



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

**Winter 2021**

**No. 53**

**YURA is a member of CURAC/ARUCC, the federation of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada/Associations de retraités dans les universités et collèges du Canada**

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**Google <Prayan happy new year> for an amusing very short video that says it all!**

## **Message from the YURA Co-Presidents**

2021 is upon us. We send to you and yours a Happy New Year. With this wish, both of us look forward to a year that will see us returning eventually to a new normal.

The YURA executive committee and its individual members continue to work for all of you. Who knew a year ago that we would all have become ZOOM experts! I still marvel at how we were able to produce a successful AGM for all of you. We have received messages from members living outside the region, who were absolutely delighted to be able to participate in our meeting.

Our participation in the Scotiabank Charity Challenge in 2020 was very successful. With only 19 members participating we managed to meet our goal of \$20,000 – and more, with a final tally of \$24,655. Not only did we raise funds for graduate scholarships, but we also had a lot of fun. We are hopeful that in 2021, we will have a team of 40 members participating so watch through the year for more information on our preparations and calls for involvement.

While we are still not able to meet personally or plan theatre outings for all of us, we are putting together many virtual activities and life-long learning opportunities for you to pursue. These notices will continue to be sent to you through our listserv. Since we are relying so heavily on our technology to stay in touch, it is important that you keep us up to date with any changes in your email address or other personal information.

Work will continue on refreshing and updating our web site to make it more useful to you. We encourage you to visit the site from time to time. We have posted forms for updating membership information, minutes of AGM meetings, and CURAC newsletters so that you can be kept up to date. York University is currently undertaking a major overhaul of all York University web pages to make them fully accessible to everyone with disabilities, so you will see some changes over the next few months.

While we are not in the physical office at York, each of us has access to the YURA email and visit it regularly to respond to your enquiries and send out information that we believe will help to serve you.

Both of us look forward with the hope that this year will see health return to our communities, and a return to a new normal in the months ahead. We ask you all to stay safe and stay engaged.

– **Charmaine Courtis and Ian Greene**

## **Letters from our Award Recipients**

Each year, we receive thank you letters from most of our award recipients. 2019-2020 was no exception. By the time of the Annual General Meeting, we had received words of gratitude from three of our recipients. We did not have time at the meeting to read these letters, but the names of all award recipients are listed in the Agenda of the Meeting which is posted on our web site.

The executive committee thought it would be good for us to share these letters with you. In each of the next several *Newsletters*, therefore, we will quote these letters. The first is from Jessica Godin who received the William W. Small Award.

– **Charmaine Courtis**

**Jessica** writes: “I feel very grateful to be the recipient of this award, so thank you to the York University Retirees’ Association. It means a lot to have my hard work recognized. As a first-generation, mature student from a working-class background I never saw myself as someone who was ‘award-winning.’ Until I began my studies at York and realized that if I put my mind to it, I can achieve my dreams. I feel extremely proud of the hard work I have done during my undergraduate career and I enjoy being an ambassador of York University wherever I go.

Right now, I am in the process of applying to counselling graduate programs in the San Francisco Bay Area where I currently live. I plan to pursue licensure as a Marriage and Family Therapist and

open a private practice as soon as possible. I have a real passion for counselling and look forward to starting my journey as a therapist.

The past two years have been a very busy time for me both personally and academically so from a financial standpoint this award is very much appreciated. My husband and I planned a wedding, got married, moved across the continent and maintained two separate households in two very expensive areas, all while I finished my undergraduate degree, volunteered at a research clinic and occasionally worked as a dental assistant during my spare time. In the end every sacrifice we made was worth it. I feel proud of the work I have done and will continue to do, excited to represent York University as an alumnus, and honoured to be the recipient of this years William W. Small Award. Thank you.”

– Jessica Godin

### **New Members for 2020-21**

Chodak, Marla  
Kay, Fiona  
MacDermid, Robert  
Northrup, David  
Phillips, J. Bryan  
Rodgers, Elizabeth  
Santarossa-Roncali, Marilyn  
Tortorelli, Laura  
Wace, Richard  
Wilson, Hannah

### **Life as It Was Back Then: A Reminiscence**

*Our 32<sup>nd</sup> Reminiscence is written by Mieke Christmann who is a resident at Christie Gardens where I also live. As we will see, Mieke (pronounced Mica) was a social worker who emigrated to Canada from the Netherlands when she was 26. She is one of my favorite persons here and, at the age 95, even though she is now largely blind and has hearing difficulties, she lives independently and leads a rich intellectual and human life. She is one of my role models. I sat with her and she recounted her youth; I did a first typescript which I read back to her and which she*

*corrected and to which she added points of interest. So, the following is in her own words.*

I was born in the Netherlands in 1925 in the small city of 's-Hertogenbosch. I was the second oldest of 6 children. My father was an electrical engineer and worked at the head office of the provincial electrical power corporation. Around the time I was 3 or 4, the family moved to a smaller city of 3,000 where the power plant station was located. This small city, Geettrividenberg, had had a charter since the Middle Ages to have the prerogatives of a city because of its then-strategic location.

I recall that we were a very active bunch of children, and, although we were a tight knit group, there was still sibling rivalry and competitiveness, and much playing outside in the summer months, including endless games with the other children in the neighborhood. My family was Catholic as were about 80% of the citizens in the south of the Netherlands. We went to mass daily during school days and absences from mass were noted in the tri-monthly report cards.

After I completed elementary school (grades 1 to 8), my parents decided to send me to a very good catholic secondary school (gymnasium) which was located in another town because my city was too small to accommodate high schools. I was by then 13 in the year 1938 and had to commute by train. In those days, the train had compartments reserved for women. The train stopped about 8 times before it reached the city and, each time, boys and girls from other high schools climbed aboard but it took several months before they allowed me in their compartment. I suffered and felt rejected.

It was a very different life for me, what with going by train and being in a city where no one knew me. At that time, neither I nor my parents had plans for my future. In fact, my parents were surprised that I had passed so well the entrance exams for this high school which was of very high caliber. For instance, we learned six languages, including Latin and Greek. *(In fact, all the Dutch women here at Christie Gardens are fluently multilingual and belong to the French club.)*

*(Note from Anne-Marie: I learned from Mieke that we should not call her country Holland, which the*

*French do, but the Netherlands. She explained that Holland constitutes two of the 12 provinces of the Netherlands. In one province are located Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague-- all the large cities. Because of this, Holland became better known than the Netherlands. After the War, the government wanted to promote tourism and used "Holland" because they felt that "the Netherlands" was too difficult to pronounce in advertisements.)*

The war in my country really broke out in 1940 when I was 15 years old. The Dutch had planned on flooding parts of the Netherlands if it was invaded by the Germans, an invasion which they had expected by land. But on a night in May 1940, I woke up to the noise of airplanes flying over the city. My father turned on the radio and confirmed that the invasion was, in our area, by air. I was terrified and thought that this would be the end of the world. Two days later, Rotterdam was bombed. A while later, the Germans arrived in a convoy in my city while the population was at mass. Someone entered the church shouting "The Germans are here," and there was panic in the church. The priest told us to stay calm and everyone went home quickly. In the afternoon, the Germans pulled up in the small park onto which my house faced. They got out of their car and chatted with the population.

But this friendliness did not last. First, they confiscated all the radios. However, my father had foreseen this and had already hidden ours so that he would go upstairs in the evening and listen to the BBC to follow the progress of the war. After that, the Germans kept coming into the homes and first confiscated all brass objects which they needed for the "war effort." Then, it was pewter and any metal object. My parents buried some in a big hole which they dug at night in our garden.

We children went back to high school after a few weeks. My father's job was not terminated but much of the copper needed for electricity was also confiscated. As a result, blackouts were frequent and, during the winter, schools were so cold that we stayed in our winter clothes for a couple of hours before being sent home because of the cold. The winters were terrible and also happened to be the coldest in the history of the country. The entire population suffered dreadfully from the cold. The

Germans installed a pro-Nazi Dutch civil administration with a German head and went on to assess how much they could confiscate (coal, for instance, or food from farmers) from the population. We went hungry during the entire war and had food on our minds all the time. It took many years after, at least a decade, before rationing stopped and we could start to eat reasonably well.

At some point during the early occupation, the school passed the word that the Germans were looking for men aged 17 and over; they were taking them to labour camps elsewhere. My older brother was of that age and my parents did not tell us children at the time, but they built a hiding place under the rafters in the attic where my brother hid during the three hours that each raid took place. At other times, he would disappear and hide on Dutch farms. He was never caught.

In November 1944, we were freed by what I believe were Polish troops who were part of the Canadian Army, after which other armies arrived. These were days of jubilation. Unfortunately, the north part of the Netherlands was still occupied and starving to death. I was thinking what to do after completing high school. I kept hearing about the starvation in the North and decided to become a social worker to help people. But I had to wait until 1946 before I could enter university because, in addition to hunger, nothing worked: There was no transportation, everything in the country had been destroyed and it was total chaos. There were shortages of everything.

During the war, the Netherlands lost their colonies in the Dutch West Indies (Indonesia), which were an enormous source of wealth. But, in the 1950s, the country found natural gas within its coastline and this is what led the country to prosperity.

I emigrated to Canada in 1951 at the age of 26 on my own. I was tired of the drudgery, beset by difficulties in finding lodging, and looking for adventure. I had a friend whose sister married a Canadian soldier. Her friend came to Hamilton and found me a job as a social worker in Kirkland Lake where I stayed for three years. Then, Hurricane Hazel happened in 1954 and I received a call from the Dutch Embassy in Ottawa to see if I would go to

work for the Holland Marshes which were flooded and needed Dutch-speaking social workers because the people had lost everything. After that, I remained in the south of Ontario. Eventually, I married a Dutch engineer who had four children of whom two were already married and had three children altogether. So, I became a wife, stepmother, mother-in-law, and grandmother all at once.

-- Mieke Christmann

## INDIGENOUS REALITIES

The CBC radio show "White Coat, Black Art" aired a wonderfully informative episode on November 14, entitled "Cultural safety: Making health care safe for Indigenous patients". The show intensively interviewed a number of Indigenous people working in health care and came up with numerous stories of how systemic racism towards Indigenous people plays out in health care in Canada.

A recording of this episode, can be found at <https://www.cbc.ca/listen/live-radio/1-75-white-coat-black-art>.

The U of T Library has gathered information about **local Indigenous history** (Tkaranto) <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/Toronto>

## TRAVELOGUE: Seven Weeks before the Mast Part 3 – by Jamie Savage

May 30, 2012 **The Equator**

We crossed the equator around noon on the 29th. There was a big crowd around the wheelhouse as everyone watched the GPS count down to 0 degrees latitude. There was a big blast of the ship's horn and then a toast by everyone. There is a ritual (hazing) that is supposed to be performed for all those crossing the equator on a ship for the first time. The permanent crew had been strongly hinting that it involved the shaving of heads; some of the women were quite concerned. The ceremony, presided over by King Neptune, converts

you from a pollywog to a shellback. The ceremony occurred today on the 30th. They locked us all in the library while they prepared. They were all in costume/makeup etc. and we were blindfolded and taken out on deck one by one where we had to kiss a fish head, put on boots filled with slimy leftover food and fish etc. and then had more slimy stuff poured over us. They had a theme for each of us that was the basis for a task we had to perform to earn this great honour bestowed on us by Neptune. Because I had 'fed the fish' (puked) so much at the beginning of the trip, my task was to eat a blue and green concoction....I got it all down...just gagged once. We were given certificates proving that we were now shellbacks and that we don't have to go through this again. My shellback name is 'Cuttlefish'. It was really well done, a lot of fun and the big effort put in by the crew was greatly appreciated. It took a long time to wash all the gunk off the decks afterwards. This takes care of another thing I wanted to do on this trip.

June 3, 2012 6:34 PM

The doldrums are an area around the equator where there can be no wind or extreme squalls. So, you don't really sail...you motor through this area with some sails set just in case of wind. The first squall we went through was simply rain and not too much wind. A nice warm rain so I didn't bother with a rain suit...just got wet. We had a few dolphins come by and play in our bow wave for a bit...they seem so playful and carefree. Caught another 10-pound Dorado and had it for dinner. I've been doing some repairs on sails...resewing frayed seams. During the night of June 2nd, we motored through the calmest waters and then were hit by the biggest squall so far. (Un?)fortunately, I was off-shift and slept through it.. We're motoring directly into the wind for a few days then we'll head NW under sail and make a big circle back NE to the Azores (so I'm told). It adds miles to the trip but it's the best way for a square-rigger to go. A whale and dolphins were sighted today, unfortunately, not by me...oh well...still 18 days to go. I've noticed that, when the dolphins come, all work on the ship stops. Even the permanent crew with many years of sailing experience stop to watch. They are mesmerizing!

June 7, 2012 **Rescue at Sea**

We are now well past the doldrums and are sailing NNW. We are sailing across a good wind, so the ship is constantly heeled over about 12-15 degrees and we're moving along nicely....simply walking around at this angle is an art. While we were motoring through some very calm seas on a beautiful day a white object was spotted off the port bow. Because we were motoring it was an easy thing to change course to intercept and pick up this debris. As we came along-side we could see that it was a mass of white plastic strapping used to wrap around large crates to help hold them together.

Then, to our surprise, we saw that a giant sea turtle was caught up in this stuff and was struggling to get free. When we got close he tried to escape by swimming down deep, but the buoyancy of the strapping would not let him. Once the ship was stopped, Spike and Alan (both Aussies) went over the side and pulled the mass, along with the turtle, to the side of the ship. They were joined in the water by Jackie (Nova Scotia) and the rescue operation began while the rest of us looked on. The straps were around the turtle's neck and legs. Someone had to hold the shell while the others worked at cutting the straps. There was always the possibility that the turtle could have given them a nasty bite with that big beak, but it simply wanted to get free. It took several minutes but all the straps were cut, and the turtle dove deep as soon as he was freed and was quickly gone from sight. I have videos of this as well.

As predicted by Jenny (UK) shortly after the rescue, a pod of Pilot Whales and some Dolphins swam beside the ship later in the day to thank us for saving the turtle.....I like to think she is right about why they dropped by.

June 12, 2012

The last week or so have been the same, beautiful sunny days with clear nights. If there were cloudy times they seemed to clear soon after we started our watch. We see storms around us, but they all miss us. It's a steady NE wind so we've been on this starboard tack for days now. We're making good time so we may get to the Azores early.

Occasionally seeing dolphins and pilot whales and a few ships. We've been catching dolphin fish

but, although I thought they were a good size, they were deemed too small and let go. One night the line was left in the water overnight and when it was pulled in the next morning, we'd caught a deep-sea feeding fish that comes to the surface at night. It was long and skinny with teeth and big eyes, creepy looking. We've had trouble identifying it from the books on board. The sail that a few of us had been sewing was hoisted the other day and we looked at it like proud parents as it filled with wind and our seams held. Only 9 days to go until Horta (the Azores) and the days seem to be going by quickly. I was at the helm talking to shipmates about the squalls we could see in the distance and how lucky we'd been to avoid them when all of a sudden a big wind hit us nearly blowing me off of the steering box where I was sitting. The Skys and Royals and the outer and flying jibs had to be taken down pronto. It didn't last long, and the Royals were set again. That's how it goes...you take a sail down and then sometimes you're putting it back up 5 minutes later.

Sat, 16 Jun 2012

We're a bit ahead of schedule and if we arrive too early we may simply do some island hopping around the Azores. The winds are light at the moment and we've had to occasionally use the engines. There is no moon during our night shift so we're being entertained by the glowing plankton as we disturb it as we move through the water. It looks like the Disney cartoon where Mickey is the magician, waves his wand and a stream of stars shoot out from the wand. I could watch it endlessly. When a dolphin is in the bow wave at night, he disturbs the plankton. You don't see the dolphin, but you see his swim path. As we're approaching civilization we're starting to see more debris in the water...not too much, mostly parts of fishing gear, but it's annoying. Everyone's busy making the ship look pretty before we get to Horta. The ship then goes to mainland Europe for a few tall ship festivals so they want her looking her best. We've had a few fire and Man-over-board drills, serious stuff, but we have fun with it. Lots of Portuguese Man-o-wars in the water so we keep a sharp eye out when we stop to swim. Other than that, it's pretty much just lazy sailing...relaxing and stress free.

June 19, 2012 **We're Here!**

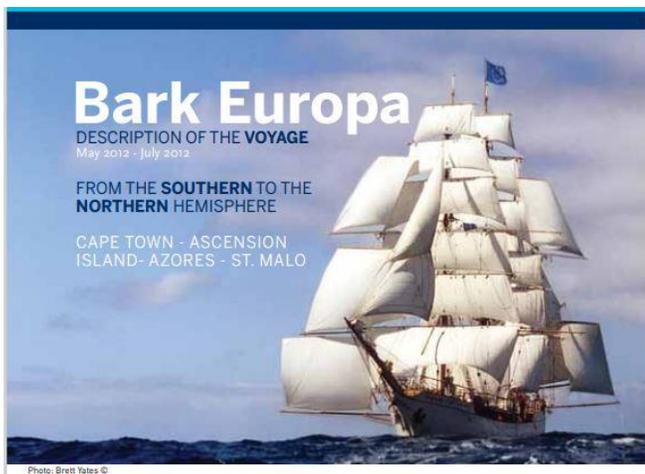
A number of good sailing days has us arriving at Horta early. We had to motor the last couple of days. Stopped for a swim and it was the best one yet...22.9C and no casualties. Painted the deckhouse storm shutters and furled and braced square all the sails. While motoring in we saw two large whales, a little far away but could see their spouts. We were escorted on and off by a pod of ~100 dolphins and these guys were jumpers. We were on the 8PM-midnight watch (the watches had been shortened from 6 to 4 hours each) as we motored into Horta. Rained the whole way but watching the dolphins easily made up for it. We've arrived a few days early so we'll be exploring the Azores for a few days before we watch the ship sail away on the 23rd. There are a few voyage crews getting off here and there will a change to part of the permanent crew, including a new Captain along with his dog.

\*\* It was quite the trip with ups and downs along the way. When I got off the ship in the Azores, I watched her sail away without me. I stood on the warf crying like a baby as she really had become my home. And as a final gesture, I found out about land-sickness three days later while at home in Ontario, it only lasted one day.\*\*

– **Jamie Savage**

*The link below includes very interesting photos and short videos with sound. The videos have an arrow. It may take 3-4 seconds before the videos start.*

<https://photos.app.goo.gl/XbtnXwRCCAUBLEGW8>



## **PARKINSON'S SUPPORT GROUPS**

You are not alone: Parkinson Canada Support Groups provide help and hope

A formal Parkinson's diagnosis can come after months, or even years, of searching for answers to seemingly unexplainable symptoms. For some, a Parkinson's diagnosis brings a sense of relief – finally, an explanation and a name to what they've been experiencing. For others this diagnosis may bring about more questions than answers. What follows is a unique path for everyone, as the condition progresses individually, and symptoms manifest themselves in different ways for each person. It can be an isolating, challenging journey without the support of others and the knowledge that you are not alone.

Symptoms could include loss of smell, shaking hands or legs, rigidity, difficulty walking, loss of balance and other symptoms. Beyond mobility issues people might experience other non-motor symptoms such as fatigue, urinary and bowel problems, mental confusion, unexplained pain, etc.

Parkinson Canada hosts local volunteer-led support groups in communities across Canada to provide mutual support from other people living with Parkinson's. Support groups offer a safe environment for talking about experiences, enhancing one's ability to cope with the daily challenges of Parkinson's, and simply to feel seen and heard by others who understand. During the pandemic these meetings are now being held virtually.

In Mississauga that group is led by Bruno and Mary Ann Bellissimo with assistance from a dedicated volunteer committee.

“We are so fortunate to have volunteers like Bruno and Mary Ann, who has been involved with Parkinson Canada since 2013. The efforts of their group in Mississauga are truly commendable. Beyond the group itself, they are a fundraising force through Parkinson Canada Super Walk, and are committed as anyone in supporting a vision of a better life today for Canadians living with Parkinson's; a world without Parkinson's

tomorrow” says Jon Collins, Vice President Marketing and Fundraising with Parkinson Canada.

This year, due to the pandemic, the annual Super Walk Event had to be cancelled. In its place Bruno and Mary Ann decided to hold a socially distanced event in their backyard that included a short walk through their neighbourhood park and a barbeque with some twenty support-group friends.

Parkinson’s is the fastest-growing neurological condition in the world. Over the past 15 years, Parkinson’s has increased in Canada at a rate of 43%, outpacing most other countries in the world, including the USA who has seen a growth rate of less than 10%.

For Parkinson Canada, it is about the 100,000 people who live with Parkinson’s today and the more than 25 people who will be diagnosed tomorrow and every day after that. It is projected that in just 10 years the number of people diagnosed in Canada will double to more than 50 each day. That means that every hour of every day, another Canadian hears the words: “You have Parkinson’s disease.” The need for community support is only growing, and the efforts of people like Bruno and Mary Ann are essential to ensuring that anyone, anywhere in Canada has a place to turn when facing Parkinson’s.

To learn more about community support and other ways Parkinson Canada supports people in living well with Parkinson’s visit [www.parkinson.ca](http://www.parkinson.ca) or call 800-565-3000 to be connected to national and local support.

– sent by **Bruno Bellissimo**

## **A NEW SENIOR LIVING TREND: APARTMENTS ATTACHED TO RETIREMENT RESIDENCES**

### **– A cautionary note**

*A few years ago, I (Anne-Marie) wrote an article regarding Retirement Residences where seniors go to live in a rented apartment. I have provided a link to this article at the end below. Recently, I received an interesting letter regarding a new set of problems concerning a new trend in seniors’ rentals: apartments that are linked to a Retirement*

*Residence. I quote from the letter received from Ron Burdock:*

“My mother moved into *All Seniors Care*’s new Fox Hollow Independent Living Apts, one of the newest Retirement Residences that has a linked Seniors Apt. My mother is a very active 84-year-old with an 814 sq ft apt with full kitchen. It is a lovely building, but the experience has been deeply disturbing. We were completely unaware and misled about what it means to be linked to an RHRA controlled Retirement Residence and yet living in a building under the Landlord and Tenant Act. While we were told that "a nurse is available 24 hrs a day" we discovered quickly when my mother fell and broke her wrist that for the residents of the Apt a phone call to arrange an ambulance is all that is offered. A mysterious and distressing fire wall seems to have been erected to literally prevent the nurse in the Retirement Residence from responding to seniors in the Apts. We are investigating with the owners what specific care services and amenities are provided to the Seniors Apt residents as it appears clearly that we were very misled. We are reviewing the website as well as the marketing pieces that residents received, and the gap is wide. It seems that they sell the full experience of care; yet, if you choose the Independent Living Apts you find out after the limitations afterwards. It is important to note as well that residents in the Senior Apts sign a standard Ontario lease, which is nothing like a contract that you mention. Without a detailed list of promised amenities in a signed contract we have no cause for appeal besides the integrity of All Seniors Care.

I have visited about five other linked facilities (Apts linked to Retirement Residences) and discovered that how the buildings are linked together is the key question. In Fox Hollow’s case, all of the amenities are inside the Retirement Residence, so that during COVID, massive disruptions and stoppages of access to amenities happen for the Apt residents. Currently the residents of the Apts are being told that they must exit their building and walk 200 feet to the main entrance in the Residence, as the corridor is closed. If the amenities (dining room, swimming, fitness, recreation) had been built between the buildings then there could have been

much more consistent access facilitated. As it is, the dining room at Fox Hollow is deep inside the Residence building with limited access during COVID. Two homes that I visited have their Bistro and recreation rooms right at the corridor between the buildings and residents in the Apts seem to be happy as a direct result of the fact that their corridors are open and it takes less time to access them.

These new linked Senior Apts are a major source of revenue for the owners of the complex. My mother is paying \$3,000 a month for basically an apt worth about \$1,600 a month. The residents themselves are paying an additional monthly \$1,400 for services that they do not actually receive.

One final thought is that under an RHRA-controlled facility, there is a mandate related to committees where residents have a voice. There is no such requirement for Senior Apts. That is what worries me the most. Vulnerable seniors without a voice...which is what I am facing right now.

As you can imagine, many of the residents simply don't want to say anything for fear of reprisal, or because their family doesn't want to spend the effort to help them. And, as is usual, many are simply glad to be there and have no complaints. There is fortunately a small very concerned cohort trying to understand what is happening and wanting to address the concerns or find alternative places to live.

–Ron Burdock

<https://seniorcollege.utoronto.ca/caution-retirees-contracts-rental-retirement-residences-ontario/>

**GIVEN OUR TIMES,  
THIS IS INTERESTING  
– Harry & Bess**

Harry Truman was a different kind of President. He probably made as many, or more important decisions regarding our nation's history as any of the other 42 Presidents preceding him. However, a measure of his greatness may rest on what he did after he left the White House.

The only asset he had when he died was the house he lived in, which was in Independence Missouri. His wife had inherited the house from her mother and father and other than their years in the White House, they lived their entire lives there.

When he retired from office in 1952 his income was a U.S. Army pension reported to have been \$13,507.72 a year. Congress, noting that he was paying for his stamps and personally licking them, granted him an 'allowance' and, later, a retroactive pension of \$25,000 per year.

After President Eisenhower was inaugurated, Harry and Bess drove home to Missouri by themselves. There was no Secret Service following them.

When offered corporate positions at large salaries, he declined, stating, "You don't want me. You want the office of the President, and that doesn't belong to me. It belongs to the American people and it's not for sale."

Even later, on May 6, 1971, when Congress was preparing to award him the Medal of Honor on his 87th birthday, he refused to accept it, writing, "I don't consider that I have done anything which should be the reason for any award, Congressional or otherwise"

As president he paid for all of his own travel expenses and food.

Modern politicians have found a new level of success in cashing in on the Presidency, resulting in untold wealth. Today, many in Congress also have found a way to become quite wealthy while enjoying the fruits of their offices. Political offices are now for sale.

Good old Harry Truman was correct when he observed, "My choices in life were either to be a piano player in a whore house or a politician. And to tell the truth, there's hardly any difference! (*This was sent to me by an American friend, Sally Ehrenholm.*)

## GOOD READ

*The Ripening Sun, One Woman and the Creation of a Vineyard*, is written by Patricia Atkinson, an English woman, whose husband bought a house in a small vineyard in a tiny village of Provence. But her husband became ill with lupus and she eventually had to remain in Provence alone after having made the move to the village of Gageac in 1990. (It's near Bergerac and Saussignac and Monbazillac where the less-known sweet wine of Monbazillac is made, a wine I absolutely love but which tastes better when consumed locally as opposed to imported).

We follow Patricia's survival and progress. She has to learn French and is very intimidated by her ignorance. But, above all, she has to learn how to cultivate the vines and this book gives us ample details of all the exhausting steps she has to learn and undertake in this very difficult process. Owning a *vignoble*, however small, is a very demanding job physically and requires a great deal of knowledge...and the reader learns with her.

What I especially like about this book is that it conveys so well the mentality of villagers who depend a great deal on each other and are very generous with their help. The village culture, the culture of wine making, and types of sociability as well as life's difficulties in these contexts are at the forefront. Also well described is the quiet and non-glamorous life of the rural nobility living in a medieval castle with lands, all of which demand time, attention, and resources. Another interesting aspect of this book is Patricia's relationship with her young adult children and those of her husband along with the sociability of the volunteers who come from all over France, England and even Australia to do the harvest or *vendanges*. (The book was published Arrow Books in 2004.)

— **Anne-Marie Ambert**

## HUMOUR DEPARTMENT

For really cute and amusing short videos, google the following two words: **ottagono lab** and you will have the choice of several videos that are really intriguing and entertaining. For a very amusing start, click on the one entitled "Hello Brother" with Louis Armstrong.

## YURA Executive

### Officers

Charmaine Courtis, Co-President

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The *YURA Newsletter* is published by the York University Retirees' Association. YURA is a member of **CURAC/ARUCC**.

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