



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association

Spring 2016

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

This will be a short message since the winter months have been quiet in the office and there is not a great deal to report. There are two principal items:

Spring Theatre Trip to Stratford on Tuesday June 16 to attend *Shakespeare in Love*. You will have received a notice about this and we repeat the pertinent

details here. The cost (play, transportation and lunch) is \$129 per person and the deadline for sending your cheque to reserve a spot is April 20. These are always great outings and we encourage as many as are interested to join us. As always, partners and friends are most welcome.

Annual Membership Renewal. You will recall that last year the date for renewal was moved up to June. The result in terms of actual renewals was most encouraging and we will be once again sending out in June YURA membership renewal notices for 2016-17. We hope that the response this year will be as good as it was last year.

Showcase 2016: We are already planning for Showcase which will be held on Tuesday November 8. If you will be moving/downsizing between now and then, please consider donating regiffable items to Showcase. As you will remember, all proceeds go toward the support of the awards and bursaries supported by YURA.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us at yura@yorku.ca or leave us a message at 416-736-70664 and we will get back to you.

As we write, the first day of spring is here. It has been a relatively easy winter, but the longing for this new and hopeful season never changes. Happy Spring.

-Jane Crescenzi and John Lennox

In Memoriam

Muriel Mandel-Kalmus
December 8, 2015
Ann Ricker
December 9, 2015
James Gillies
December 13, 2015
John Carter
December 20, 2015
Raffaele Filice
December 22, 2015
Gerard Hebert

December 24, 2015
Elizabeth Peckhover
December 25, 2015
Gabriel Warburg
December 31, 2015
Viola Keller
January 4, 2016
Jose Altieri
January 8, 2016
Ellen Wood
January 14, 2016
Graham Upcraft
January 17, 2016
Olwyn Wakelin
February 1, 2016
Joseph Spina
February 2, 2016
Jane Banfield
February 6, 2016
Joyce Blyth
February 6, 2016
Margaret Betty Connor
February 29, 2016

Life as it was back then: Reminiscences

Our 15th Reminiscence is written by Shake Toukmanian. Before her retirement, Shake was a faculty member in the Clinical Area Graduate Programme in the Department of Psychology at York. She has since maintained an active academic and volunteer life, giving guest lectures at various scholarly meetings and community organizations. Of particular note is her long-term association with the Zoryan Institute for Research and Documentation and her continued involvement in the Institute's International Genocide and Human Rights Studies University Programme (IGHRUP).

I am of Armenian heritage. I was born and raised in a small rural community on the northern outskirts of Cairo, Egypt, where we were one of the very few “foreign” (non-native) residents of the area. In retrospect, we were fortunate to have lived in this friendly and hospitable environment as it gave us the unique opportunity to interact and get to know the local customs and, occasionally, even be invited to attend weddings and other festivities!

I grew up in a “maternal environment” in that, aside from my father, our household consisted of three generations of “mothers” – my mother, my maternal grandmother, and her mother, my great grandmother - all under one roof. Although somewhat unusual, in retrospect, I believe this arrangement was ideal for me and my brother in that it provided us with a sense of generational continuity based on mutual respect, support, and an abundance of love and caring.

My parents met in Cairo, a large cosmopolitan city, where a multiplicity of communities (Armenian, Greek, Jewish, French, British, American, etc.) co-existed and thrived through their religious, cultural, and educational institutions and activities. The Armenian community was perhaps the oldest but numerically the smallest...until that is the tragic events of the early 1900s [the mass killings and deportations of Armenians from their ancestral lands in Eastern Anatolia that culminated in the 1915 Genocide by the Ottoman government of the day] when thousands found refuge in hospitable lands such as the US, France, and various Middle Eastern countries, including Egypt.

Dad was an orphan of this Genocide. He had witnessed the brutal killings of all the members of his family. He recalled vividly the fear of abandonment and sense of bewilderment when he, along with thousands of male orphaned children like him, were picked up from the streets, put up in Turkish orphanages, given Turkish names, and were even circumcised, with the intent of raising them as Turks.

In view of the magnitude of these tragic events, the Western World, particularly the Americans, responded by providing humanitarian assistance to survivors, focusing mainly on saving the orphans. The Near East Relief Organization was the first to undertake the task of collecting the orphans and establishing orphanages for them in Greece, Syria and Lebanon.

My father, who grew up in one of these institutions in Greece, had nothing but fond memories to tell us about his experiences...that Near East Relief was a singular organization, in that it provided not only food and shelter to thousands of orphans, but also insured that they were schooled in the Armenian language and culture and held classes in various trades to prepare them to be self-sufficient and become “model citizens” of whatever country they chose to settle in as adults. Indeed, being a good student with demonstrated leadership capabilities, my father was sponsored by an American lady to continue his education at Anatolia College in Greece. Upon his graduation, and with the continued help of the Near East Relief Organization, he opted to settle in Cairo where a large number of his orphanage friends had settled and formed a club that, in a gesture of gratitude, was named

the Near East Relief Club. The “Club”, as they called it, was their extended family where for us, their children, every adult was an “aunt” or an “uncle”! My mother’s circumstances were somewhat different, in that she came from a large well-to-do family. Having the means and suspecting the impending events several years prior to the Genocide, they left most of what they owned behind, moved to Constantinople (Istanbul) for a few years and then, were scattered throughout the world. The branch of my mother’s family ended up in Cairo. Throughout this ordeal, my grandmother had lost her aging father, as well as her husband, and had to work to support her mother and two young daughters.

I grew up in a middle class family where education, compassion for the under-privileged and being grateful for what we had were highly valued. We were not particularly religious, but going to church on Christmas Eve, during Lent and on Easter Sunday was a must. I attended the local Armenian National School where language classes in Armenian, Arabic, English and French were mandatory at every grade level. Upon my High School graduation, I went to the American College for Girls, a reputable Presbyterian junior college in Cairo. Throughout these years, I remember being a good student. I liked school and the friends I made in that environment. But most of all, I loved our family summer vacations at the beach in Port Said or Alexandria, as well as the school trips to the pyramids and/or to the “larger than life” historic sites in Upper Egypt.

Encouraged by my American teachers, I finally received a letter of acceptance

with a scholarship from MacMurray College, a small Methodist affiliated college, in southern Illinois. The separation from my family was difficult as I was only 20 years old, had not left home nor had I been on a plane before! It was quite a **long and arduous trip**...but I made it... little did I know that I was beginning a new phase of my life during one of the most eventful decades (1960-1969) in US history (the assassinations of JFK, Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King; the start of the Civil Rights movement, student riots against the Vietnam war, etc.).

Upon completing my BA in 1961, I went to Case Western University in Cleveland for a combined MA in clinical/school psychology. The three years I spent in Cleveland were memorable in many ways: First and foremost, my family had immigrated to Canada and settled in Toronto, making it possible for me to see them often. In addition, I was financially secure for the first time since my arrival in the US. Finally, Cleveland had an established Armenian community, as well as an active circle of foreign students, with whom I socialized and developed friendships that have lasted to this day!!

Following the footsteps of a close friend, I chose to do my Ph.D. in Clinical/Counselling Psychology at the University of Utah in Salt Lake City. The day I arrived, I remember being struck by the imposing presence of the Mormon Tabernacle, the vastness of the city, its wide streets, the slow pace of the traffic and men in cowboy hats!! This was decidedly a different environment than what I had experienced living in the Mid-West... and I recall saying to myself ‘I think I will like it here!!’ And indeed I did!! I soon found a congenial

group of friends and, with the supportive atmosphere provided to me by the Faculty in the Psychology Department, I was able to complete my degree requirements in less than four years. By this time, I was ready to immigrate and although I wanted to be in Montreal, I landed a junior position at Bishop's University, a small, English language institution in Quebec's Eastern Townships. After two years, I accepted a position as in the Department of Counsellor Education at McGill University. Being in Montreal, allowed me to visit my family more often and see friends from Egypt who had also immigrated and settled in Toronto. I met my husband on one of these occasions. We seemed to have similar backgrounds. His parents were also orphans of the Genocide who grew up in orphanages and ended up in Egypt where they were married and became members of the Near East Club. He too went to the United States to do his graduate studies and was also planning on returning and settling down in Canada, preferably in Toronto. Fortunately, York was hiring. I joined the Department of Psychology in 1971 and we were married on a snowy day in December 1972.

In retrospect, life has been quite an adventure with absolutely no regrets. I had a fulfilling academic life for over 40 years, two lovely daughters and now am blessed with a little grandson who keeps me on my toes!

-Shake Toukmanian



Video

You'll like this. Contributed by **Cliff Jansen**.

(If you encounter problems, copy and paste it in the Google line and it will take you to YouTube where you will be able to view it.)

http://www.tomrush.com./video_remember.html



Humour Department

Continuation of famous insults.

"He is a self-made man and worships his creator." - John Bright.

"I've just learned about his illness. Let's hope it's nothing trivial." - Irvin S. Cobb.

"He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others." - Samuel Johnson.

"He is simply a shiver looking for a spine to run up." -Paul Keating.

"He loves nature in spite of what it did to him." -Forrest Tucker.

"Why do you sit there looking like an envelope without any address on it?"
- Mark Twain.

"His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork.." - Mae West.

"Some cause happiness wherever they go; others, whenever they go."
- Oscar Wilde.

"He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lamp-posts... for support rather than illumination." - Andrew Lang (1844-1912).

Contributed by **Mary Pfister**

Most of our generation of 50+ were HOME SCHOOLED in many ways.

1. My mother taught me TO APPRECIATE A JOB WELL DONE.
"If you're going to kill each other, do it outside. I just finished cleaning."

2. My father taught me LOGIC.
" Because I said so, that's why ."

3. My mother taught me MORE LOGIC
"If you fall out of that swing and break your neck, you're not going to the store with me."

4. My mother taught me FORESIGHT.
"Make sure you wear clean underwear, in case you're in an accident."

5. My father taught me IRONY.

"Keep crying, and I'll give you something to cry about."

6. My mother taught me about BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION .
"Stop acting like your father!"

7. My mother taught me about RECEIVING.
"You are going to get it from your father when you get home!"

8. My mother taught me MEDICAL SCIENCE.
"If you don't stop crossing your eyes, they are going to get stuck that way."

9. My mother taught me about my ROOTS.
"Shut that door behind you. Do you think you were born in a barn?"

10. My mother taught me WISDOM.
"When you get to be my age, you'll understand."
Contributed by **Mary Pfister**



Photos contributed by Adrienne Dome



YURA Executive

Officers

John Lennox, Co-President
jlennox@yorku.ca
Jane Crescenzi, Co-President
gemma.crescenzi@yahoo.ca
Steve Dranitsaris, Secretary
sdrano@rogers.com
Marilyn Cartmill, Treasurer
cartmim@yorku.ca

Members at Large

Ed Lee-Ruff
leeruff@yorku.ca
Patricia Murray
pmurray@yorku.ca
Jean Levy
levyjr@yorku.ca
Billie Mullick
bmullick@yorku.ca
Charmaine Courtis
ccourtis@rogers.com
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.

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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>