by the huge windows as each had a bountiful display of goods. I often gravitated to the grocery department where the imported chocolates and biscuits from England were my favourite. I would spend my pocket money on these tasty treats. My mother generally kept a watchful eye on the chocolates in particular, as she wanted them to last the week, but I thought otherwise.

Another stop on our Saturday trip was to the local market which was an imposing structure. It was a busy place, fruits, vegetables, and spices were sold by the vendors along with a variety of local goods; clay pots of every description, wicker baskets, straw mats, were some

of the many handcrafted things which stand out foremost in my memory. I will always remember the butchers stalls located on the far side of the building. The butchers used cleavers (actually the sharpest cutlasses imaginable) and with no formal training were literally chopping cuts of meat for their customers. There were no choice cuts and it was a case of “take it or leave it” if you did not like what they offered. Change has occurred and today the supermarkets on the island offer the same choices as they do here in Canada.

Sunday afternoon strolls along the waterfront were commonplace, which was devoid of the hustle and bustle which is ever-present today. On occasion when a visiting ship would allow visitors on board, I was always excited to go on these visits and dream of sailing to distant lands, and many years later my dream was realized.

School days were memorable. There were government-run primary and elementary schools and those were free. My parents thought it best that I should go to a private school. St. Joseph’s Convent was reputedly one of the best on the island. It was run by the Sisters of St. Joseph of Cluny who at the time came mainly from Europe. I entered in kindergarten and attended right through to high school at the same Convent school. Beyond this, it was off to schools/universities in the region or overseas. As girls at a convent school we were by no means inclined to take up their vocation.

It was a strict school. Every morning before class we had to line up in the school courtyard to ensure that we were wearing the proper school uniform,

anything different would require a letter of permission from your parents. If homework was not completed “detention” was the punishment. This meant that you would have to remain after school hours and put pen to paper, to write 100 lines or more of a repetitive phrase trumped up by your teacher. I sang in the school choir and will always remember our school concerts. It was hard work, but filled with fun and excitement. Parents and special guests were invited for the occasion.

The month of August was our summer holiday. I looked forward to these days with great anticipation. The few families who lived on the Morne had children who attended the same school as I did and we would get together on almost every day and roam the expanse of the Morne. Playing “hide and seek” among the few rusted canons and lookouts was great fun. Seeking adventure in the underground tunnels built by the British was another of my many exploits. The tunnels were not in use and were overrun with vegetation, and this became a home for bats and other creatures. We would go in with torch in hand and any rustling or noise would send us scampering out, as we were convinced that ghosts were present in these tunnels. Our summer holidays would not be complete without trips to the beach with our parents. Back then the beach front was not cluttered with hotels as they are today. I looked forward to those enjoyable days when we picnicked, played and swam in the tranquil waters, devoid of all the water skis and other aquatic sports which dominate these beaches today. It was such fun that I did not ever want our holidays to end. I will always treasure

memories of St. Lucia as these were some of the happiest days of my life.
-Mildred Theobalds

CURAC Annual Conference: May 20-22, 2015

YURA members interested in attending the May 2015 conference of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada at Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario are directed to the CURAC website www.curac.ca where they will find programme details as well as registration and conference forms. The theme of this year's meeting is "Looking Ahead." CURAC welcomes all interested individuals to its annual conference.

Presenting

Shawnette Bankasingh, a recent recipient of the YURA Mature Student Award, spoke to the membership at our Annual General Meeting last October. We now sponsor three student awards: the William Small Award, the YURA Mature Student Award, and, most recently, the Graduate Student Award. All money raised from our annual "Showcase" sale is used to support these awards which are part of our ongoing contribution to the work of the university. Shawnette convoked last Fall. For your information, here is a copy of her remarks which speak eloquently to the value of the student support provided in YURA's name.

"I would like to say that I am very excited and grateful to be the 2013 recipient of the York University Retirees' Association Mature Student Award. My name is Shawnette Bankasingh and I am an honours

graduate of the sociology program and currently a teacher candidate in the Urban Diversity Consecutive Education program here at York. This has been quite a journey. And though it has been rewarding, I have been pushed to limits I never knew were imaginable; limits that, at times, have broken my spirit and have challenged me academically, emotionally and financially. I must say, my experience at York has made me grow both as a woman of colour and as a mother. And I feel confident in knowing that I am working towards securing a comfortable place for myself and my son, Solace.

With my accomplishments I hope to educate, connect with, inspire and also learn from those living within marginalized communities who also face similar obstacles but are a model of resilience, perseverance and hope. My plan is to develop a non-profit organization that helps youth actualize their potential and self-worth through academia, the arts and social activism.

Receiving this award is meaningful to me because it allows me to see the thoughtfulness, care and selflessness that still exist in the world and to focus on the many blessings that are always present in life but are often forgotten or overlooked as we go through our everyday lives. It also allows me to take a moment to reflect on the many things and people that have encouraged, acknowledged and supported me along my path especially in times when I least expected it and when I needed it the most.

Receiving this award is also a reminder to me that I am doing a great job and that my hard work is paying off. It reminds

me to stay positive and confident, and it is a little piece of sunshine that I will use when I begin the next chapter of my journey, as I know I will encounter many more obstacles along the way.

Thank you again YURA for believing in me and seeing my worth.

-Shawnette Bankasingh, B.A.
Sociology 2014, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies. Currently a teacher candidate in the Urban Diversity Consecutive Education, York University



Shawnette and her son, Solace

A true story told about Gandhi....

When Gandhi was studying law at the University College of London, there was a professor, whose last name was Peters, who felt animosity toward Gandhi, and because Gandhi never conceded to him in any disagreement, their "arguments" were very common.

One day, Mr Peters was having lunch at the dining room of the University and Gandhi came along with his tray and sat next to him. The professor, in his arrogance, said, "Mr Gandhi: you do not understand... a pig and a bird do not sit together to eat," to which Gandhi replied, "You do not worry professor, I'll fly away," and he went and sat at another table.

Mr Peters, enraged, decided to take revenge on Gandhi on the next test, but Gandhi responded brilliantly to all questions. Then, Mr. Peters asked him the following question, "Mr Gandhi, if you are walking down the street and find a package, and within it there is a bag of wisdom and another bag with a lot of money; which one will you take?" Without hesitating, Gandhi responded, "the one with the money, of course."

Mr Peters, smiling, said, "I, in your place, would have taken the wisdom, don't you think?"

"Each one takes what one doesn't have", responded Gandhi indifferently.

Mr Peters, already hysterical, wrote on the exam sheet the word "idiot" and gave it to Gandhi.

Gandhi took the exam sheet and sat down. A few minutes later, Gandhi went to the professor and said, "Mr Peters, you signed the sheet but you did not give me a grade."

-Contributed by Mary Pfister

GOOD READS

I watched a very interesting French documentary on Queen Hortense of Holland, who was Josephine's daughter and whom Napoleon adopted. She remained faithful to his cause all her life and her son became Napoleon III. I was looking for a biography and googled "Queen Hortense of Holland," where one finds the usual Wikipedia and then photos. About 3 or 4 items below is an online full-text book about her written by Constance Wright. Because of my visual difficulties, I could not read it. But it may be worth a try for others as it seemed to cover many aspects of her life (which was very interesting). It is noteworthy that, Josephine, through her children Eugene and Hortense, became one of the ancestors of most of the royal and imperial families of Europe.

WHY ARE SO MANY CHILDREN IN CHINA MYOPIC AND HAVE TO WEAR GLASSES?

An article in the November 8th *Economist* showed that the number of Chinese teenagers who are myopic has increased substantially since the 1970s, especially in cities—now four fifths of them are short-sighted. Among school age children, 40 percent are now short-sighted, double the rate since 2000. This compares with less than 10 percent in Germany and the U.S.

Why is this? Poor eye sight has been found in China to be associated with more time spent studying, reading, and using electronic devices and the results are more obvious in upper-income families who have higher expectations for their children.

As a result, these children do not spend enough time outdoors. *It turns out that exposure to daylight is key in preventing myopia.* Chinese school children spend about only one hour outside compared to three hours for Australian children, for instance. And rural Chinese children are much less likely to suffer from myopia because they spend more time outside.

--summarized by Anne-Marie Ambert

Humour Department

"Lexophilia" is a word used to describe those that have a love for words, such as "you can tune a piano, but you can't tuna fish", or "to write with a broken pencil is pointless." A competition to see who can come up with the best lexophiles is held every year in an undisclosed location.

When fish are in schools, they sometimes take debate.

A thief who stole a calendar got twelve months.

When the smog lifts in Los Angeles U.C.L.A.

A dentist and a manicurist married. They fought tooth and nail.

A will is a dead giveaway

When you've seen one shopping center you've seen a mall.

Police were summoned to a daycare center where a three-year-old was resisting a rest.

A bicycle can't stand alone; it's just two tired.

The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine is now fully recovered.

He had a photographic memory which was never fully developed.

When she saw her first strands of grey hair she thought she'd dye.

Acupuncture is a jab well done. That's the point of it.

--Contributed by my brother

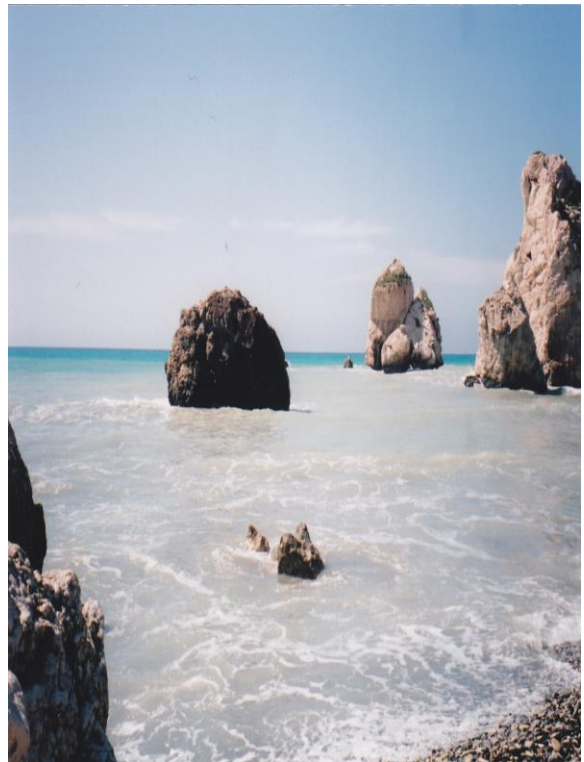
This video last nearly 15 minutes but it is absolutely hilarious. (*You may need several trials to get it going. I had a hard time with it....! AMA*)

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/LR2qZ0A8vic?rel=0>

-Contributed by Stanley Jeffers



Cyprus



YURA Executive

Officers

John Lennox, Co-President
jlennox@yorku.ca
Jane Crescenzi, Co-President
gemma.crescenzi@yahoo.ca
Janet Rowe, Past President
janet-R@rogers.com
Gill Teiman, Secretary
gteiman@yorku.ca
Marilyn Cartmill, Treasurer
cartmim@yorku.ca

Members at Large

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
Ross Rudolph
rrudolph@yorku.ca
Anna Hoffmann
annahoffmann@rogers.com

Ex-Officio members:

Anne-Marie Ambert, Editor
ambert@yorku.ca
Fred Fletcher, ARFL
ffletch@yorku.ca
David Smith
dmsmith@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>