

York University Retirees Association [YURA]

A Newsletter for Members of YURA – No 1 – September 2000

Introducing a non-electronic medium which will attempt to inform and encourage members about opportunities available through the **York University Retirees Association**.

Murray Ross Passes

Murray Ross, York's founding President, died on Friday 21 July 2000 at Belmont House in downtown Toronto. He was 91 years of age. There will be a memorial service on September 19th at Glendon College.

Past Events

□ **Niagara-On-The-Lake Shaw Festival** on June 1st, 2000. Noel Coward's *Easy Virtue*, set in the 1920s, surprised many of us. Clearly, Coward being Coward, clever repartee was displayed throughout the performance, but the oppressiveness of the Old World class system struck home and stayed in our minds. Thirty-four YURA members joined the chartered bus trip. We've been happy with the good lunch provided by Lady Janet's Restaurant, and its very convenient location next to the theatre. Moreover, in the last few years we've been blessed with splendid sunshine and comfortable temperatures at the Shaw Festival.

□ **Railway Spurs, Soaring Chimneys & Brick Factories**, an urban trail walk on May 19, 2000 was plagued with intermittent chilly, driving rain which made parts of the walk miserable, but some showed up and persevered in spite of this. A walk through the Toronto Carpet Factory was the highlight, but we also discovered the old bowser factory where Richard Storr's (History Dept., Arts) father probably was the plant manager for a few years before World War I. Because many were disappointed and unable to attend this event, it will be repeated on 15 October 2000. See times below.

Upcoming Events

- **Stratford Festival for Hamlet on Friday the 13th of October 2000.** If you did not receive an orange flyer with details about this event call 736-2100 e.70664 for more information. Ticket availability and bus seating is limited so respond quickly.
- **Urban trail walk on Thursday the 15th of October 2000 from 10 am to noon.** See description above.
- **Garden Gloves and Gumboots in May or June 2001** Brian Bixley (Economics Dept., Glendon) has kindly invited us to visit his gardens (including flower, shrub, pond, hedge, vine gardens, and even a maze) at Lilactree Farm in the scenic Mulmur Hills, on the brow of the Niagara Escarpment west of Alliston. (In the early nineteenth century some thought the knobby terrain in Mulmur Township was the result of volcanic action!) This is a possible one-day excursion. Are enough of you interested? We will inquire at the Annual Meeting (about 35 to 40 are needed for this trip).

John Warkentin

50th Anniversary History of York

Prof. Michiel Horn of Glendon History has been named to head this project. Archives in Scott Library has started to assemble the records. Just recently, they acquired all of the official minutes of the Senate and the Board of Governors.

The Hackers' Corner YURA Web Page

is at <http://www.yorku.ca/yura/>

The Email Newsletter

is a joint effort of the Retirement Planning Centre and YURA and will be sent to anyone who leaves their email address with *How Chee Un* in the RPC at <retire@yorku.ca>. The editor is *Karen Gray*, Director of the RPC. It is published irregularly and topics include a range of items of interest to retired people.

The RPC Web Page

may be found at <http://www.yorku.ca/retire/>

Health Care Discussions

The Association of Retired Faculty & Librarians (ARF) has started discussions with the Pensions & Benefits Office at York to obtain clearer information on how adjustments are made to a person's "maximum lifetime extended health benefit" of \$25,000 as benefits are consumed each year. As retired people live longer and medical costs increase, the fixed maximum lifetime benefit may adversely affect an increasing number of people. The way the credit remaining to each person is calculated therefore becomes critical. How do our members get regular and accurate reports on their credit balance?

We know that charges up to a \$1000 a year will be forgiven each year end. But do charges in excess of \$1000 in a single year reduce permanently the remaining maximum benefit of \$25,000? Will low charges in a year allow the forgiveness of earlier debits? Some of these issues relate to the description of benefits appearing in university documents. Can these documents be written in clearer, more user-friendly language?

The shape of post-retirement benefits and deductibles for different employee groups and how the costs of these benefits are covered now varies from group to group. Whether the university would be willing to make all benefits for all retired people the same (as they are for pension benefits) remains an open question. The Association of Retired Faculty seems to be the only group of retirees that is currently raising these questions with the university.

John Becker

Association of Retired Faculty

York community members may be aware that there are two retirees organizations, but some confusion prevails about which is which and why there are two, despite efforts to make clear what the differences are. We thought in this initial YURA newsletter, YURA members--if you don't already know--would be pleased to have on record information about what our sister retirees group ARF (the Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians) is, about its size and agenda, as well as something about its history, concerns, and achievements.

As YURA members know, any retired employee of York University may join YURA by payment of dues of \$15, but as ARF's name indicates, its members must have been faculty or librarians.

ARF came into being in the fall of 1994 in response to the University administration's letter sent to all retired faculty members and librarians, telling them that their benefits programme was to be significantly cut back in its provisions which had been in effect for 10 years. They were given a

scant two weeks to decide whether to sign up for the new plan which would now require a monthly fee (where there had been none before) and a higher deduction for a single person or couple which would reduce the amount they would receive in refunds on eligible expenses (\$175, \$275 instead of >\$25 and \$50); there was also a significant reduction of reimbursements for dental costs (from 100% and 50% to 65% and 35%).

ARF's membership this past year was about 125. It established a formal connection with YUFA and pays a fee to them in recognition of YUFA's task of representing at the bargaining table the concerns of all the retired faculty and librarians.

The most notable ARF achievement to date is the establishment of a Trust to administer a \$1 million fund, derived from part of YUFA's allocation during the last pension holiday. At a General Meeting, ARF members voted to use this fund which YUFA had reserved for retirees as seed money for a Trust fund to be dedicated to improving benefits for retired faculty and librarians. The present Board of Trustees, established to administer this fund, consists of three YUFA members (one of whom is a retired faculty member still teaching) and two ARF members.

Currently its fees are \$25 annually. Application forms are available from and fees may be dropped off at either the **YUFA** office, 241 Schulich Building, or the **RPC**, C132 West Office Building.

YURA sends good wishes for ARF's success in its endeavour to find ways to improve health benefits. YURA's mandate is to work toward finding ways by which benefits for ALL York retirees will be improved. Whatever ARF achieves may be a good omen for YURA.

Virginia Rock

Request for News

In future newsletters we would like to include information on activities undertaken by York retirees – such things as celebrations, moves, travels, adventures, etc. If you would like to share an experience with us send a note to any member of the YURA Executive Committee. See list in next column.

Comings & Goings

As long as we have memories, yesterday remains,
As long as we have hope, tomorrow awaits,
As long as we have friendship, today is beautiful.
Anon.

Many of us have pleasant memories of one or more of the following former colleagues who have died since the beginning of the year 2000:

Zivko Apic	Margery Adamson
Alan Anderson	Gerard Biron
Leslie Carey	James Callighen
Ioan Davies	Norman N. Feltes
Emma Greatti	Olive Lambert
Richard Mooney	Adair Odie
Kenneth Radford	Murray Ross
Esther Rousselle	Frank Salerno
Mary Spence	ArvoTiidus
Peter H. Wood	Elizabeth Wodzianska.

Profile of a Former Colleague

Olive Lambert was one of the very early staff employees, when York was on the Glendon Campus, and one of her first jobs was with Bill Small and the Board of Governors. Olive was in her 40s when she came to Canada from England and during her early years she supplemented her York income by babysitting for various York people. Family matters caused her to return to England for a year or so and on her return she worked in several departments of the Faculty of Arts, including Humanities, English and East Asian Studies before she moved into the Faculty of Graduate Studies Admissions Office. She retired in December 1979 at the age of 60 and moved to Brighton in England. Olive loved to travel both before and after retirement. She visited Australia at least three times during her retirement, spent time in Singapore and Fiji, and came back to Canada every second year. Until her mid 70s she continued to work part time with an agency, locating short term accommodations in Brighton. She last came to Canada in October, 1999 when she visited with friends in Halifax as well as in Toronto. Olive died in Brighton in April Pauline Callen

A Slice of York

Who remembers those many retired permanent force military officers who helped build York in the early years? Send names and anecdotes to J. Becker.

The Executive 1999-2000

Contact any of the executive for more information about the YURA.

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** Also available during the day at the YURA Office in the West Office Building 416-736-2100 e.70664*

Elections to fill these positions will be held at the Annual General Meeting on October 27th. Details about time and location will be forwarded separately.

Retirement Planning Centre

Karen Gray and **How Chee Un** are the helpful staff of the **RPC** and have been of great assistance to the Retirees Association over the years. YURA's office is located within their precinct in the West Office Building, Room C132. Their phone is 416-736-2100 e.66228; email: retire@yorku.ca

Parking Privileges on Campus

One of the most attractive benefits of YURA membership is free parking when visiting either of the campuses. This benefit is not available to retirees who are concurrently employed either full or part-time by the university. Pass the word to your colleagues who have not yet joined YURA. Membership costs \$15 per year.

(End of the September 2000 YURA Newsletter)