



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association

Summer 2016

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Contents

Message from the YURA Co-Presidents.....	page one
Rusty Shteir receives an award.....	page two
Seniors' Census duty denied.....	page two
Life as it was back then: Reminiscence David Fowler.....	page three
Humour Department.....	page five
YURA Executive.....	page seven
YURA Office Hours.....	page seven

Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

We're at the beginning of June already and Anne-Marie Ambert has produced a summer newsletter for which we thank her. Four newsletters in one year and the monthly publication of *Person-to-Person* represent a major contribution to the collective identity and collegiality of YURA, so we'd like first to thank Anne-Marie most warmly for her stellar work on behalf of YURA. We are very

fortunate to be kept so well-informed and to benefit in various ways from these two publications.

Before the summer break, we'd like to mention three items:

- (i) **Showcase:** It will take place this year on Tuesday November 8 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. You should already be in receipt

of a separate **call for small regifiable items** for which you no longer have any use. We would be most grateful to receive them and make them part of our Attic Treasures Table. If you require help in getting these items to campus, please call us at 416-736-2100 ext. 70664 OR email us at yura@yorku.ca and we will get back to you about pick-up. Please remember that ALL proceeds are donated to the three YURA-sponsored student awards.

(ii) **Annual General Meeting, Friday October 21:** Our guest speaker will be **David Crombie** who will be talking to us on the topic “Toronto: Fit for the 21st Century.” Please mark this date on your calendars and plan to come on campus to hear this exceptional man.

(ii) **Membership Renewal:** You will be hearing from us by mid-June about the renewal of your YURA membership. We hope that you will respond without delay to our request for renewal of your membership so that the process can be mostly completed by the end of summer and well in time for the start of activities in the fall.

SUMMER HOURS: The Office will be closed from Friday July 1 to Tuesday August 23. We will be checking for messages occasionally. Office hours will resume on August 23.

We send warmest wishes to all of you for a happy, sunny, and safe summer. Thank you for your support.

Yours truly,
-Jane Crescenzi and John Lennox

RUSTY SHTEIR RECEIVES AN AWARD

Rusty Shteir will be awarded an Honorary Degree. It will be presented to her at the LA&PS Convocation on June 22 at 10:30 am, when undergraduate students in the Gender and Women's Studies and graduate students in the Graduate Program in Gender, Feminist and Women's Studies will be graduating. She will make a short speech at the presentation.

This is wonderful news. Warm congratulations to Rusty.

SENIORS' CENSUS DUTIES DENIED

Did you know that seniors who live in retirement homes as well as long-term care facilities do not get to fill out a census form? This deprives them de facto of their duty and by the same token they cannot either receive a long form of the census—even though 25 % of households now receive one.

What happens? These independent-living retirement residences and long-term care facilities receive from the government a list and it is someone with access to the residents' files who fills out the basics (age, sex) for each resident in each apartment—even when the residents are mentally competent as most are in retirement residences which are growing like mushrooms in number (because there is money to be made). As a result, these same residents are not on the list to randomly receive the long form. Consequently, the government and researchers are deprived of precious information regarding the proportion of

the elderly in a census tract who may be in poor health and have disabilities. Hence, an area (such as North York that has so many retirement residences) may be deprived of funding for certain needs.

It seems that this is a topic that CURAC and CARP, as two groups representing retirees, should be interested in looking into. StatsCan argues that, asking for completion of a census form is too much of a burden on residents (and this approach also saves money). I suspect that this lapse dates from decades of political thinking that were focused on very ill and mentally disabled elderly in long-term care institutions, a reality which has since long become more complex socially.

-Anne-Marie Ambert

Life as it was back then: Reminiscences

Our 16th Reminiscence is written by David Fowler. When he retired from York in 1996, David was a faculty member in the Schulich School of Business and the Director of the International MBA Program. He has chosen to entitle his Reminiscence: "Reminiscences of a Buenos Aires Childhood."

I was born in the Buenos Aires suburb of Belgrano in September, 1930, and lived there continuously till March, 1948 when I left Argentina to attend Imperial College, London. My father had chosen to leave England during the General Strike of 1926 when there was a world-wide shipping slump and soon joined an Anglo-Argentine shipping agency and brokerage firm in Buenos Aires. He supervised the stays in port of the ships

the firm represented and was allowed four months home leave to the UK every four years. Three years later in 1929, he married a daughter of the principal shareholder who had arrived in Buenos Aires from England in 1889 at 12 years of age.

Belgrano was a middle-class suburb inhabited by a significant number of English-speaking families. We were members of the Belgrano Athletic Club which boasted 15 tennis courts, a bowling green, a rugby field which became a cricket pitch in summer, a swimming pool and a large club house with bar, restaurant, billiard tables and a few residential rooms for some old bachelors. This club and the downtown English Club were social centres for the ex-pats. This was a time when British influence was still very significant. The British owned and operated the railways, the telephone company, several banks and insurance companies, a major meat-packing plant and two important shipping agencies and brokerage firms as well as many large "estancias" producing beef, sheep, wheat, oats, corn, barley, etc. All of these provided employment for a substantial number of Britons.

I completed all my primary and secondary schooling at private English schools in the Buenos Aires area. Schooling at the primary level (grades 1 to 7) was in both Spanish and English as primary education in Spanish for half a day was compulsory for all school-aged children. As a result we had Spanish classes in the morning and English classes in the afternoon. Secondary education was optional and could be in either English or Spanish. My parents opted for English so I worked towards

the Cambridge Higher School Certificate. I walked to and from primary school, ten long blocks, twice a day and had to cross the railway tracks at a level crossing. People were killed fairly frequently at that crossing so it was impressed on me that I was not allowed to cross when the barriers were down. As a result I was occasionally worried about being late for school.

The suburb of Belgrano in the 30s was a mixture of the modern and the century-old. Alongside modern housing and apartments were some ancient mansions. There were also some odd customs. In addition to the milkman delivering pasteurized milk in bottles, we had the farmer who paraded his cows, with their calves, down the street dispensing fresh milk. The cows had bells around their necks so they could be heard coming and those wanting milk took their jugs out on the street. The farmer then milked one of the cows into the jug, was paid, and went on his way. The sanitary authorities finally caught up with that after cases of foot and mouth disease were reported.

There were several unpaved streets in Belgrano that, in rainy weather, became a sea of mud. The authorities, therefore, installed horizontal swing bridges at street corners to allow pedestrians to cross. The commuter train system to and from downtown Buenos Aires was very efficient and, while the British ran the railways, trains were always on time. As a result we used it frequently but, as we lived about 8 long blocks from the nearest station it was not great to walk in bad weather. We had a choice - we could take a taxi which was usually an ancient Ford with the fare starting at 50 cents of the peso or take a horse-drawn carriage, called a Victoria, which started

at only 40 cents of the peso. My mother who was an economical soul always took the Victoria. The corner grocery sold the usual goods but also wine and beer, and specialty products from England like Worcestershire Sauce, Angostura Bitters and Branston Pickle.

I realized, as soon as I arrived in austere England in 1948 that my childhood had been a privileged one despite the fact that my parents, although reasonably well off, were certainly not wealthy. My mother did not work outside the house but neither did she work particularly hard inside. We had one full-time, live-in domestic helper, a weekly washerwoman, a woman to do the ironing weekly, a man to polish the floors monthly and a regular gardener when we lived in a house with a garden. In addition, we shared a night watchman with our neighbours on the street.

It was only when we came to Canada in 1953 that I found out the extent of the devastation that the Great Depression had on North America. Argentina prospered in the 30's, it did not suffer the terrible drought that afflicted the Prairies so they produced and exported tons of wheat, corn, barley, oats and beef and more beef. The family business also prospered as a result. The agricultural surpluses were so large that I remember two years when they were burning excess corn cobs in the railway locomotives instead of coal (which had to be imported).

But let's backtrack here: Life changed on September 3, 1939 (my ninth birthday) when Britain declared war on Nazi Germany. Many Nazi sympathizers came out of the woodwork including the Argentine government of the day. My

parents' plan of sending me to an English Public School went by the board. No home leave for us in 1940. My father left the family firm to join the Royal Naval Volunteer Reserve with the intention of going to sea and fighting in the big war but it wasn't to be. The Navy decided that his knowledge of the shipping business and the eastern South American coastline was too valuable to waste so he was put in charge of a covey of agents who attempted to determine where the German U-boats were operating. A lot of cloak but not much dagger as they successfully transmitted vital information to the Admiralty.

The big excitement came in December 1939 with the Battle of the River Plate where three outgunned British cruisers, the Ajax, Achilles and Exeter under Commodore Harwood took on the German pocket battleship, the Graf Spee, and damaged it sufficiently to force its captain, Hans Langsdorf, to seek shelter in Montevideo to effect needed repairs. The Uruguayans were neutral but pro-Allies so they were allowed a stay of only 72 hours. A radio announcement by Winston Churchill referring to approaching British warships led the captain of the Graf Spee to scuttle his ship. Those on board escaped to Buenos Aires. The captain subsequently committed suicide when he discovered he had been duped. Theoretically his crew should have been interned (Argentina was "neutral") but most of them made their way back to Germany. Apart from that incident, I was relatively unaffected by the war.

In the British community in Argentina many of the youngest and brightest chose to volunteer in the British armed forces. This involved a dangerous

journey because the U-boats were very active in the South Atlantic. Britain bought, on credit, many thousands of tons of beef which had to be paid for after the war. The Argentine government demanded payment in US dollars but the Argentines have always been very nationalistic and the foreign-owned railways rankled so in March 1948 they took over the railways in payment of the British debt. Most of the foreign railway employees promptly left, going predominantly to the UK, thus reducing the size of the British community. This had an unfortunate effect in that there was less business for the English-owned banks, insurance companies, etc. which correspondingly downsized.

My story ends here as I, too, left Argentina a few days after the takeover of the railways to go to Imperial College in London. After graduation I did return but stayed for only 18 months before emigrating to Canada in 1953. Some people thought we were foolish because at that time Argentina had a higher per capita National Income than did Canada. It's a very different situation today. We arrived in Canada with no job but good prospects and I started working for Dominion Tar & Chemical Company in Montreal as a Design Engineer in the Engineering Department at a monthly salary of \$350.

-David Fowler

Contemporary Philosophers

"As I hurtled through space, one thought kept crossing my mind - every part of this rocket was supplied by the lowest bidder." John Glenn

"When the white missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we

had the land. They said 'Let us pray.' We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.”

Desmond Tutu

“I'm not a paranoid, deranged millionaire. God dammit, I'm a billionaire.” Howard Hughes

“After the game, the King and the pawn go into the same box.” Italian proverb

“The only reason they say 'Women and children first' is to test the strength of the lifeboats.” Jean Kerr

“You know you're a redneck if your home has wheels and your car doesn't.” Jeff Foxworthy

“When a man opens a car door for his wife, it's either a new car or a new wife.” Prince Philip

“Wood burns faster when you have to cut and chop it yourself.” Harrison Ford



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