



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association

Spring 2017

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

Dear YURA Members:

As we write, winter has returned after a balmy end of February. It has been quiet in the office since January. The usual tasks continue. We are happy to say that John Wilson, a member volunteer, has stepped forward to staff the office on

Wednesdays and we are extremely grateful for his willingness to do so.

At its Executive Committee meeting of February 21, the dates of this year's theatre outings were confirmed: *Romeo and Juliet* on Tuesday June 6 and *Saint Joan* on Tuesday October 10. You will

already have received ticket information about our Stratford trip in June. Ed Lee-Ruff continues to work on the updated version of *Advice to Retirees*. The Executive Committee also discussed a guest speaker for our AGM in October and we're happy to report that Audrey Macklin, Professor and Chair in Human Rights Law, University of Toronto, has accepted our invitation. She is one of Canada's foremost advocates for refugees and is currently Director of the Centre for Criminology and Sociolegal Studies at the U of T. We look forward to hearing her speak.

Members will have received a letter from Charmaine Courtis asking that you consider sending a donation in support of any of the three YURA student scholarships, or the York Camps Subsidy Fund, or the YFS Food Bank. We have been encouraged by the response to Charmaine's letter. YURA continues to be pro-active in contributing to educational support on campus. In addition to sponsoring the Association's student awards and the York Camps subsidy, YURA also participates in the Middle School Initiative of the Access to Postsecondary Project based in the TD/York University Access Centre.

Fred Fletcher, the representative on the YURA Executive Committee of the Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians at York, has let us know that the speaker at ARFL's spring meeting on May 12, 2017 will be Malcolm Thurlby, professor of Visual Art and Art History. A reminder will be circulated closer to the date. Finally, information has been circulated separately to YURA members about the annual meeting of CURAC (College and University Retiree

Associations of Canada) to be held at Carleton University between May 24 and 26.

Anne-Marie Ambert is interested in receiving from YURA members more *Reminiscences* for the Newsletter. Who were you before your academic career began? This is one of the interesting features of each newsletter and we strongly encourage you to consider submitting to Anne-Marie a brief memoir in the vein of what has appeared in the newsletter.

Let's hope for a timely, warm spring. Should you have any concerns, please contact us at yura@yorku.ca or call us at 416-736-2100 ext. 70664. As always, thanks to all the volunteers who so generously contribute their time and energy in support of the Association.

With best wishes
-Charmaine Courtis and John Lennox, Co-presidents

We continue publishing photos of members of the Executive as well as volunteers so that our general membership gets to know them better. In the photo on page 3 are the organizers of the Annual Showcase. From left, Noel Corbett, Pat Murray, and Steve Dranitsaris. Steve is also our Secretary.



Life as it was back then: Reminiscence

Our 19th Reminiscence is written by Vivienne Monty who was a librarian and Head, Government and Business Library at the Keele campus for 20 years and then librarian at Glendon College for another 20 years before her retirement.

I shall start before the normal reminiscence, namely before the stork was kind enough to pick me up and deliver me to my beloved parents in Hungary. The year was 1948, the dreaded war was over, they had married in 1946 with loads of hope for a better future. The war had been hard on both of them. My dad was first drafted and then beaten badly and put in a political prison from 1944-45 by the Nazi authorities for trying to help some of his Jewish friends escape or hide. In 1948, they planned to emigrate and leave all the troubles of Europe behind but then I came along. (My first name in Hungary was and is Vivienne. My father paid off the authorities to list me as such. Mostly in Hungary, names had to be chosen from the Official Book of Names (usually recognized Saints) and Vivienne was not there. Greasing palms of officials was rampant and that's how officially I became Vivienne which is what my mother had chosen for a girl before I was ever born.)

My mother developed pulmonary thrombosis having me and by the time all was said and done, the borders to Hungary were closed by the communists. All exit papers were null and void. Thus my life as I remember it began behind an iron curtain. I was shielded by my parents who made my

childhood as happy and carefree as they possibly could. Certainly there was no lack of love and caring in the home but all too often the outside world popped in no matter how hard they tried.

My father having been a "capitalist" was not allowed to seek work and numerous times the secret police arrived around midnight at our door to "ask questions and interview my parents." My mother could no longer stand it and in early 1956 when the internal communist borders opened to some travel, we went off to Czechoslovakia for a vacation. There, while on a tour, my mother told me at one point to speak only in German and tried to walk across the border to Germany with me through a mine field as it turned out. It was then when my father knew he had to act. He used all and any of his contacts and miraculously we were allowed to leave in late August of 1956. It was either that or use the underground through Yugoslavia. My mother couldn't pack fast enough which turned out to be a good thing since a few days after our harrowing journey in late September across the iron curtain into Austria, the revolution broke out. For once, my mother said, we were in the right place at the right time.

Some weeks later, we arrived in Canada where most of my father's family had emigrated. "Welcome to Canada" and that's all you got back in those days. No immigrant services, classes, or any other kinds of help. That included my father's family who had booked a hotel for us for three days, had us to Sunday dinner and then that night told us that the weekend was over, everyone was busy and we were on our own. This included forgetting about the extra money my father had given them when they left which they promised to give back if we

ever arrived. We were obviously never supposed to arrive.

It was all very scary. We got a room in a rooming house (with cockroaches). My parents tried to look for work with me in tow. My mother, being fluent in English, found a job fairly quickly but my dad spoke no English, was in his mid-fifties and so the best he could find was as an orderly in a hospital. He proceeded to have what I later learned was a “nervous breakdown.” As breadwinner, he must take proper care of my mother and me in a manner that was appropriate he felt. At this point, my mother, the quiet shy one took charge. She said that we had come here for a free and better life and if others could do it so could my father who had a PhD. in Economics from Frankfurt-am-Main. He also had a track record as a good businessman. My mother said we would take the little money we had, buy a home and start the business up again. She had total faith that he could do it.

It was your typical instant success that they often speak of. My parents worked day and night, sometimes 22 hours a day, no furniture in our house and so much more or shall I say less? My mother was nonetheless as happy as a clam because every time she saw a police officer, she no longer had any fear. She only saw opportunity. The public school I went to did not work out very well. I was teased and bullied for not speaking English and the teacher did nothing to help, in fact, she managed to call me stupid in front of the other children when I did not understand her questions. My parents had been devastated in Hungary when they were told that I had the right to only 8 years of schooling because of my father’s

capitalist status and this was unacceptable so they enrolled me in a private school. Now they had to make the money to cover the tuition, uniforms etc. As my dad later said, “I had no choice but to become a success.”

The new school had a few challenges since they had never seen an “ethnic” before. My parents were told to send me to camp that first summer to learn English. More expenses. I hated camp as it reminded me of roughing it in Budapest, no running hot water etc. etc. The only way I would stay out the six weeks was when my parents called and said they would buy me a bike like the one I had left behind in Budapest. *Children often don’t think or know better or understand the hardship they might be causing.* I never went to another camp again but I learned English and grew 4 inches in those six weeks. On my return to school I also got a wonderful teacher who went to work full speed on my English accent with my parents’ permission.

Slowly but surely things started to get better. My father paid for some of our antique furniture to be brought to Canada and we got most of our paintings and other cultural property out of Hungary. We bought a car but still it was seven days a week of work for my parents and no vacations. You would think that a vacation or some rest would be a priority but no, it was my learning French that was. Canada was a bilingual country they said and I had to learn better French than was being taught in school. So one day my mother came with a folio she and my dad had prepared. I could work for my dad in the summer as usual, go to camp OR I could be sent to Switzerland but I would have

to go to school all summer there learning French. This was not a choice as far as I was concerned. So for the next few years as soon as school finished in Canada, off I went to Lausanne. I was in heaven. By the mid sixties, my father started to do well although he always said you had to push pretty hard to get to “easy street.” I had learned French and because of that would spend the last 20 years of my career at Glendon. They had enormous foresight and always told me that learning and work never go to waste.

This of course is the extreme precis version of so much more. Suffice it to say, Canada has been good. I asked my dad when he found out that he was dying if he had any regrets about the tough times which he would not have had if we had stayed somewhere in Europe, where he spoke the language and knew his way around. He told me he had no regrets whatsoever for “where else would a lousy immigrant with an accent be able to have so much.” No regrets indeed.

-Vivienne Monty

In Memoriam

David Bell	January 10, 2017
Michael Ecob	January 5, 2017
Joseph Green	February 3, 2017
Marguerite Hooker	January 23, 2017
Paula Ironi	January 27, 2017
Nancy Kasper	December 10, 2016
David Logan	January 17, 2017
Desmond Maxwell	December 7, 2016
Thomas Meininger	December 12, 2016
Joyce Mills	December 12, 2016
Luigi Salerno	December 4, 2016
Emil Schmittat	January 25, 2017
Heather Spurrll	December 7, 2016
Grace Walker	February 12, 2017

Note from the Editor

As pointed out by the Co-presidents, unless other YURA members volunteer their own Reminiscence, this much-loved section of our Newsletter is the last one to appear.

Often, our members tell me that their lives are not “interesting.” For them, perhaps, but not for us. The purpose of this feature is to celebrate the lives of our members while they are still with us and also to remind ourselves that we come from a past that was rich in other types of lifestyles than current ones.

For further information, please contact me at ambert@yorku.ca

“IMPROVING PRESCRIPTION DRUG SAFETY FOR CANADIAN SENIORS”

This very important report from the Institute for Research on Public Policy, written by Nicole F. Bernier, should be read by everyone. Please click on the link below. It provides a summary as well as the research.

http://irpp.org/research-studies/study-no61/?mc_cid=1a9c616b82&mc_eid=085edb974c

SUPRISES IN RETIREMENT

Here is a link sent to us by Marisa Barlas regarding an article about what is surprising in retirement. Marisa is sthe

Senior Development of Gifts at York and attends our AGMs.

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/the-biggest-surprises-in-retirement-1486955341>

I want to point out that this article focused on people who are comfortable financially. They might have gotten entirely different results with a working-class “sample.”

**AN ARTICLE FROM *The Newsletter*
OF THE RETIREES’
ASSOCIATION OF LAKEHEAD
UNIVERSITY**

This article is very interesting as it provides us, Ontarians of the GTA, a perspective on how our more northern neighbors access medical care which is available only in Toronto—which we take for granted. (This story is focusing on Sunnybrook Hospital.)

**DOWN AND OUT IN TO: THE
LOGISTICS OF TRAVEL FOR
MEDICAL PROCEDURES**

A recent trip to Sunnybrook Hospital in Toronto, accompanying a fellow member who underwent a complex medical procedure unavailable in Northwest Ontario, gave valuable insights into improving the odds of a successful outcome. While there is a mountain of instruction for the financial side of medical travel, which tells us what expenses are eligible and how to fill in the voluminous forms needed to support travel and a multi-day stay, there is little guidance for the practical side of such travel. The conditions were less than ideal, so this piece is intended to

help fill some of the gaps, for both the patient and the accompanying person.

Travel arrangements for the actual journey and hotel stay, made by Maritime Travel of Thunder Bay, all worked flawlessly. Likewise at the Sunnybrook Hospital end, staff in reception and medical staff were efficient, pleasant, cheerful and informative. Communication was very direct and clear regarding post-op procedures.

Transportation within Toronto, especially for the first trip after discharge is crucial and needs to be planned beforehand. Use of TTC is discouraged. The use of taxis as ambulances is problematic, but can be managed. Problems with movement multiply during rush hours, such as, jerking starts and stops. Walking as a means of transport or even exercise also needs planning. Walking back to the hotel from the hospital at rush hour on a rainy day before dawn was a bad idea, I discovered. On one day during the period, Toronto set a record daily total of “collisions” between people and vehicles. “Collision” is the current word in the media to describe a person being run down by a vehicle. Even on a crosswalk with traffic lights, pedestrians take their life in their hands.

At rush hour the tempo increases. One look at the stream of expensive SUVs tells you that the folks driving them are likely used to getting their own way, so beware. This is the land of expensive autos. The dictum for pedestrians to catch the driver’s eye is not so easy when the windows of the autos are

tinted. Machine contends for the same space with human being.

For all medical procedures where the patient is incapacitated or loses vision, the accompanying person should expect to play an active role negotiating and advocating as well as organizing details, like food and medication schedules. Practice manipulating a wheelchair would be helpful. The effects of anaesthetic linger as do sedatives given the patient.

At Sunnybrook, in the main waiting area, the patient (amusingly called the “loved one”) is assigned a serial number, so that the person accompanying can keep track on a video screen as the patient travels through the process. Discharge is where most problems occur, since the patient is in a delicate condition and disoriented.

Lessons learned and re-learned: staff at Sunnybrook spelled out the limitations of the hospital. Although an overnight stay may be necessary, the hospital is for conducting the operation, not for recuperation. The schedule is regimented and not conducive to rest. On occasion disruptive people, a fire alarm and ambient noise can wreck sleep.

Take lots of cash or have access to a bank machine. A hotel is unlike a hospital in many respects. Service for everything runs on gratuities. Ditto for taxi travel and restaurants. If the stay is more than a day, access to cooking facilities and a supply of fresh food is necessary.

Access to medical care is least expensive for people who live closest to the hospital, such as, the Bridle Path and

toney Blythwood Road across from the hospital. The distribution of medical care has the same principles as real estate: location, location, and location.

–**Ian Dew** is RALU’s Editor

Good Reads

The Illegal, by Lawrence Hill. Keita Ali, like every boy in the imaginary Zantoroland, is a runner. It is all Keita ever wanted to do. He finds he must run from Zantoroland to survive because of his father’s political activities. He joins a marathon running team but fails to make the playoffs so must escape again to a nearby place (Freedom State) which also doesn't welcome foreigners. He stays underground but surfaces periodically to race and earn prize money to survive. His very existence is illegal as he tries to evaluate who is friend or enemy. It is a fast moving and compelling story which will keep you riveted and is written by our own Canadian Lawrence Hill.

–**Margaret Leitch**

A Love of War is a story that utilizes the passions and emotions of the York University Faculty Association Strike of 1997, to explore how minorities survive when they do not fit in. The narratives work with themes from my academic teaching and research both in Business, and in the School of Gender, Sexuality, and Women's Studies. It was published in January 2017 by MLR Press of Albion, New York. That's not a vanity press; I sent it to MLR Press first from the list of LGBTQ publishers because their initials are the same as mine. I took it as a good omen and indeed it was! It also is available through Amazon, Kobo, and Nook books.

--**Louise Ripley**

Inside the O'Briens is a lovely novel about a family of four young adult children, including one who is married and with a new baby. The father, Joe, an Irish cop in his early 40s, learns that he has Huntington's Disease. Throughout, we follow his deterioration, his wish to be an example for his children and even grandchildren on how to live with that deadly syndrome, and how the children cope with the issue of whether or not they should learn who among them has inherited the disease and how to cope with this knowledge. It is a very well-done book, written by a neurologist, Lisa Genova. 2015 Gallery Books.
-Anne-Marie Ambert

No Place to Grow Old: How Canadian Suburbs Can Become Age-Friendly

By Glen Miller, in the March 2017, no 14 of the **Institute for Research in Public Policy**

Please click on the link below. It may ask you if you are secure in opening it, and click on OK. Then, it will open.

<http://irpp.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/insight-no14.pdf>



Peculiarity—Humour ?

En Russie, beaucoup de conducteurs utilisent des caméras fixées sur le tableau de bord pour filmer ce qui se passe devant eux, pour éviter d'avoir recours à des témoins en cas d'accident.

Ces caméras captent parfois des scènes irréalistes qui nous font reculer dans le fond de notre fauteuil.

<http://www.youtube.com/embed/5RAaW1FzYg?autoplay=1&modestbranding=1&rel=0&showinfo=0>

(Contributed by **Rachel Lewin**)

INTERESTING HUMAN-POWERED LITTLE CAR

<https://www.youtube.com/embed/4IKq1fGtXFM> (contributed by Helen Mannion)

The *Washington Post's* Mensa Invitational once again invited readers to take any word from the dictionary, alter it by adding, subtracting, or changing one letter, and supply a new definition.

Here are the winners:

1. **Cashtration** (n.): The act of buying a house, which renders the subject financially impotent for an indefinite period of time.
2. **Ignoramus**: A person who's both stupid and an asshole.
3. **Intoxicaton**: Euphoria at getting a tax refund, which lasts until you realize it was your money to start with.
4. **Foreploy**: Any misrepresentation about yourself for the purpose of getting

laid

5. **Giraffiti:** Vandalism spray-painted very, very high.

6. **Sarchasm:** The gulf between the author of sarcastic wit and the person who doesn't get it.

7. **Inoculatte:** To take coffee intravenously when you are running late.

8. **Osteopornosis:** A degenerate disease. (This one got extra credit.)

9. **Decafalon** (n): The grueling event of getting through the day consuming only things that are good for you.

10. **Glibido:** All talk and no action.

11. **Dopeler Effect:** The tendency of stupid ideas to seem smarter when they come at you rapidly.

12. **Arachnoleptic Fit** (n.): The frantic dance performed just after you've accidentally walked through a spider web.

13. **Caterpallor** (n.): The color you turn after finding half a worm in the fruit you're eating.

Flowers that look like birds:

Dancing Girls (*Impatiens Bequaertii*)



Flying Duck Orchid (*Caleana Major*)



(Contributed by Helen Mannion.)

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