



A newsletter for members of the York University Retirees' Association (YURA)

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

It is June, spring/summer has finally arrived and many of you are no doubt preparing for holidays and cottage outings. There are many things to catch you up on before we too prepare for summer.

This quarter we have added to our staffing in the office. Agnes Fraser has now joined John Wilson on Wednesday. We are grateful to all our office volunteers and would like to take this time to thank Agnes, John Wilson, John Lennox, Sara Kozlowski and Philippa Marchetti for ongoing support. Without these volunteers, we would not be able to support the Association as well as we do. So a big thank you to all.

The Executive Committee has been busy this quarter as well. We have had several meetings over the term to prepare for Showcase, November 12, our theatre outings both June 18th and then again October 8, 2019. This year, members of the executive committee along with other YURA volunteers have been planning a range of activities for our members. The trips to the Bata Shoe Museum and the Aga Khan Museum were wonderful outings for those members who participated. This fall we plan to announce an outing in late September to Lake Muskoka, for a ride on the steamship the Sequin. So stay tuned.

We have been updating our web site with the goal of making it more helpful to YURA members and more interactive. Thanks to the work of both Michele Young and Ian Greene, you will notice many changes. We have updated our membership renewal forms with the hope of identifying more members who can help.

We are delighted to report that our guest speaker for the Annual General Meeting, October 25th, will be Anna Porter. Anna Porter was born in Budapest, Hungary, during the Second World War and escaped with her mother at the end of the 1956 revolution. In 1982, she founded Key Porter Books and published such national figures as Farley

Mowat, Jean Chrétien, Conrad Black, and Allan Fotheringham. Please see additional details below. We hope you will add this date to your calendar.

And finally, after much discussion in the Executive meetings, we have decided to enter a YURA team to the Scotiabank Charity Challenge (5 KM walk), October 20, 2019, to raise money for our YURA Graduate Student Endowment. If you are interested in participating as a team member, please send us a note on the yura@yorku.ca email or indicate so on your renewal membership form. Our goal is to build a team of 20 YURA members and raise as much as we can. All proceeds raised by the team will go directly to the Endowment and will be tax receiptable with donations of \$20.00 or more. We hope you will give this new initiative your serious consideration. It will be an addition to the annual fundraising letter that is sent by Charmaine Courtis, as co-president of YURA. With the changes in funding that the university and students will experience this year, these efforts are even more important.

Once again, YURA was well represented at the annual CURAC meetings, held in May at the University of Guelph. Ian Greene, Fred Fletcher, Charmaine Courtis and Fred Weizmann were in attendance. While there were the usual sessions on best practices, the University put on several very interesting sessions highlighting leading-edge research in Agriculture, Medicine, and Aging.

We are appreciative of all the work that Anne-Marie Ambert puts into both the *Newsletter* and the *Person-to-Person* as our Editor. Her contribution to YURA is extensive, and we thank her on behalf of all our members for her wonderful contribution to the Association.

Another person we wish to acknowledge in the report is our Human Resource support person, Teresa Hunter. She will continue to collect our mail

and support our membership renewal process. Thank you Teresa.

Our office will close at the end of June and reopen again in late August. Through the summer we will be processing membership renewals and welcoming new members. We will answer the yura@yorku.ca email throughout the summer. On behalf of the Executive we wish you a wonderful summer and look forward to working with you and for you again in the fall.

--**Charmaine Courtis and Ian Greene, Co-Presidents**



Anna Porter was born in Budapest, Hungary, during the Second World War and escaped with her mother at the end of the 1956 revolution to New Zealand, where she graduated with an MA from Christchurch University. Like so many young Kiwis, after graduation she travelled to London, England, where she had her first taste of publishing. In 1968, she arrived in Canada, and was soon swept up in the cultural explosion of the 1970s. At McClelland & Stewart, run by the flamboyant Jack McClelland,

she quickly found herself at the heart of Canadian publishing.

In 1982, she founded Key Porter Books and published such national figures as Farley Mowat, Jean Chrétien, Conrad Black, and Allan Fotheringham. She went on to write both fiction and nonfiction works, including *Kasztner's Train*, which won the Writers' Trust Nonfiction Prize and the Jewish Book Award, *The Ghosts of Europe*, which won the Shaughnessey Cohen Prize for Political Writing, and has published four mystery novels. She is the author of two books of memoirs: *The Story-Teller: A Memoir of Secrets, Magic, and Lies* (2006) and *In Other Words: How I fell in Love with Canada one Book at a Time* (2018). Anna Porter is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a recipient of the Order of Ontario. She lives in Toronto with her husband, Julian Porter. Visit her at AnnaPorter.ca.

At the York University Retirees' Association Annual General Meeting on October 25, Ms. Porter will discuss her most recent memoir, *In Other Words*.

EDITORIAL NOTE

It should be noted that parts of this *Newsletter* were prepared during the celebrations commemorating the 75th anniversary of D-Day.



IN MEMORIAM

Fred Ash	February 27
Ronald Burke	March 19
David Johnson	March 20
Morton Abramson	March 26
Gordon Gard	April 4
Giovanni Passarelli	April 7
Sylvie Arend	April 8
Ronald Webster	April 9
George Martell	April 14
Giuseppe Pastore	April 20
Cynthia Dent	April 25
Tucker Carrington	April 29
Stephen Endicott	May 4
Peggy Ng	May 4
John “Jack” Craig	May 9
Inez Nunes	May 15

REMINISCENCE

Our 26th Reminiscence is authored by Robert Fothergill. Robert retired from York in 2006. At the time, he was teaching in the Faculty of Fine Arts. He has entitled his childhood autobiography “My time as an altar boy.”

“I think I must have been six years old, possibly still only five, when I began to serve at mass as an altar boy, sometime in 1947, in the outer London suburb of Banstead in Surrey. Too young, too small to manage the transfer from one side of the altar to the other (“the Epistle side” to “the Gospel side”) the huge ceremonial missal from which the priest read the service – though he presumably knew the standard bits by heart - and surely too young to enunciate the Latin. After some training in the rudiments I first flew solo – though I can’t recall the specific occasion – at a weekday mass, attended probably by no more than half a dozen souls, remotely controlled by Mr. Flaxman who positioned himself as close as possible to the altar. Mr. Flaxman was a devout layman who probably went to mass every day of the year. I don’t know if he had any semi-official function, as sacristan or

verger or something – verger sounds a bit Anglican – but he was a pillar of the large hut which then served as the parish church in Banstead, and must have coached the novice altar boys. (By the way, and for the record, I never encountered, or at any rate recognized as such, the remotest whiff of altar-boy-abuse in my time in the Catholic Church. There.)

It must have gone like this: Father Ryan and I have donned our costumes in the sacristy, he wearing the complicated rig-out of alb, dalmatic, chasuble etc., and the latter most likely green for a day of no special distinction, and I the cassock and cotta of a server. The cassock is an ankle-length black serge coat with a lot of buttons up the front; the cotta is a starched white blouse with wide sleeves. I emerge from the sacristy first, looking unbearably angelic I imagine, followed by Father Ryan carrying, under a cloth matching the colour of his chasuble, the ciborium containing the hosts for today’s consecration. Is my mother in the congregation? And does an almost sinful pride and joy fill her heart – that heart that I will break only eleven or twelve years later? At the foot of the altar we genuflect, he stands at centre and I kneel on the lowest altar step...and we begin. He declares, like Buck Mulligan, “Introibo ad altare dei” – I will go into the altar of God – and I respond, “Ad deum qui laetificat juventutem meam.” – To God who brings joy to my youth. It is from one of the psalms. (In putting it down here I am going from memory, plus enough remnants of academic Latin to make sure I’ve got the case agreements correct.) At this first outing I don’t know it by heart, but am reading from a printed card. Perhaps Mr. Flaxman is saying it along with me. Do I have any idea of what it means? I really can’t say. Whatever else it may be, it’s a series of extreme tongue-twisters. My next response is “Quia tu es, Deus, fortitudo mea; quare me repulisisti et quare tristis incedo dum affligit me inimicus?” (I swear I haven’t looked this up, and if it looks like showing off, well I suppose it is. But it’s also prima facie evidence of how indelibly this basic liturgy was engraved on young brains, over a period of several years.)

And on it goes. The preliminaries over, and the general confession recited, by me – “Confiteor deo omnipotenti...” – Father Ryan mounts the altar steps and proceeds through the prayers and readings prescribed for a “low” mass on a weekday. Unlike on a Sunday, he doesn’t read the epistle and gospel extracts in English to the congregation – they have them in their two-column dual-language missals anyway. There is no sermon, probably no “notices” or announcements. On some mornings there may be no congregants there at all, except for Mr. Flaxman. After about fifteen minutes we are getting to the heart of the mystery. We are approaching the consecration. At every mass, with the sole exception of the “mass of the pre-sanctified” on Good Friday, some number of “hosts” – small micro-thin coins of a simple flour-and-water “bread”, manufactured by nuns in a convent-industry, plus a very small quantity of wine (tasting rather like sherry, as most altar boys eventually discover for themselves) are turned into the body and blood of Christ, by virtue of the utterance of the ritual words, “Hoc est enim corpus meum” – For this is my body – and “Hoc est enim calix sanguinis mei” – For this is the chalice of my blood. It’s a genuine ritual, rather than a mere ceremony, in that if the exact words are not said, by a properly ordained person, the miracle will not occur. Not surprisingly, a lot of what can fairly be called superstitious dread surrounds the possibility of getting it wrong, or of dropping or spilling something.

In preparation for the consecration, one of my duties as a server – and it is, actually, the task of a sort of waiter – is to bring to the stage-left side of the altar the “cruets”, containing a little wine and a little water, which Father Ryan takes from me and mixes into the chalice. I forget why water has to be mixed into the wine-to-be-consecrated, but it does. It seems redolent of pre-Christian, Greek sacrificial rituals, and probably is. (After the consecration and distribution of communion is over, the server approaches the altar again with a cruet of water and a little folded towel, for Father Ryan to wash his fingers.) For the actual moment of consecration I kneel to one side of Father Ryan on an upper step of the altar, and ring the little set of jangly bells three

times: once when he reverently genuflects before the divine presence that he has just brought into our midst; once when he raises the host aloft for all to see; and once when he genuflects again. The process is repeated a few seconds later for the wine-become-blood. As a child of six, and indeed for the next ten years, I believed in the literal truth of this miracle, and while it inevitably becomes rather dulled by familiar repetition, it never ceases to be an occasion of awe.”

--**Robert Fothergill**

FORD GOVERNMENT CUTS IN HEALTH SERVICES AND CARE

Following are three short articles intended to highlight the potential consequences of some of the many cuts in the financing of health services and care in Ontario. Much more could be written as the list is very long.

GETTING SICK HURTS WHEN YOU ARE OUTSIDE ONTARIO

The Ford government is proposing to eliminate all out of country health coverage for Ontarians travelling outside of Canada.

This policy constitutes an attack on Ontario’s seniors. Many seniors enjoy inexpensive trips to warmer climes during Canada’s long winter (snow birds) or visit children and grandchildren in the United States or Europe or Asia.

The Ford government points out that OHIP coverage outside of Canada only provides a limited degree of protection. This is true, but it is an argument for increasing coverage, not removing it.

Private insurance coverage for seniors is prohibitively expensive as it is, but as John Deamer of Wasaga Beach points out (*Toronto Star*, May 3, 2019) even those rates are based on OHIP as the first payer. Without OHIP, private insurance rates will increase and make out-of-country trips too expensive for most seniors. That week in Cuba or

the month in a mobile home in Florida will be just a dream or a memory, depending on your age.

By the way, seniors over 80 cannot buy travel insurance at all. And there are quite a few of them out there by now.

If the Conservative government of Ontario wants to have seniors vote for them in future, they should increase, not decrease, OHIP coverage for out-of-country travel.

--Edelgard Mahant

CUTS TO PUBLIC HEALTH

Cuts to Public Health will put all the residents of Ontario at risk – there will be fewer dollars for nutrition programs for school children, for the monitoring of immunizations, for water testing, for food inspection and for disease prevention. How can this possibly make sense? Just look at the recent spike in cases of measles. Without more intense monitoring, instead of less, cases like this *will* increase. Who lived through the SARS epidemic? How will the residents of Ontario cope without sufficient public health funding? And do we not want our water tested for safety? I'm sure that everyone who lived through the Walkerton crisis would argue in favour of more rather than less water testing.

Good and targeted public health spending avoids costs for acute illness later.

--Karen Somerville

ONTARIANS SUFFERING FROM SEVERE AND PROLONGED PAIN

Nerve-blocking injections help people who suffer from severe and chronic pain, usually as the result of an accident or cancer. These injections are similar to the freezing that dentists use. About 60 000 Ontarians receive these injections monthly and in some cases weekly, thus avoiding the use of opioids.

The government's proposals would limit these injections to four visits a year, with a maximum of four injections per visit. (Some people need more than one injections per visit, on both sides of the spine for example.)

This policy is cruel. What does the government expect people who suffer severe pain to do? Commit suicide? Take opioids? There are already far too many opioids in circulation in the province.

We call on the Ministry of Health to allow Ontarians who suffer from extreme pain to receive as many nerve-blocking injections as their doctors prescribe. It is the right thing to do.

--Anne-Marie Ambert (abbreviated by **Edelgard Mahant**)

GOOD READS

One of my favourite authors of suspense/thriller books is surely Daniel Silva. The last book I have read, *The Heist* (2014), is one of his most elegant. As usual, it follows the activities of his main hero, Gabriel Allon, an art restorer who is actually the most successful member of Israel's Secret Service. *The Heist* is situated within the context of the Syrian war and describes how the ruling family hides billions abroad through a couple of members of their clan. The focus is the search for this money. The narrative is also situated within the context of the many heists of priceless works of art (used for money-laundering).

This novel takes place while Gabriel's wife, Chiara, is expecting twins. A new heroine is introduced and constitutes one of the centre points of this page turner. The action takes place in Austria, Italy, Switzerland, London and Corsica and involves many intelligence agencies—some legitimate, some criminal. I often skip details to follow the action when I start a spy novel but I read every page of this one as it was also very rewarding in what one can learn about money-laundering and fake works of art (my next career?).

--Anne-Marie Ambert

ESOTERICA

In the old days, Prisoners were taken to the gallows (after a fair trial of course) to be hanged. The horse-drawn dray, carting the prisoner, was accompanied by an armed guard, who would stop the dray outside the pub and ask the prisoner if he would like "ONE LAST DRINK". If he said YES, it was referred to as ONE FOR THE ROAD. If he declined, the prisoner was ON THE WAGON. So there you go ... More bleeding history.

Here are some facts about the 1500s: Most people got married in June, because they took their yearly bath in May and they still smelled pretty good by June. However, since they were starting to smell, brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odour. Hence the custom today of carrying a bouquet when getting married.

Baths consisted of a big tub filled with hot water. The man of the house had the privilege of the nice clean water, then all the other sons and men, then the women and finally the children. Last of all the babies. By then the water was so dirty you could actually lose someone in it. Hence the saying, "Don't throw the baby out with the bath water!"

Lead cups were used to drink ale or whisky. The combination would sometimes knock the imbibers out for a couple of days. Someone walking along the road would take them for dead and prepare them for burial. They were laid out on the kitchen table for a couple of days and the family would gather around and eat and drink and wait and see if they would wake up. Hence the custom of "Holding a Wake".

(Contributed by **Rosemarie Nielsen**)

CONTEMPORARY PHILOSOPHERS

The best cure for sea sickness, is to sit under a tree.
Spike Milligan

Lawyers believe a man is innocent until proven broke.
Robin Hall

Kill one man and you're a murderer, kill a million and you're a conqueror.
Jean Rostand.

Having more money doesn't make you happier. I have 50 million dollars but I'm just as happy as when I had 48 million.
Arnold Schwarzenegger.

We are here on earth to do good unto others. What the others are here for, I have no idea.
WH Auden

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During the summer, the YURA office will be closed from the end of June to late August.

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