



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association

Fall 2016

No. 37

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

We hope that you had a safe and pleasant summer and that autumn (now upon us) will bring exceptional weather and will delay as late as possible the onset of winter.

We want to begin by providing a brief report on the 14th annual conference of CURAC (College and University Retiree Association of Canada) that was held at the University of Saskatchewan last May

and attended by John Lennox as YURA's representative. The topic of the meeting was "The Changing Post-Secondary Education Landscape." Among the presentations were papers on the evolution of the corporate and research university; on indigenization of the University of Saskatchewan; on a strategic perspective for the Saskatoon Council on Aging and the Age-Friendly Saskatoon Initiative; and on community engagement involving retirees who link community and university. For me, the most memorable part of the programme was its blend of institutional, indigenous, and senior perspectives. There is a vitality in this confluence in Saskatchewan and much to learn for the rest of us. The statement I will always remember was delivered by Candace Wasacase-Lafferty who is Director of Aboriginal Initiatives at the University. At the university's beautiful Gordon Oakes Red Bear Student Centre, she made a point of saying that within its walls, "No one is a stranger." The inclusive ethos of the centre is, in my view, a model for the country

The YURA year has begun with our annual call for nominations and the announcement of our Annual General Meeting on Friday October 21. We will be honoured to have as our guest speaker **David Crombie, OOnt** (Order of Ontario) and **OC** (Order of Canada), whose subject will be "Toronto: Fit for the 21st Century." He will speak at 11 a.m. We do hope that members will turn up in great numbers.

Our fall list of events is as follows:

Thursday October 20: The YURA trip to the SHAW FESTIVAL to see A

Woman of No Importance. 45 people have signed up to go.

Friday October 21: AGM at the Underground

11 a.m. Guest Speaker **David Crombie**
12 noon: Lunch (complimentary)
1:15 p.m.: Annual General Meeting

Please register by October 17 if you plan to attend. To do so, email us at yura@yorku.ca OR call 416-736-2100 ext. 70664

Tuesday November 8: SHOWCASE (9 a.m. to 3 p.m.) Central Square. All proceeds are donated to YURA-supported student awards.

As you may know, in the late spring the processing of membership and parking passes moved from Pension and Benefits to Human Resources. We want to thank Pension and Benefits for their service to YURA over the last two years.

We would also like to express our gratitude to Donna Smith who, in her role as Interim Assistant Vice-President, made the new arrangement possible. Jane Crescenzi and Marilyn Cartmill came to campus every Wednesday over the summer to make the transition as smooth as possible and YURA owes them a great vote of thanks for that exceptional extra volunteer activity. The transition has been very uneventful thanks to their attention and to the talents of Teresa Hunter in HR.

In closing, we'd like to acknowledge the honour awarded to Fred Fletcher, a member of the YURA Executive Committee. MacEwan University, at its spring convocation, bestowed on Fred the MacEwan University Medal of Excellence in recognition of his lifetime

of contributions to the academy. Richly deserved and, as YURA knows, those contributions continue. Warm congratulations, Fred.

All good wishes for the fall. We are looking forward to seeing you at our Annual General Meeting and at Showcase.

**-John Lennox and Jane Crescenzi
Co-presidents**

IN MEMORIAM 2016

Giantee Simbhunauth	March 5
Gerald Gold	March 6
Joyce Aspinall	March 12
Reuben Hasson	March 15
Leonora Johnson	March 15
Walter Beringer	March 23
Gwyneth Smiley	April 7
Ruth Cogan	April 16
Rosalina Simone	April 16
G. Donald Jackson	April 20
Sarah Macdonald	May 3
Letty Anderson	May 9
Betty Witmer	May 11
Thelma McCormack	May 21
Assuro Vacchiano	May 25
Shirley Howell	May 30
Maria Leone	May 31
James Coldwell	June 10
Harriet Botta	June 23
Ramsay Cook	July 14
Orest Subtelny	July 26
Edward Hagerman	July 31
Dolly Sutter	August 16
Rima Anani	August 31

Life as it was back then: Reminiscences

*Our 17th Reminiscence is written by
Peter Kaiser. Before retiring from York*

in 1993, he taught in the Department of Psychology. After, he continued to conduct research, coauthored a book, Human Color Vision, and started a web book, The Joy of Visual Perception. "I finally turned in my keys in 1997. Currently one of my joys is a new skill I acquired, namely woodturning. Also I continue to maintain my web book."

"I was born in 1933 when Hitler rose to power. The events of the thirties in Germany are well documented so there is no need to dwell in detail on them here. Suffice it to say that non-Jews were forbidden to associate with Jews as friends, employees or even as doctor's patients. By 1936, my parents decided that it would be impossible to remain in Germany and prepared to immigrate to the United States. My father left first. The U.S. recognized his German medical credentials; all he had to do was pass an English examination. My mother, my sister, who was born in 1935, and I immigrated to the U.S. in 1937, settling in the village of Lynbrook, Long Island, NY. This is where my father established his medical practice. My parents were able to bring all their possessions, however, no money could be exported. My grandparents stayed in Germany only to perish in the gas chambers. Actually, my mother's father, died at the age of 50 in 1936, from complications relating to the injuries he received while serving in the German army during WW I.

My father's medical practice did well in the beginning because many people in our village were interested in the new German "refugee doctor". When this novelty wore off he had to establish a steady and reliable practice. He was most adamant that he was not a refugee,

but an immigrant. Refugees seek refuge and plan to return from whence they came. He immigrated to the United States! The early years in the U.S. were financially difficult. I remember my mother wearing the same housedress for many years. During World War II, my parents took in women boarders who worked in a nearby defense plant, manufacturing airplanes. The ladies were taken in as much for the money as for patriotic duty.

My parents, being educated and intelligent people, reasoned it would be good for my sister and me to continue to learn German while at the same time becoming fluent in English. Thus, we spoke both languages. When I was in grade 1, the principal called my parents to determine what languages were being spoken at home. When she learned that we spoke both English and German, she informed my parents that I wasn't learning English very well and that they should stop speaking German. Today, it might seem incomprehensible that this dumb advice would be followed. However, one must recall that we were new immigrants from Germany. Education in Germany was not like that of the United States. A passage from Albert Speer's *Inside The Third Reich* describes the German educational climate: "In school, there could be no criticism of courses or subject matter, let alone of the ruling powers in the state. Unconditional faith in the authority of the school was required. It never even occurred to us to doubt the order of things, for as students we were subjected to the dictates of a virtually absolutist system." Thus, my folks did not argue or countermand the principal's dictates.

I find it difficult to recall many joys in my life while in grammar school. I had few, if any, friends. I cannot recall a single instance of even wanting to ask a friend to stay over for dinner or to sleep over. However, even if I wanted to have a friend over for dinner I am not sure it would have been possible. Even my sister, who was far more socially adept than I, never had a friend over for dinner. In fairness though with food rationing in force during the WW II, I imagine families were constrained by the allotted food ration stamps. So my early years in school were not particularly happy. My parents brought clothes for my sister and me so that new ones would not have to be purchased for several years after our arrival in the U.S. The style of dress for the young German child was different than that which American children wore. Children, being cruel as only children can be, made my life miserable when they mocked the clothes I wore. In addition, my English vocabulary was poor and my accent even worse. This provided additional fodder for the ribbing and teasing to which I was subjected. The start of World War II with its associated anti-German propaganda did not facilitate assimilation in my new country. In addition, I found that antisemitism was exhibited by some of my classmates, presumably mimicking their parents.

I recall receiving some particularly useless advice from my grammar school principle when I complained about the name calling. She told me, "Peter, sticks and stones will break your bones, but words will never hurt you." The summer between my third and fourth year in grammar school was devoted to correcting my pronunciation of the

English language. I learned to properly pronounce my W's, as in women, ch's as in chair, and th's as in the; typical problems for one whose first language is German. These tutorial sessions were an unqualified success. There is not a trace of a German accent in my speech. It has been completely replaced by a New York accent.

There was one highlight. The members of my sixth grade class engaged in some gymnastic exercises which were publicly performed. One of these involved diving over an increasing high human pyramid and performing a tumbling roll after clearing the pyramid. I was the last person to perform the exercise, therefore having to dive over the greatest number of my classmates. That was the beginning and the end of my gymnastics career.

When I was 11 years old, in 1944, my parents decided it was time to start speaking German again. They reasoned that it is always good to have a second language. We were in the throes of World War II and I wanted no part of that Kraut language. By 11 years of age, I truly assimilated into my new country and wanted to remain as undistinguished from others as possible. My parents received no cooperation from me in their attempt to teach us German. This stubbornness came to haunt me when I had to take a language course as an undergraduate and in graduate school when I had to demonstrate a scientific reading knowledge of two foreign languages.

One of the frequent recurrences in these early years were the regular reports one received regarding academic progress; the report card. These were given

periodically and were to be brought home and signed by one's parents. My reports were usually undistinguished and when my parents asked why I hadn't done better, I would make reference to some classmate who did worse. This always brought the same reply, especially from my father. "Always look up, don't look down." As a consequence, in succeeding years, my comparison groups were not my performance peers or those whom I surpassed. Rather, I compared my work and achievements with those whom I considered to have better accomplishments than I had. This mode of operating followed me through the rest of my life and continues today.

I never liked going to school. I disliked reading what I was told to read, and then being tested. One would think that with such a dislike I would not have remained in school until the age of 33, with only a four-year absence for military duty.

My mother dedicated her life to the service of others. She dedicated herself to her husband, her children and her community. A time came when my sister and I would come home from school and yell, "Mom!" When this happened my folks decided it was time for her to reduce some of her outside activities so that she would be home when needed. As my sister and I became more independent, she once again devoted greater attention to her various outside activities.

I will end by noting that I graduated high school in 1951, went to university for one year, then the United States Air Force for four years, back to university, then to graduate school, after which I had a two year postdoctoral fellowship

and finally in 1968 came to York University.”

--Peter Kaiser

NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following new members:

Natasa Bajin, Wilfried Bandle, Irene Boyd, Cheryl Coleman, Gloria Cook, Brian Gaber, Gabrielle Hardt, Neita Israelite, Armando Marino, Alina Marquez, Arun Mukherjee, Leo Panitch, Kelly Parke, Barbara Rahder, Joanne Rider, Gordon Roberts, Mary Sangregorio, Candace Seguinot, Holly Small, Norma Speranza, John Thomson, John Wilson, Paula Yanofsky

YURA ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

Friday October 21, 2016 at the Underground in the Student Centre

11 a.m. Speaker: David Crombie, OOnt, OC – “Toronto: Fit for the 21st Century”

12 noon Luncheon (Complimentary)

1:15 p.m. Annual General Meeting

If you plan to attend, please register by Monday October 17. To register, email us at yura@yorku.ca or call 416-736-2100 ext. 70664

SHOWCASE 2016

Tuesday November 8: 9 a.m. – 3p.m. Central Square

Helping YURA to Support York Students

Come to our annual Showcase, meet friends, spend some cash, and help us raise money in aid of our three student awards. As usual, there will be our Bake Table, our Attic Treasures Table, and tables for YURA vendors and exhibitors.

As you will recall from notices already circulated, we are soliciting from members small regifiable items for our Attic Treasures Table. Please, no books, lamps, appliances or bedding. Keep in mind that most of our customers are York students.

Deliveries may be made to YURA, 101 Central Square on the following days and times:

Tuesday November 1 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Wednesday November 2 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Thursday November 3 from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

If you require assistance in getting your items to the YURA office, please contact us at yura@yorku.ca or call 416-736-2100 ext. 70664 and we will be pleased to assist you.

GOOD READS

I have just finished reading Andy Weir’s **The Martian**. What a page-turner. Like Jules Verne all over again: deja vu! I would highly recommend it to anyone even slightly interested in space exploration. It will be particularly engaging to those with some interest in engineering and/or biology, or to those interested in engineers’ and/or biologists’ minds. I am sure the movie conveys the suspense, but if you are interested in what was going through this

guy's mind, the book is going to be the winner. Make sure you have the next few days clear before you open it. Published by Broadway Books, a division of Random House, 2014.

–**Bill Frisken**

The Invention of Wings by Sue Monk Kidd (she also wrote *Secret Life of Bees*). This exquisitely written novel takes us into life in a wealthy plantation house in South Carolina in the 1800s. We hear the events through the eyes of the slave girl Hetty "Handful" and through Sarah Grimke, a daughter of the plantation owner. On Sarah's 11th birthday she is given this young slave "Handful" as her personal slave, and Sarah tries to refuse the gift as she doesn't condone slavery. Sarah has a keen intellect and she aspires to accomplish something greater with her life but because she is a woman, society and family shackle her intelligence. Through all this the norms of society and the place of women and slaves tells a gripping story of tragedy, survival and love for all concerned. It's a great read.

--**Margaret Leitch**

The Little Paris Bookshop, by Nina George, published by Crown, 2015, available in the Public Library. From a floating bookshop in a barge on the Seine, Monsieur Pardu prescribes books to mend broken hearts and souls. He is still heartbroken after his great love disappears, leaving him a letter which he has not opened. When he finally opens it he unmoors the barge and travels through the waterways of France, picking up some interesting companions on the way and having some strange adventures. A truly delightful read.

- **Pauline Callen**

The Golden Son, by Shilpi Somaya Gowda, published by Harper Collins in 2016, available in the Public Library. A fascinating story of the eldest son of a prestigious family in India. Anil travels to the USA to become a doctor, where he has many triumphs but also tragedies. While there is an underlying love story the cultural differences and practices are spellbinding. After the death of his father, who has been the problem-solver for the village, this task now becomes Anil's as the oldest son, not easy to do long distance over the telephone. This one is hard to put down until finished.

-**Pauline Callen**

BREXIT or UK's answer to Schitt's Creek (CBC)

On June 23rd the UK had a Referendum on whether to remain in or leave the European Union. To many, particularly one Mr. Cameron, the overall tally indicated an unexpected decision to leave. However, he was the person who masterminded the "question" which had no provision or safeguards attached. It seems that the referendum could be won by one vote, even if only one person in the UK had bothered to vote!

One unanticipated result was panic in scholarly circles which received vibes that EU partners were becoming unwilling to continue inter-university collaborative research funding. Also there was a good deal of concern amongst EU researchers working in the UK as to their future status. Deans and Presidents have been making statements on this to reassure those involved that

they would not be affected (at least immediately).

The split in the vote was binodal from North to South. The extremities, Scotland and the Southern Counties were generally quite strongly for staying with the EU. The central counties were for leaving. Off to the west Ulster, with a land border with an EU country, voted to stay. There was some hint of a divide between seniors (for leaving) and juniors (for staying). The former with memories of an extinct “Commonwealth,” the latter with no experience of anything else. There were also suggestions, shameful to admit, of xenophobia in many areas.

The lead-up to the vote was characterized by misinformation and trivialities. Indeed even the name Brexit introduced a sort of levity or unimportance to the matter. The posing of the question has raised many constitutional and legal concerns. The confusion of “referendum” with “democracy” is also a red herring, overlooking several points involving the purposes of democracy, such as to serve as some protection of minorities against majorities. Strange that a government supposedly committed to spreading “democracy” would reveal that they do not really understand what it is.

My Alma Mater, University College London, held a legal forum post Brexit to take a close look at the whole debacle which some may find interesting. It can be seen and heard on the web at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EnlHKuINSE>. You will need 100 minutes to take in the whole thing, but it is a sobering reflection on referenda in general (particularly for Canadians), and

the terrible mess a government can get into when it lacks common sense and foresight. -Clive Halloway

Parenting in the wild



(Contributed by Helen Mannion)



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