



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association (YURA)

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

We hope that the holiday was a time of friendship and rest, and we would like to add our voices to those that wish you happiness and health in 2018.

The fall was a busy and successful time for the Association. Our annual fall theatre trip to the Shaw Festival in October was on one of the loveliest days in the fall – members and their spouses and friends travelled to Niagara-on-the-Lake for lunch at Queen’s Landing and then walked to the Festival Theatre to see *St. Joan*. The reviews were generally excellent and it was a wonderful time together.

Our Annual General Meeting took place October 27th. As was the case in previous years, we had a guest speaker in the morning to get us started. This year we were delighted to have University of Toronto Professor Audrey Macklin, who provided an engaging talk on refugees in the Canadian context. The discussion that followed was lively. We were grateful to have her contribution. A new member was welcomed to the Board at the AGM, Bruno Bellissimo. We are delighted to welcome him to the Executive. Bruno will take over the YURA representative role to the Pension Fund Board of Trustees from outgoing member Colin Deschamps. At the time of the AGM there was no nomination for a replacement for outgoing Co- President, John Lennox. We appreciated publicly the contributions that both John and Colin have made to the ongoing work of the Association over these past several years.

At the December meeting of the Executive Committee, Ian Greene was appointed as Co-President for the coming year. To replace him on the Committee as member-at-large, we welcomed Donna Smith to the Executive. Donna will be our representative on the All-University Pension Committee (AUPC) for the coming year. With these changes, the Executive is now up to full membership and looking forward to serving you in the year ahead.

On November 7, YURA held its annual showcase and fundraiser for student bursaries and awards. Many members donate regiftable items and baked goods. This year we added a paperback book table to the mix, which was a big success. We also had a number of vendors selling their wares. Thirty volunteers, many sporting T-shirts advertising YURA and our efforts in fundraising for student awards took part in the day – set-up, sales, and cleanup – and the Association raised \$2183 which is the record result . Our sincere thanks to Pat Murray and Steve Dranitsaris who were such effective and enthusiastic co-chairs of this event, to those who donated items and baked goods, and to all who contributed their time and talents to this eminently worthwhile event. And, as always, a special thank you to Noel Corbett for his planning expertise.

Thanks also to Joe Sanguedolce and his custodial staff in their crucial help in setting up for the day. YURA is proud of playing its part in the work of the university through its support of student awards and bursaries and of other student-and-community activities on campus. We look forward to another good year for the association. Our spring theatre outing is already on the books: Stratford on June 12 *The Tempest*. The date and play for the Shaw is still to be determined. We hope that you will mark the June 12 date on your calendar and, when it is known, the Fall date. More specific information about reserving tickets will come as the date approaches.

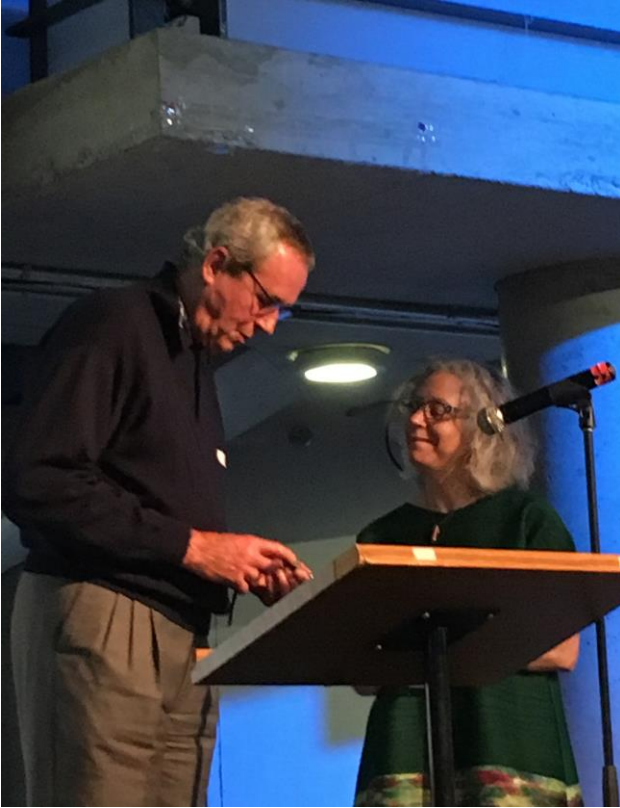
We would like to give a special thanks to John Lennox, who served as Co-President of YURA for many years with meticulous dedication to detail, enthusiasm, and a terrific sense of humour. John, we appreciate you greatly!

We are grateful for the support of each member and, as always, you are invited to contact us with your

questions and concerns either by phone ([416] 736-2100, ext. 70664) or by email at yura@yorku.ca.

With our best wishes,
-Charmaine Courtis and Ian Greene, Co-Presidents

GUEST SPEAKER AT AGM



John Lennox and Audrey Macklin (compliments of Pat Murray)

In Memoriam

Albert Tucker, 17-10-25
Divakarma Varma, 17-10-14
Nick Elson, 17-10-10
Donald Dawson, 17-11-21
Renato Fogolin, 17-11-22
Douglas Pawson, 17-11-13
Ina Meadows, 17-11-13
Frank Matthews, 17-12-4
Vicki Innes, 17-11-24
Donald Coles, 17-11-29

Albert Tucker

Albert died just a two weeks short of his 94th birthday. The January **2013 Newsletter** presented its third reminiscence and it was that of Al. It is reproduced here to honour his life in his own words. Albert was the second principal of Glendon College and was President and then Co-President of YURA from 1997-2007. When Albert retired from York, he was teaching history both at Glendon and at the Keele campus. Al was a most helpful person in general and was held in great affection by many. He is greatly missed.

He had entitled his reminiscences "Remembering Streets and Fields."

I am not sure I knew it at the time, but looking back and reflecting, so much happened between the ages of 12 and 20 that those years seem now like a distinct time with boundaries that make them a stage of life – one which would influence other stages that followed. At the heart of my memory is both a distinction and a fusion between the rural and urban experience.

I grew up in the east end of Toronto, in one of the many neighbourhoods that developed there after completion of the Prince Edward viaduct in 1919. Most of those who settled there were English working-class immigrants, many of whom were unskilled; but even with low-paying jobs they could buy a small plot on one of the new unpaved streets and, in stages, as they earned enough to buy materials, gradually build their own homes.

The rooms were small and the furnishings sparse, but by the 1920s natural gas and water flowed in underground pipes, and most houses by then had complete indoor bathrooms. Overhead wiring along main streets like the Danforth made it possible not only to extend the street-car system eastward from Bloor Street, but to provide lighting for streets generally and for the plain interiors.

Most aspects of life were semi-rural. Behind the houses across the street was an immense field where boys could play at cowboys and Indians; at the end

of the street was a sand-lot where we could improvise a baseball game; and a few blocks north was the ravine of the Don River, on which we could play hockey in winter, or along which we could hike or just wander in summer.

There was no supervision or planning by community authorities, very little of organized sports or recreation, and trips downtown happened only once or twice a year. The neighbourhood gave us a self-contained social life that seemed as rural as it was urban. Even the two-kilometre walk to East York Collegiate passed by fields that only recently had been cash-crop farms.

For me, between the ages of 12 and 16, this division between city and country was enhanced by spending my summers on a large mixed farm in southwestern Ontario, where I learned very different lessons from those of the school-room. There was no electricity, no indoor plumbing, and no budget yet for the new phenomena of tractors and pick-up trucks. The cutting and reaping and hauling of crops were all still done by teams of Clydesdale and Percheron horses.

By the time I was sixteen I had learned how to drive teams of those horses, how to pile and shape a full wagon-load of hay, how to stoke wheat and oats with a fork, how to direct the blower on a threshing machine powered by a wood-burning steam engine in the middle of the field, how to form a large, rounded stack of straw that would provide bedding through the winter for the milking cows, the horses in the stable and the pigs and sheep. They were all challenges that led to growing confidence in an adolescent mind.

But the farm was also isolating. There was little time or opportunity to make friends or mingle with neighbours. The streets of east Toronto, by contrast, instilled a sense of sharing with others. In nearby houses lived widows and children who had lost their husbands and fathers in the trenches of Flanders; or children with a father who had survived a gas attack and would never work again. We all knew that such households survived on small monthly pensions and we shared that knowledge as

part of the social attitude towards income, spending and a sense of equality.

So - rural and urban were for me a rich amalgam that stays in my memory, where recurring scenes make me reflect on how or if my early life might affect the thoughts and emotions of later years.

-Albert Tucker

York University Retirees' Association (YURA)

AGM Luncheon

Friday, October 27th, 2017.

Speech By:

Amy de Nobriga

Thank you for the lovely introduction and inviting me to speak at your luncheon. When I received a letter last year, informing me that I was given the William W. Small Award, I was overjoyed to receive assistance with my tuition – which I desperately needed. However, I was also overjoyed because it brought me assurance that I was on the path I was supposed to be on.

I came to York University in 2015 as a mature student. I had previously gained a B.A. from the University of Guelph in 2009. I worked 8 years in the social service field. I worked constantly--days, afternoons, nights, weekends, and holidays-- at multiple agencies. Then I lost my main job and source of income due to funding cuts at the Children's Aid Society – 70 people lost their jobs including me. It was hard to find work. When I applied for jobs, I wouldn't get them because I did not have a Bachelor of Social Work. I began to internalize this and think that I wasn't good enough.

But I persisted and decided to apply for my Bachelor of Social Work--even though I had not yet paid off my first undergrad degree. When I received my acceptance letter from York University, I cried with joy and worry. Finally, things were going to change – but how was I going

to pay for it? I applied for OSAP and received some funding.

During my Bachelor of Social Work at York, I got picked out of a number of BSW students to join the Women, Madness and Criminalization course-- where I along with 9 other BSW students and women who were incarcerated at Vanier Centre for Women (a women's prison) did a social work course together. I also completed a placement at the Community and Legal Aid Service Programme at Osgoode Hall Law School.

I graduated *Magna Cum Laude* in 2017.

Currently, I am completing my Master's of Social Work at York where I am about to embark on research evaluating the Partner Assault Response Program.

In the future, I hope to apply to law school to become a lawyer. With both my social work and law degrees, I hope to open a practice that incorporates social work and law to develop a holistic response to systemic issues in the legal system.

Thank you again for the William W. Small Award. You helped ease my financial worries and gave me the reassurance. That a girl whose paternal grandparents are immigrants from Trinidad and Tobago, whose parents did not go to university nor did anyone in her entire family go to grad school and even was told by her grade 12 English teacher that she wasn't smart enough to go to university that in fact that she mattered and was enough. Here I stand before you with two undergraduate degrees, currently completing my Master's and dreaming of law school, with the persistence and determination to conquer life's challenges and reach for the stars.

Thank you. **Amy de Nobriga**

Volunteers Wanted

The office needs you!!!!!! To help staff the office on Wednesday and Thursday in the term. Our hours

are 11:00 am to 3:00 pm.

Skills required: willingness to help with office work, such as mail merges for large mailings; other secretarial skills; web updating; and dealing with phone and email enquiries for YURA.

If willing to serve, please email us at yura@yorku.ca or call us at 416 736-2100 ext. 77064



Amy de Nobriga

REPORT ON ANNUAL SHOWCASE FOR 2017

YURA staged its annual Showcase event in Central Square at the University on Tuesday, November 7th. This year's event boasted more than thirty volunteers staffing the Attic Treasures, Bake Sale, Book and YURA information tables. Additionally, there were nine exhibitor tables at which retirees put on display their talents, retirement pursuits and/or sold their wares. There were also many retirees who contributed re-giftable items, books and baked goods that were sold at Showcase. A total of \$2,183 was raised, surpassing last year's record total of \$1,884. All funds raised support the

YURA-sponsored student awards at the University. We are grateful for the volunteer time, the exhibitor participation, the donations of attic treasures, and the baking, pricing, promotional and organizational talents that our retirees put forth every year to make our presence known at the University and to raise some money to assist needy and deserving students.

--**Patricia Murray and Steve Dranitsaris**

Showcase 2017 Co-coordinators

Patricia Murray and Steve Dranitsaris, were 2017 Showcase Co-chairs.

Volunteers were

Sandra Pyke, Jane Crescenzi, Cathie Stone, John Wilson, Charmaine Courtis, Billie Mullick, Janet Rowe, San Nolte, Rosemarie Nielsen, Barbara Rowe, Pearl Darlington, Marg Gilligan, Paula Freeman, Susan Lanoue, Irina Ostapchuk, Ed Lee-Ruff, Ross Rudolph, Noel Corbett, Marilyn Cartmill John Lennox, Dave Smith. Donna Smith, Gabriele Hardt, Natasa Bajin, Gwyn Buck, Philippa Marchetti, Ann Pestano, Mildred Theobalds, Michele Young



Patricia Murray (Photos by Steve Dranitsaris)

**YORK PENSION PLAN AT DECEMBER 31, 2016
(2015 amounts in brackets)**

Actuarial valuation results are provided in an annual report by the Plan Actuary.
 Market Value of Assets \$2.31 billion (\$2.16 billion)
 Actuarial (Going Concern) Surplus \$139.5 million (\$115.9 million)
 Solvency (windup) deficit - \$116.7 million (-\$170.9 million)

Explanation of the above

An actuarial valuation is an analysis performed by an actuary that compares the assets and liabilities of a pension plan. The present value of all plan assets and liabilities are calculated as of a specific date. If the value of the plan assets exceeds the value of the liabilities, the funded ratio will be greater than 100% and the plan will be in a "surplus" position. If



From the left, **San Nolte, Billie Mullick, and Charmaine Courtis**

the liabilities exceed the value of the plan assets, the funded ratio will be less than 100% and the plan will be in a "deficit" position.

An actuarial valuation uses actual plan member demographic and earnings data, as well as economic and demographic assumptions for unknown future events (e.g. at what age will a current employee retire? How many years will they collect pension for? What investment return will the pension fund earn in the future?) to estimate the future liabilities and determine the contribution requirements for the plan sponsor (York University).

A going-concern valuation provides an assessment of a pension plan assuming the plan continues indefinitely. A solvency valuation assumes the plan is wound up. This is not a realistic scenario but is a requirement for reporting. The assumptions used are different, producing differing results.

--Colin Deschamps

SUGGESTED ONLINE READING

The **Corporate European Observatory** is an organization located in Brussels that acts as a watch-dog on the influential role that European corporations play in the rules of the European Union. They particularly focus on agri-business, big pharma, and others that can affect the health of Europeans and the environment.

It is a leftist-oriented organization that does sound research to prove its points. Their findings are shocking but not surprising. It has been staple food for me for several years. It complements my other favourite magazine, *The Economist*, which supports liberal capitalism but provides very interesting data, analyses, scientific, and cultural reviews.

<https://corporateeurope.org>

IF YOU HAVE MISSED IT.....

Consider seeing the 2016 movie *Hidden Figures*. It is the story of a team of black American women, all gifted mathematicians, who served a vital role in

NASA during the early years of the space program. The three heroines around whom the story revolves are played by Taraji Henson, Octavia Spencer and Janelle Monáe. The story is fairly realistic given that all of this takes place in the 1950s and 1960s, amidst marches for civil rights and the gross maltreatment of blacks. One gets to sympathize with these women of courage, wit, and humour along with the meshing of family and work lives. Kevin Costner portrays the head of NASA and, as their supervisor, is caught between the obvious genius of these women and the results they bring versus the absurdity of their racialized position...very well described in the film. One of the best movies I have seen in years.

--Anne-Marie Ambert

GOOD READS

I have just read for a fourth time in so many decades the 1940 bestseller, *I Bought a Mountain*, by Thomas Firbank, first published by the New English Library. This autobiography covers the years 1931-1940 when a young Canadian of Welsh origin buys a huge sheep farm in North Wales that covers 2,400 acres of steep mountainous terrain, peaks and valleys, called Dyffryn. In 1933, he is joined by his new wife, Esme, who plays a key role in the running of the domain.

As befits the environment, this is a starkly written book, with all the details of daily routines in sheep farming and description of social life across slopes, gulleys, in a place where it rains several times more than it does at Bettws-y-Coed, six miles away. The author (and his wife) describe all the "modern" improvements they bring, including their own hydro-electric dam, and their liming of the acid pastures to make them more productive. Chapters such as "The year the snow came," and "The poultry tragedy," talk about their trials. There is a great deal of dry humour within this very pleasant writing. We are always in the natural environment in this book.

It's a life largely, but not entirely, destroyed by technological advances and economic considerations. About 30 years ago, I spent a week

in North Wales and took short walks in some of these same mountains with my eager little daughter. From time to time, just before turning a corner on a hilly trail, we would suddenly smell something “foul” which we soon learned to recognize as a sheep. Then, a sheep or two would suddenly cross our path, branded, so that they could be returned to their farms for washing, sharing, and sales—just as in those days in the 1930s.

I would also suggest googling both Thomas Firbank and Esme as their lives were very interesting. Wikipedia has good articles on them.

--**Anne-Marie Ambert**

20th CENTURY PHILOSOPHERS

The best cure for sea sickness is to sit under a tree.

Spike Milligan

Lawyers believe a man is innocent until proven broke. **Robin Hall**

Kill one man and you're a murderer, kill a million and you're a conqueror. **Jean Rostand**

We are here on earth to do good unto others. What the others are here for, I have no idea. **WH Auden**

If life were fair, Elvis would still be alive today and all the impersonators would be dead.

Johnny Carson

America is so advanced that even the chairs are electric. **Doug Hamwell**

The first piece of luggage on the carousel never belongs to anyone. **George Roberts**

If God had intended us to fly he would have made it easier to get to the airport. **Jonathan Winters**

BONS MOTS

The roundest knight at King Arthur's round table was Sir Cumference. He acquired his size from too much pi.

I thought I saw an eye doctor on an Alaskan island, but it turned out to be an optical Aleutian.

She was only a whisky maker, but he loved her still.

A rubber band pistol was confiscated from algebra class because it was a weapon of math disruption.

The butcher backed into the meat grinder and got a little behind in his work.

No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationery.

A dog gave birth to puppies near the road and was cited for littering.

A grenade thrown into a kitchen in France would result in Linoleum Blownapart.

Two silk worms had a race. They ended up in a tie.

(Source unknown)

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