



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

Spring 2021

No. 54

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

Contents

Message from the YURA Co-Presidents	Page 2
Letter from Ariel Shoikhedbrod: Graduate Award Recipient.....	Page 3
In Memoriam.....	Page 4
Biographical Sketches.....	Page 4
Murray Sinclair Retiring from the Canadian Senate.....	Page 5
Life as It Was Back then: Suzanne Legault	Page 5
Being Stalked in 2013-14, Sam Lanfranco	Page 6
Teaching In An All-Black College In 1968 In Georgia, by Anne-Marie Ambert	Page 8
Historical Curiosities, Anne-Marie Ambert.....	Page 10
Good Reads, Anne-Marie Ambert	Page 10
Historical Humour, Source Unknown.....	Page 11
Political Humour, Bruno Bellissimo.....	Page 11
YURA Executive	Page 12
YURA Office Hours	Page 13

Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

Dear YURA members:

This has been an unforgettable year, though we all wish we could forget it. We have reviewed our message to YURA members a year ago – sent out just before the lockdown. Twelve months ago, we had no idea that things would be where they are today. Who knew that a vaccine could be created in less than a year? Who knew that we would learn to “pivot”? Who knew we would become Zoom experts? Who knew that we would become so reliant on our tablets and laptops!!! But here we are.

In early March 2020, we were asking for more volunteers to staff our office in Central Square on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, and thanking our current volunteers. We encouraged our members to think about joining our theatre trips to Stratford in June, and to the Shaw Festival in September. We were planning more outings like our Muskoka cruise in the previous fall. We were looking forward to our participation in the annual meeting of the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) in Vancouver this past May.

Then the pandemic lockdown hit in mid-March. York University was locked down, and the YURA office was closed. Our Stratford and Shaw Festival excursions were cancelled. The CURAC meeting took place, but later and via Zoom. Our YURA executive began its regular meetings via Zoom, and we are grateful to our secretary, Steve Dranitsaris, for having the technical knowledge to set them up for us and run them successfully.

Charmaine Courtis, Dave Smith, Donna Smith and Teresa Hunter, our liaison in Employee Relations, expanded the membership registration system to include electronic transfer, by which our members could renew their memberships and pay on-line, or could renew by mail (with cheque) if necessary. Logistically, the exercise was a huge investment of time and energy for the team. Special thanks go out to David Dimick who drove to Aurora to pick up and deliver documents almost every week through the winter. Thanks to their dedication, our

membership renewal nearly kept up with the previous year.

Anne-Marie Ambert has kept us all connected with her regular PTP publications. We appreciate the work that goes into this contact, extend our gratitude to both to those who provide Anne-Marie with materials as well as the constant support that she provides.

We are so thankful to YURA members for their loyalty. But we want to make your membership worthwhile. Our Events Committee, led by Donna Smith, has come up with plans for several on-line events which you have all received emails about – please reply to emails from YURA@yorku.ca to register and participate in these seminars. And please remember our Zoom Coffee Hour, organized by Fran. Wilkinson, every Tuesday morning at 10. This is a good opportunity to connect with other members and share pressing matters. In addition to the emails we send, we are using the YURA web page to keep you up to date with other on-line events, mostly hosted by York University, that members may be interested in attending.

YURA will participate once again in the Scotiabank Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge in October 2021. In 2020, 19 YURA participants raised more than \$24,000 for YURA’s graduate student scholarship endowment in a “virtual” race event, in which participants had to pledge to walk at least 5 km some time in October and find on-line sponsors. In 2021, there will be a similar virtual event, perhaps combined with an in-person event depending on when restrictions are lifted, and we hope to raise double what we raised in 2020. **We hope to recruit 40 volunteers in 2021!** If you are up to walking 5 km in October and are willing to send your family and friends emails to sponsor you, we want you!!! More details will come in the next few months

We will hold our AGM for 2021 on Friday, October 29, at 11 a.m. Please mark your calendar. Our 2020 AGM was held on Zoom. The event was very successful. We hope that we can hold our 2021 AGM in person, but because of the success of the

Zoom 2020 AGM, which allowed some of our members to attend who could not have attended in person even under the best of circumstances, we plan to have an on-line component for our 2021 AGM. Those who can attend in person can eat a delicious lunch and mingle in person for the first time in months, if by October that is permitted.

Our condolences to those of you who have lost loved ones over the past year. We have and are recovering. Zoom funerals and Zoom celebrations of life are very helpful, but we would have preferred in-person gatherings.

Because of our association with YU-Care, the York research group on aging, we have learned that retirees like us are resilient. Most of us have adapted to new technology, perhaps not enthusiastically, but successfully. And in the end, we have learned new ways to connect to family and friends. And these new techniques have given us tools to reach out that will last well beyond the pandemic. How wonderful it is to be a retiree in this age!

Keep up your spirits!

– Charmaine Courtis and Ian Greene,
Co-Presidents

Letter from Ariel Shoikhedbrod: Recipient of the YURA Graduate Student Award

Although it is unfortunate that I am unable to accept this award in person at the Annual General Meeting given our current circumstances, I am so honoured to be featured in this newsletter which still allows me to express my gratitude to the York University Retirees' Association community and award donors.

To provide some context, I am a graduate student in the clinical psychology program at York. On top of coursework and research, the program provides extensive clinical training in assessment and psychotherapeutic interventions for individuals struggling with mental health issues. My clinical and research interests revolve around motivational

and interpersonal factors associated with both well-being and psychopathology. My primary program of research examines how self-determined and communal models of motivation can inform the support provided to depressed individuals.

I firmly believe that the phenomena we study are fundamentally contingent on how we can disseminate this knowledge to and connect with our broader community. As a result, I got involved with the Mood Disorders Association of Ontario, which is a not-for-profit organization offering support programs to people within Ontario, and to their families, who are living with depression, bipolar, and other mental health concerns. For the past 2 years, I have served as a volunteer facilitator for weekly support groups, including the family members' and supporters' drop-in. I find it meaningful and rewarding to provide these accessible opportunities for individuals and their families to receive mental health support and psycho-educational information from trained staff and community members with lived experiences. The discussions have provided me with unique insight into support providers' lived experiences with depressed individuals which has, in turn, informed my program of research.

I hope to come out of graduate school as a licensed clinical psychologist trained as scientist, clinician and involved community member. I want to translate a scientific understanding of psychopathology into evidence-based techniques for helping individuals and their significant others. At the same time, I want to reciprocally glean insights *from applied practice and experiences from the **community to guide research questions and advance scientific thinking.**

In pursuit of these ultimate goals, the struggles and difficulties encountered along the way are often cast aside. While trying to juggle all my academic, clinical, and volunteer responsibilities, I found myself really struggling to attend to personal and family matters this year in addition to adjusting to the major hurdles that came with the pandemic. I can not stress enough how helpful the financial contribution from YURA was for me. This award further affirmed my goals and bolstered my motivation to keep up my work.

I place great value in supporting others based on my clinical, research and volunteer experiences at the graduate level. Thank you YURA for supporting me.

—Ariel Shoikhedbrod

Clermont Trudelle	May 22, 2020
David Walton	May 2, 2020
Patricia Wells	January 19, 2020
Page Westcott	August 30, 2020

IN MEMORIAM

Primula Bull	May 8, 2020
Allan Burgess	October 13, 2020
Walter Carter	September 2, 2019
Evelyn Chalmers	September 7, 2020
Hisaie Chew	January 2, 2020
Caterina Chiaravalloti	November 28, 2020
Nona Crossley	October 2, 2020
Florence Davies	May 31, 2020
Gene Denzel	August 29, 2020
Jocelyn D'Oliveira	January 28, 2020
Harvey Donaldson	July 18, 2020
Maria Durante	August 7, 2020
Douglas Freake	December 3, 2020
L. Elizabeth Gibson	May 6, 2020
Elaine Glossop	July 29, 2020
Louise Greenwood	April 18, 2020
Elisabeth Gross	November 29, 2019
Sidney Harrison	February 3, 2020
Dorothy Herberg	November 15, 2020
Dorothy Herbert	November 1, 2019
Miriam Hoffman	May 8, 2020
Peter Hogg	February 24, 2020
Louis Lefeber	April 15, 2020
Helen Massam	August 24, 2020
Angela Mazzonna	January 3, 2020
David Mendelson	March 1, 2020
Susan Chisholm Milligan	May 7, 2020
Keith Nagle	April 16, 2020
Leo Panitch	December 20, 2020
Evelyn Pritchard	April 11, 2020
Louise Rockman	May 29, 2020
Frank Sabatini	April 4, 2020
Elena Salerno	February 13, 2020
Michael Semak	November 29, 2020
Wayne Sheppard	April 29, 2020
Irwin Silverman	June 18, 2020
Ian Sowton	January 23, 2021
Luisa Stellato	January 20, 2020
Michele Tesi	August 21, 2020

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCHES

Jane Grant grew up in Windsor, Ontario. She studied Biology and Chemistry at the University of Windsor, 1967-70.

Jane then moved to Toronto with spouse John and son Michael in 1971, when John joined Connaught Laboratories as a scientist involved in vaccine production and development.

She studied at York University while children were young, a course per semester. Jane worked as a technician in John Heddle's cytogenetics laboratory from 1978 to 1981. In 1981, she was hired by the Biology Department as an undergraduate technician preparing materials for student biology labs, and later became supervisor of this working group, until retirement in 2014.

Jane became active in the staff union, YUSAPUY, as a steward and a member (and sometimes Labour Co-Chair) of the Joint Health and Safety Committee, and later became President from 1991 to 1993, and VP for several years thereafter. She was President of the Confederation of Canadian Unions from 2000-2009. She is now enjoying retirement.

Charmaine Courtis graduated from York University in 1972. (Honour's) Sociology and started her career at York immediately in the Central Admissions office. "My first office was a closet in the basement of Steacie Science Library! In 1973 I was hired at the Faculty of Administrative Studies as the Admissions Officer.

Over the next 40+ years, I had several roles in Student Affairs and Student Services. The culmination of this experience led to my role as Executive Director of Student Services and International Relations for the Schulich School of Business (renamed in 1995). As a senior member of the Dean's management team, I travelled extensively both on behalf of the school and the

university to build a large international exchange network for Schulich and finally to help in the development and launch of the India MBA program. We launched this program in 2010 in Mumbai, and three years later moved it to Hyderabad to a permanent space.

I retired in September of 2014. I set myself up to do some independent consulting and advising with people looking for the appropriate schools internationally and continued to do that for another year.

For the last four + years, I have been a member of YURA. It has been a great pleasure to serve on the Executive Committee first as a member at large and now as a co-president.

MURRAY SINCLAIR RETIRING FROM THE CANADIAN SENATE

Although this occurred a few months ago, Sinclair's thoughts constitute a socially and politically important reading. We strongly recommend that you set aside time to read his address below.

<https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/residential-school-deniers-white-supremacists-biggest-barrier-to-reconciliation-says-murray-sinclair/>

Life as It Was Back then: Reminiscence

Our 33rd Reminiscence is written by Suzanne Legault who retired in 2009. She was at the time teaching in the Department of French Studies at Glendon. She has entitled her reminiscence, "Snapshots of my life" (in plain black and white, with no photoshopping).

1. My first job...

I worked in a lumberjack camp in Northern Ontario. My cousin Denise and I, both 14, were "cookies" for about 22 men one summer long ago. We slept in a locked office and woke up at five every morning. We loved to go and ring the outside triangle bell for

the wake-up call at 5:30. We proceeded to cook all morning and clean the sleeping area in the afternoon. I remember being surprised by the pin-ups by the bunk beds but otherwise felt quite safe, even if we were the only women in the camp. The men were most amicable.

When we burnt some of the pies and covered them with ice-cream, they pretended not to notice. But then they ate a lot and did not expect Julia Child or Madame Benoît to appear. Like me, they had no idea of their existence. It was an important experience and I remember holding my first cheque with great pride. I never became a very good cook. Burnt pie is still my specialty.

2. On taking care of the earth way back when...

Living on a farm implies a very different lifestyle. We were completely self-sufficient foodwise, with gardens in the summer and hunting in the winter. And yes, there was no plastic: paper bags and carton boxes were the norm. We had few changes of clothes and when one of my dresses came to the end of its life, I could expect to have it reappear in quilts and rugs made by my mother during the long winter months. In my early years, we had a woodstove, a water pump and an outhouse. After electricity arrived, our comfort level improved.

The vegetables from the garden were delicious and the tomatoes in our present-day grocery stores would pale in shame. Yummy vegetables, but there was a price to pay: hard work, concerns about the use of pesticide (DDT), competition from the products of Southern Ontario, price cuts by part-time farmers who had a full-time job in the city, etc. The compost from the barn was spread on the fields in the spring to enrich the soil and for a few days that unpleasant smell was overpowering. It could mix in with the odour of sulphur coming from the chimneys of the mines of INCO. To this day I can taste it in my mouth.

I do not remember hearing much about taxes in my youth, but I do remember that my father, like all farmers, had to contribute a certain number of days each year to the maintenance of roads. I am too out of touch to really understand if the youth of today would find this an idyllic lifestyle. One has to remember it meant no phone, real isolation, little or no access to doctors and obviously low income. No Health Card either, the starting date for this benefit being July 1st, 1966. However, I liked living on a farm: the contact with animals, the self-sufficiency, the space, the all-round knowledge needed to survive, if not always to prosper.

I do not think I would have had the type of intelligence or the high physical energy essential to pursue that lifestyle. I am proud of and grateful for having earned my doctorate in Literature from the Sorbonne since this was not a very probable outcome for me. However, I still long, deep down, for a sky not lined by city towers that block the curvature of the sky and where birds crash into windows.

3. On encountering a wolverine in the forest...

One of the winters when I lived by myself in the forest, I had decided to go to the dump and had this unexpected experience. Something suddenly appeared as I was driving on the narrow road. I braked, right at the turning point of the trail, barely missing the deep ditch. My white truck, a Dodge Dakota with a V-8 engine, could stop (almost always) on a dime and start on its own in temperatures well below 40 and, yes, this without being plugged in. I was as proud of it as my mother had been of quilts and embroidery, but the immediate subject of my awe was not the prowess of my pickup in the dead of winter. It was a very alive brown furry apparition that had also stopped dead in its tracks. The pointed head and long tail joined by a curvaceous body stared at me sideways -- barely a minute. It then slipped into the woods as if it had never existed. Like a unicorn.

I came back to my senses. In a flash I realized it was a wolverine. My father, a trapper, had not lied. They, these beings strong enough to fight off a bear, really lived. They were not made up. I could now place them in my mental totem pole. I shivered with happiness, even as I stared at the slippery open white space in front of me. I turned on the ignition key, well aware that I would have to wait till my return to the cabin to savor the absolute joy of this rare encounter and share it with my brave companion, my cat Chalumeau who, with me, faced the unexpected joys and dangers of living in the bush. We both felt that one, unlike the protagonist in Robert Frost's poem *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*, should succumb to the tantalizing appeal of the woods "lovely, dark and deep"!

--Suzanne Legault

Being Stalked in 2013-14

It was my last class before retiring from York. I had taught for over 50 years and I enjoyed teaching evening economics courses to part-time students who are frequently first-generation Canadians or recent immigrants. I like to know students' backgrounds so I can incorporate relevant materials and insights into lectures. There are always students for whom this is their first university course, and knowing their context was important to help me to contribute to their success. Mainly they needed reassurance and a reminder that they could ask for help.

The first student to turn up for office hour was an immigrant, married with a child. I asked about her background. This was her first university course. She has a successful career in a field where she did not need a degree. She was proud to say that she owned properties rented to faculty members. By week three I sensed that something other than the course was bringing her to the office. She would arrive with no agenda and no questions related to the course work. By week five I recruited a female

TA to sit with me in the office for the office hour, and we kept the door open. The student missed the midterm exam, and her behavior was becoming more concerning. When I went to leave campus, sometimes at an odd hour, and she would be parked near my car. Once she was with her young son. I would always excuse myself and quickly depart. I was being stalked.

I was deluged with emails, and I had no success trying to steer her back to the course material. I then forwarding the emails, unread, to my female colleague undergraduate course director and asked for help. The student threatened to complain to the Ontario Human Rights Tribunal, claiming that not reading her emails denied her “freedom of speech”. By December, the university administration had taken over what clearly needed more formal intervention . By mid-January, with the course over, she had missed the final and the makeup exam.

Though all of this I kept a 24-hour a day activity log in case she accused me of something. She told us that she had “Told her husband everything”. It was upsetting because I feared what might come next. As a precaution I met with the local OPP detachment, so I could call them directly if I had trouble at my home. Time passed and in March the local village Winter Festival was taking place. I forgotten about it, but when some fireworks went off, I first thought my house was under fire. I only then realized how rattled her behavior had left me.

Around that time, I participated in a session in Picton’s Regent Theatre. A local entrepreneur, and some people from the MARS Lab in Toronto, and I were discussing local economic development. I was afraid that the women could show up, and the facilitator arranged for a group of six women who, with a signal from the stage, would surround the student. She did not show up.

Another Toronto person had contacted me and expressed interest in attending the Picton session. I discouraged them, saying that the MARS Lab

people were available in Toronto, and that I was coming to Toronto so we could meet there. The contact sent me a photo, and a time and place were set to meet. Instead, the former student showed up. She has set up a phony email with an assumed name and phony photo. I said I was not there to meet her, took a photo of her in her car, and left.

That night I got an email from the phony account, asking why I had left. For a moment I questioned my own memory. Had anxiety caused me to mistake the person in the car for the student? My photo confirmed that it was the student. I was not going crazy. I gave the photo to the university and shortly after that I ceased to hear from her. This happened seven years ago and now it feels like ancient history, but there is still a small piece of the trauma that does not go away. I have some empathy for the student and whatever drove her to her actions.

I always have deep empathy for women who are stalked, having known several including one where she and her daughter were only safe and secure when her ex-husband with anger management issues was killed in a fight. I now have a deeper sense of the lived experience of being stalked. I was terrified even though I did not risk the levels of physically and sexual threat experience by women when stalked. I felt at risk and I did the things that I am told are done by women who are stalked. I questioned my actions, tried to be reasonable, and tried to diminish the threat in my own mind. It is a terrible situation, and I can only imagine how much worse it is when a woman suffers the experience, especially in situations where there are no supports, or where she is not believed. That would be abandonment and betrayal at so many levels that it is hard to imagine what one would do. I was grateful that at York I was believed, and I got help from staff and administration in resolving the problem.

– **Sam Lanfranco**

TEACHING IN AN ALL-BLACK COLLEGE IN 1968 IN GEORGIA: LIFE ON THE EDGE

In the fall of 1967, at the age of 26, I started teaching at an all-black college in Augusta, GA. I was fresh out of Montreal and then Cornell U and, after completing my two-year residency, I had applied and had been accepted to teach at both the white and the black colleges in Augusta where I was to spend only one year because I was simply joining my new husband, also a sociologist, who was finishing his mandated two-year tour of duty as an army officer at the height of the Vietnam war. Apart from what I had seen on TV, I was largely ignorant of the complexities of daily race relations in the South. But I had already joined a Civil Rights Movement at Cornell and it seemed fair that I should work at a black college rather than a well-endowed white one, even if the salary was much higher with the latter.

We lived in an all-white middle class area in the back apartment that an elderly couple was renting out to military couples. I had barely arrived in July, when our landlady approached me outside one day, very annoyed to have learned about my job from her black gardener and said that I was not American and therefore did not understand the situation “down here, and we hope that you will not bring any of these people to the house.” When my husband returned, I had an absolute fit of outrage.

Apart from this, the first incident happened in late October when I woke up one night to dancing lights in our window and then smelled fire. We ran outside to find a smallish KKK cross burning very close to the house in the gravel backyard that served as parking spaces. We extinguished it with the garden hose and then my husband hid it in his car trunk in a tarp. I don't know if any of the neighbours saw this commotion or, for that matter, had contributed to it. My husband was Texan and was far more shaken than I was—I didn't quite understand the fearful ramifications of this

situation. He decided that we should not mention this incident to anyone and behave as if nothing had happened.

At some point later, my car broke down in the parking lot of the college. I phoned our garage (white) and he said, “sure, we'll get it and tow it here, if needed.” When I gave him the address, there was absolute silence at the other end, and then he hung up on me. A colleague phoned a black garage owner and then offered to drive me home. I gratefully accepted and asked him to drop me at a grocery store near my house. When my husband returned and I told him the story, he very ominously said, “Don't ever accept a ride from a black man alone in a white area here because he could get killed and something not too pleasant could happen to you.” I couldn't believe what I was hearing but my husband seemed quite shaken up again. I had put a man's life in danger. The next day, my husband drove me to the college where I found my car repaired and the kind garage owner wouldn't hear about a payment.

The third incident occurred in January. The Dept of Sociology at the U of Georgia (Athens) invited sociology majors in the South to a day-long information session to recruit potential grad students. I talked to some of my students: Two males and four females were really excited about going and one of the two male students offered to drive us. My husband instructed me to sit in the back with the women in case we were stopped by the highway patrol. During the entire trip of about 3 hours, while we all babbled away, the two guys kept looking back anxiously for any sign of the police.

We arrived late by a few minutes. Followed by my six students, I opened the door of the meeting room where about 35 white Southern students were assembled with some profs. There was utter silence and appalling astonishment in the room and people were staring gaping. Finally, one of the profs got hold of himself, stood up, and welcomed us. He

asked me to introduce my students and I was so shocked that I was completely mute! I can only recall how happy my students were on the way back and how they chatted excitedly about talking with the “white kids” and the wonderful food we had been served. It was the first time in their lives that they had eaten at a table with whites. They were so excited and deeply touched. The initial shock had been so great that I never recalled anything of the day that had been so memorable to my students.

It so happens that, before we left Athens, a white female student from the other college approached me and asked if she could ride back with us as she said that she lived near my place. I asked the driver and he was quite pleased. She sat with me in the back of the car and asked me to drop her at my place because her father “would kill me if he saw me in this car.” Unfortunately, upon arriving in Augusta in the dark, my student’s car broke down near the Woolworth store from where it was agreed that I would phone my husband so that he could collect me. As it was cold in the early evening, we all went inside and stayed at the entrance near the cashiers.

One male student offered me some cheese bits. We were in a circle and, as I put my hand in the bag, I will always remember this: Some of my students stood frozen in place; so I looked around and we were surrounded by 8-10 white men who were moving threateningly closer. Suddenly, in walks my husband in his officers’ uniform and I urgently called out his name as I had become frightened. The men scattered! He drove all the students to their homes and when they were gone, he let out a long whistle of relief. He said he had arrived in the nick of time, otherwise my male students would have been “roughed up” or worse because they were with a “white girl” (me). During this time, the clever white female students had stayed outside and walked away and returned when we all piled up in my husband’s car. (She lived in the well-to-do part of Augusta in a very large home and I saw at least

two black servants when the lights were turned on when we arrived.)

The last incident happened the morning after Rev. King was assassinated. The Dean phoned and asked me to go to the campus chapel (it was a Methodist college) for a memorial service. He emphasized that it was important that all white faculty be present. I was driving my first car slowly, a huge white Olds that you could sleep in, along the usual dirt lane in the back of the college, when, suddenly, out of nowhere, a bunch of black teens jumped out, surrounded my car and started rocking it. I had to stop the AC for fear that my battery would overheat, as batteries often did in those days. It was hot and I was afraid to die of heat: There was no way I was going to get out of the car because I could see that these kids were out for revenge on any white they saw and I was all alone, terribly frightened.

I can’t say how long this lasted, perhaps just two minutes—an eternity. Then, a pickup truck arrived, and out jumped several college students who chased the kids away, yelling at them that I was one of their teachers, and came to apologize. My legs were shaking when I got out. This was my last bad incident, although the service for Dr King was quite draining emotionally. His death was such a huge loss and the assassination such a social and political blow.

So long as I was on campus, life was pleasant, although I was very busy for a person my age with responsibilities beyond her abilities and understanding. The outside world was the unpleasant part. Two separate worlds. Now I shudder when I think of it all. The white folks in Augusta were also very nice—except when told what I was doing...which I soon learned to keep to myself. Yet, there is no doubt, with hindsight, that, even the KKK cross burning in our backyard had to have happened, if not with the consent, at least with the tacit acceptance of the people in my “friendly” neighbourhood who had probably watched me very

carefully. Therefore, it was with great pleasure that I saw Joe Biden and two democratic senators elected in Georgia. But it is far from the end of Dr King's dream, as in Republican states, including Georgia, they are changing some laws regarding access to voting which will again make it harder for minorities to vote.

– **Anne-Marie Ambert**

HISTORICAL CURIOSITIES

Did you know that Josephine, Napoleon's beloved Empress, whom he divorced in order to have a son and heir with the Austrian Duchess Marie Louise, still ended up becoming an ancestor to all current European royal families, except for England? This includes the royal families of Norway, Sweden, Belgium, Denmark, Luxemburg and the former royals of Greece and Portugal. How did that come to be?

Josephine was born in Martinique in 1763 and married the Viscount of Beauharnais in 1779 with whom she had two children, Eugene and Hortense. Both children were attractive, pleasant, had good heads on their shoulders, and good values. When Josephine married Napoleon in 1796, to the annoyance of his family, he adopted the young adults who remained attached to him even after he was exiled. They also became their mother's main source of moral support.

Neither young adult sought high positions, but Eugene served Napoleon well. They became prince and princess. Eugene also became Viceroy of Italy and Hortense, Queen of the Netherlands through a forced marriage to Napoleon's odious brother, Louis. For his part, Eugene married Mary, a Bavarian princess, but it was a love match.

Eventually, Eugene's daughter married the Crown Prince of Sweden, from which came the ancestry of the European families mentioned above. As for Hortense, who had been forced by Napoleon to marry his rather difficult brother Louis, their second son later became Napoleon III—despite Napoleon having refused to make him his heir. Hortense's marriage was horrible, she was maltreated, and

consequently spent most of her time with Josephine. At some point, Napoleon allowed her to divorce and she remarried for love and gave birth to a son who became a duke.

(I took this interesting historical curiosity from a well-documented and thick book written by Evangeline Bruce, *Napoleon and Josephine. An improbable marriage*, published in 1996.)

– **Anne-Marie Ambert**

GOOD READS

Tracks, by Robyn Davidson, published 1980. This is my second time reading this book which I first read many years ago. This is the story of a 25-year-old young white Australian woman who decides that she wants to cross the desert of Australia, from Alice Springs all the way to the Pacific coast—alone with three camels. It is interesting to read for several reasons.

First, how she accomplishes this goal is certainly rather incredible as we follow her on her journey from day to day. Second, the various states of mind that she goes through are, from a psychological perspective, very well described and perceptive. Third, and here we have to keep in mind that, especially in the bush, the era of unquestioned macho male privilege in 1977 when she starts her trek alone, results in Robyn suffering a great deal of male abuse and exploitation during her two years of training in Alice Springs. Furthermore, during this trip, she encounters many Aboriginal tribes and she provides wonderful insights into their relationship with the earth, between themselves, and with whites. She also does talk about their past and ongoing history of colonialism and mistreatment. This is an adventure autobiography. It is well told and very honestly so. I thoroughly enjoyed it. I suggest Googling her name and see where she is at these days.

– **Anne-Marie Ambert**

HISTORICAL HUMOUR

In ancient Israel, it came to pass that a trader by the name of Abraham Com did take unto himself a young wife by the name of Dorothy.

And Dot Com was a comely woman, broad of shoulder and long of leg. Indeed, she was often called Amazon Dot Com. And she said unto Abraham, her husband, "Why dost thou travel so far from town to town with thy goods when thou canst trade without ever leaving thy tent?"

And Abraham said, "How, dear?"

And Dot replied, "I will place drums in all the towns and drums in between to send messages saying what you have for sale, and they will reply telling you who hath the best price. And the sale can be made on the drums and delivery made by Uriah's Pony Stable (UPS)."

Abraham thought long and decided he would let Dot have her way with the drums. And the drums rang out and were an immediate success. Abraham sold all the goods he had at the top price, without ever having to move from his tent.

To prevent neighbouring countries from overhearing what the drums were saying, Dot devised a system that only she and the drummers knew. It was known as Must Send Drum Over Sound (MSDOS), and she also developed a language to transmit ideas and pictures - Hebrew To The People (HTTP).

And the young men did take to Dot Com's trading. They were called Nomadic Ecclesiastical Rich Dominican Sybarites, or NERDS.

And lo, the land was so feverish with joy at the new riches and the deafening sound of drums that no one noticed that the real riches were going to that enterprising drum dealer, Brother William of Gates, who bought off every drum maker in the land. And indeed, did insist on drums to be made that would work only with Brother Gates' drumheads and drumsticks.

And Dot did say, "Oh, Abraham, what we have started is being taken over by others." And Abraham looked out over the Bay of Ezekiel, or eBay as it came to be known.

He said, "We need a name that reflects what we are." And Dot replied, "Young Ambitious Hebrew Owner Operators."

"YAHOO," said Abraham.

And because it was Dot's idea, they named it YAHOO Dot Com.

Abraham's cousin, Joshua, being the young Gregarious Energetic Educated Kid (GEEK) that he was, soon started using Dot's drums to locate things around the countryside.

It soon became known as God's Own Official Guide to Locating Everything (GOOGLE).

That is how it all began. And that's the truth.

(Source unknown.)

POLITICAL HUMOUR

The Pearly Gates

While walking down the street one day, a Senator is tragically hit by a car and dies. His soul arrives in heaven and is met by St. Peter at the entrance.

"Welcome to heaven," says St. Peter. "Before you settle in, it seems there is a problem. We seldom see a high official around these parts, you see, so we're not sure what to do with you."

"No problem, just let me in," says the Senator.

"Well, I'd like to, but I have orders from the higher ups. What we'll do is have you spend one day in hell and one in heaven. Then you can choose where to spend eternity."

"Really? I've made up my mind. I want to be in heaven," says the Senator.

"I'm sorry, but we have our rules." And with that, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell. The doors open and he finds himself in the middle of a green golf course. In the distance is a clubhouse and standing in front of it are all his friends and other politicians who had worked with him. Everyone is very happy and in evening dress. They run to greet him, shake his hand, and reminisce about the good times they had while getting rich at the expense of the people. They played a friendly game of golf and then dine on lobster, caviar and the finest champagne.

Also present is the devil, who really is a very friendly guy who is having a good time dancing and telling jokes. They are all having such a good time that before the Senator realizes it, it is time to go. Everyone gives him a hearty farewell and waves while the elevator rises. The elevator goes up, up, up and the door reopens in heaven where St. Peter is aiting for him, "Now it's time to visit heaven...

So, 24 hours passed with the Senator joining a group of contented souls moving from cloud to cloud, playing the harp and singing. They have a good time and before he realizes it, the 24 hours have gone by and St. Peter returns. "Well, then, you've spent a day in hell and another in heaven. Now choose your eternity."

The Senator reflects for a minute, then he answers: "Well, I would never have said it before, I mean heaven has been delightful, but I think I would be better off in hell." So, St. Peter escorts him to the elevator and he goes down, down, down to hell...

Now the doors of the elevator open and he's in the middle of a barren land covered with waste and garbage. He sees all his friends, dressed in rags, picking up the trash and putting it in black bags as more trash falls to the ground. The devil comes over to him and puts his arm around his shoulders.

"I don't understand," stammers the Senator. "Yesterday I was here and there was a golf course and clubhouse, and we ate lobster and caviar, drank champagne, and danced and had a great time. Now there's just a wasteland full of garbage and my friends look miserable. What happened?"

The devil smiles at him and says, "Yesterday we were campaigning. Today, you voted."

– Contributed by **Bruno Bellissimo**

YURA Executive

Officers

Charmaine Courtis, Co-President

ccourtis@rogers.com

Ian Greene, Co-President

igreene@yorku.ca

Steve Dranitsaris, Secretary

sdrano@rogers.com

David Smith, Treasurer

dmsmith@yorku.ca

Members at Large

Angus Anderson

angus.anderson@me.com

Sheelagh Atkinson

sheelagh.atkinson@icloud.co

Bruno Bellissimo

brunomba@hotmail.com

Agnes Fraser

a.fraser@bell.net

Jane Grant

fjgrant@sympatico.ca

Ed Lee-Ruff

leeruff@yorku.ca

Patricia Murray

pmurray@yorku.ca

David Leyton-Brown

dlbrown@yorku.ca

Savitsa Sévigny

ssevigny@yorku.ca

Donna Smith

djsmith612@gmail.com

John Wilson

5646.e.wilson@gmail.com

Ex-Officio members:

Anne-Marie Ambert, Editor

ambert.yorku@gmail.com

Fred Fletcher, ARFL

fred_fletcher@sympatico.ca

Agnes Fraser, Volunteer Office Staff Representative

a.fraser@bell.net

John Lennox, Past Co-President

jlennox@yorku.ca

YURA Office Hours

(in non-Covid times)

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.

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>

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

Anne-Marie Ambert, Editor

ambert.yorku@gmail.com