



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

**Summer 2021**

**No. 55**

**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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## Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

Last year at this time, we started out by saying “It is a June like never before!” Well, it turns out that it is another June like never before. Spring/summer has finally arrived, and few of us are preparing for holidays, though we hope that the end of summer will bring a glimmer of hope. Thank goodness we are retired and have some flexibility! The YURA office has been closed since March 2020, although we have continued to monitor YURA email and telephone messages from our volunteers’ homes. And it looks as if there may be some on-campus re-opening beginning in September, if all goes well, and this would include the YURA office, depending on government and university regulations. We will keep our members informed.

A year ago, we were hoping vaccines would arrive by Christmas, and now most of us have received at least our first shot. We are alive and have a lot to be grateful for.

The Executive Committee has continued to meet regularly via Zoom. It’s amazing that most of us have become Zoomers! Our Events Committee has made available two Zoom webinars about digital issues of interest to Seniors, and we have worked with CURAC (College and University Retirees’ Associations of Canada) to provide on-line activities of interest to our members through links on our web site. And we have a YURA coffee hour intermittently. Our thanks to Fran Wilkinson for this terrific, member-inspired initiative. These are all posted on our web page – so please check it frequently: [York University Retirees' Association | Just another York Central CMS Sites site](#) . We have a web committee that has recently enhanced our web page to make it more user-friendly. Thanks to Steve Dranitsaris, Steve Glassman, and Michele Young for their efforts.

Our annual membership renewal drive has begun. Last year was a challenge because of limited access to university facilities, but we managed to maintain our membership at nearly 500 thanks to your loyalty. This year should be even better.

**YURA’s major fund-raiser for 2021** will again be our participation in the 5 km walk/run in the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon Virtual Charity Challenge in October. YURA has been approved as an official charity, and we are now listed on the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge web site. By mid-June, our YURA web page will tell you how you can register to participate in that event, and through that participation, we are able to raise funds for YURA graduate awards. All you need to do is to register, agree to walk or run 5 km some time in October, and send fund-raising emails to your family and friends to sponsor you.

In 2020, we had 19 participants who raised more than \$24,000 for YURA graduate scholarships. Our goal in 2021 is to double that amount! We can do it if we can double the number of participants. In 2019, we had 8 participants, and they had so much fun and success that we recruited 19 last year. These 19 enthusiasts testify to how much they enjoyed the event, and how rewarding it is to raise funds for our students who receive graduate awards. If you have any inquires, please contact Ian Greene at [igreene@yorku.ca](mailto:igreene@yorku.ca), or 416-571-8742.

You will remember that, a year ago, York University was the victim of a cyber attack. As a consequence, the university has implemented a new two-factor login procedure for those of us with York University email accounts. The two-factor procedure is simple, effective, and provides peace

of mind for users. You will have received instructions from University Information Technology if you have a York University email address, but if you have any issues, YURA can help you. Please send an email to [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca) or leave us a telephone message at 416-736-2100 ext. 70664.

**The YURA Annual General Meeting** will take place by Zoom on Friday, October 29 starting at 11 a.m. If circumstances permit, there may be an in-person component as well. Our guest speaker will be Dr. Brian Goldman, host of the CBC weekly program “White Coat, Black Art,” and author of *The Power of Kindness*. Please put this on your calendar now.

We greatly appreciate of all the amazing work that Anne-Marie Ambert puts into both the *Newsletter* and the *Person-to-Person* as our Editor. She has been doing so for an interesting and impressive 11 years. 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 is Teresa Hunter, who has been our Human Resources support person. Thank you, Teresa. As you will have seen on our web page, John Lennox, past co-president of YURA, was awarded a Tribute Award at the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada Zoom meeting in May. John has done so much to advance YURA and is continuing to play an active role on our executive committee as past president. Congratulations John, and thanks!!

We hope that our office at 101 Central Square will reopen again possibly as early as September 2021 or early 2022 with the help of our **volunteers**. Before the lockdown, John Lennox helped on Tuesdays, Agnes Fraser on Wednesdays, and Sara Kozlowski on Thursdays. If you would like to volunteer in our office once the university re-opens or would like

more information about what our volunteer needs are, please let us know. Our volunteers greet people who drop into our office – often faculty or staff who are considering retiring and want to know about YURA. As well, they reply to telephone and email inquiries.

Through the summer we will be processing membership renewals and welcoming new members. We will answer the [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca) email throughout the summer.

On behalf of the Executive, we wish that your summer will be as happy and safe as possible, and we look forward to working with you and for you again in the fall.

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

## **In Memoriam**

### **A Thought Of Remembrance For Our Lost Indigenous Children**

On Thursday May 27, **Chief Rosanne Casimir of the Tk'emlúps te Secwépemc First Nation confirmed that the bodies of 215 Indigenous children were discovered in an unmarked mass grave** at a former Kamloops, BC residential school. **That's 215 children stolen from their families and communities – never to return.** One has to keep in mind that, unfortunately, other such sites probably exist throughout Canada where these Residential Schools were located. The homesick children were often malnourished with foods strange to them, and their immune system was weakened so that they caught various diseases, such as tuberculosis, and consequently died. Others may have been killed to hush sexual abuse while

others may have died as a result of harsh physical punishment.

Three of the many relevant websites:

First, google the words “where were the residential schools in Canada” to obtain maps of their locations.

### **An Overview of the Indigenous Residential System**

[http://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/An-Overview-of-the-IRS-Booklet.pdf?utm\\_source=leadnow&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=blast2021-05-31](http://www.anishinabek.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/An-Overview-of-the-IRS-Booklet.pdf?utm_source=leadnow&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=blast2021-05-31)

### **Residential School Survivors’ Stories**

[https://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethechildren/stories/?utm\\_source=leadnow&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=blast2021-05-31](https://legacyofhope.ca/wherearethechildren/stories/?utm_source=leadnow&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=blast2021-05-31)

## **Ali Eliasu: Recipient of the YURA Graduate Student Award, 2019-2020 – A Thank You**

Thank you so much for having my contributions to the community acknowledged. This instills confidence in me to continue to do my best and dedicate my time to help much more.

I love to volunteer my time when I have enough to spare. The recognition that this award has offered me has motivated me to do more for my community. Recently, I have engaged myself in a STEM research mentorship program where we take on a few undergraduate students from the sciences who might not have a background in engineering research and guide them on a research topic. My group is working on “Promoting STEM education

using 3D printing.” This will provide more opportunities to share my expertise and also learn from my community. I hope to continue to stay engaged in these forms of community interactions that are a win-win for everyone involved.

Keeping my focus on studying has become increasingly hard when you have to worry about finances, especially in this current situation. I used to respond to random jobs that were given out by an employment agency, which were mostly off campus (2-4 hours bus ride). I mostly do these types of work during the summer to help pay for my apartment and a few luxuries as well as to have enough to send back home. The summer 2019 saw the onset of a global pandemic which shut everything down and jobs that were still in operation were extremely high-risk.

Unfortunately for me, I also had to move out of my old apartment on April 1<sup>st</sup>, 2020 due to personal reasons and this put a strain on my finances. This award could not have come at a better time. In addition to my line of credit, it allowed me to stay afloat till such time when I can begin to earn again as a teaching assistant. My sincerest gratitude to the York University Retirees’ Association and donors for this great honour and support.

## **Life as It Was Back then: Reminiscence**

*Our 34<sup>th</sup> Reminiscence is written by Ellen Hoffmann who retired as University Librarian in 2001 and from the Information and Privacy Office in 2007. She has entitled her reminiscence, “Car Trips in the Fifties.”*

Family car rides and car trips were a constant part of our lives in 1950s Wisconsin when I grew up. Riding in the car had rules. I always sat behind our

mother and my sister always sat behind our father. It still makes me uncomfortable to sit behind the driver when I am in the back seat. The strictest rule was the absolute barricade between her side and my side of the back seat; absolutely nothing could cross to the other side. And of course, no radio, no air conditioning.

Sunday afternoon drives were common. Mostly we drove through the farmland near our home on the west side of Madison. But sometimes we went farther, to the driftless area of southwestern Wisconsin. We usually stopped for a treat on the way home. Sometimes it was a 10-cent Dreamsicle instead of 5-cent popsicles. Or maybe a stop at a Rennebohm drugstore for a brown cow root beer float. Or maybe at Madison Milk Producers for really good ice cream. Wisconsin really was “America’s Dairyland.”

I remember a trip when the toll roads from Chicago to New York were new, but most of the travels I remember were before the Interstates were built. Travel was slow. Our cars contributed to the slowness. We always had used cars with re-tread tires. Breakdowns were not uncommon. My father could always change a tire, but sometimes a garage was necessary. Also, my sister suffered from car sickness, so we christened Urp (our family word for vomit) towns in several states. My mother was the navigator, a responsible and sometimes tension-filled responsibility when navigating in and out of cities.

Many summers involved a long car trip to visit family and friends in other states. My grandparents lived in Missouri, so we went there many years. Once to Missouri and then west to Oklahoma, another time to Missouri and east to Tennessee. Other relatives lived in New England and on the East Coast, and they were the reason for other trips.

Before we had television, we visited relatives south of Chicago for my father to watch the White Sox; the trip was a slog through the western suburbs. We also visited relatives in Minneapolis and there were interesting stops along that route. My sister and I wore pants or shorts in the car, but before arriving at the friends or family whom we were visiting, we stopped and changed into dresses so we would look “nice.” (When we wore shorts to visit the Canadian Parliament, we were asked to leave the visitors’ gallery because we weren’t dressed properly.)

We all enjoyed finding and repeating Burma Shave signs. We always recorded the states of different license plates; I think we found the most at Yellowstone. And we played many rounds of finding the letters of the alphabet on signs; it was hardest if the letter had to start the word. We could count on Quaker State Motor Oil for the “q.” We brought toys and crafts. The year we were making doll clothes, we took so many supplies we had to sit on the floor. I don’t think my parents ever made motel reservations. When we stopped at a motel, my mother went in to find out the price and to check the room. It was a great treat if the motel had an outdoor pool. Car travel has changed—and so has Wisconsin.

– **Ellen Hoffmann**, University Librarian Emerita

## **Bio Sketches**

**Steve Dranitsaris** (Secretary of YURA Executive Board). Steve retired from York in January 2014, following more than 40 years of service. A 1973 York grad, he was Senior Executive Officer in the Office of the Vice-President Finance and Administration for 12 years prior to retirement. His career at York also included leadership roles in Kinesiology and Health Science, Athletics & Recreation, Private Funding, Alumni Affairs, the Convocation Office and Stong College.

During his working years, Steve served the University community in many voluntary roles, among them long stretches as Chair of the University Parking Committee and Parking Appeals; director of the CPM Employees' Association; coordinator of York's summer slow-pitch league and organizer of the annual faculty and staff golf tournament. He was involved in many University committees, task forces, and building projects; was instrumental in much fundraising for student scholarships; and was a long-serving member of the York University Alumni Board. For 17 years, he also represented the alumni on the University Senate.

Steve has served as Secretary of the YURA Board since 2015. In retirement, he has been an active volunteer at his curling club, his church, for several charitable causes, and at York. He provided leadership for the 50th Anniversary celebrations of Kinesiology & Health Science in 2017 and Stong College in 2019.

**John Wilson** is a member of YURA Executive Committee and a recent retiree from York after 32 active years of service. During those 32 years he worked in Campus Services and Business Operations and was entrusted with numerous jobs and responsibilities including Horticulturist, Arborist, Supervisor and Assistant Superintendent of Grounds and Vehicles, Manager of Mailing Service, Manager of the Inter-University Transit System, in addition to acting as Communication Liaison Officer for numerous Capital Construction projects on the York campus.

Beyond his commitment to York, John is and continues to be a strong advocate for Arboriculture and for the need for a greater appreciation of our urban forests. He is the acting Chair of a non-for-profit organization called the Canadian TREE Fund that provides funding for research and education

projects that relate to urban forest issues and challenges. He is also a Director on the Board of the Aurora Community Arboretum, a 20-year-old organization that has established and maintains an arboretum with over 500 trees in Aurora.

John is grateful for the opportunity to assist with the day-to-day operations of YURA, as well as sit on the Board, as it provides a great transition from full-time employment and a chance to stay in touch with longtime friends and colleagues.

## Coach Tours

Travelling is one of the initial goals of many retirees, so that many YURA members are probably dreaming of escaping to visit other countries (after the world is a safer place, free of the pandemic). When I was in my 30s, I would never have thought that my future mode of travelling would be by coach tours. It sounded too rigid and "corny." Yet, later, I took a few such tours before turning 60 and after that, until age 75, I took at least three a year in addition to trips south and driving across Canada. Most of the tours I took were in Europe, with a smattering in the USA (3), Australia (3), New Zealand (2), Newfoundland (2), and Les Iles de la Madeleine (1). All in all, I must have taken well over fifty tours. Given this extensive experience, I thought I could provide information that would help YURA members enjoy tours to the fullest in future years.

**Advantages:** No need to worry about daily planning, food, parking, and getting lost. Airport transfers to and from hotels are also included, which is great. As well, at the higher end of the price range, these tours arrange for travelers to live in fabulous places, meet interesting people, and visit monuments not usually open to the public. Where relevant, the guides can also help with opera and theatre tickets.

**How to choose a tour operator?** I always chose companies depending on the destinations I had in mind. Other key criteria were the trajectory or places visited, the number of days spent in each place, the quality of the hotels, and the number of meals included.

In those days, my travel agent provided me each October with the catalogues of my favourite tour companies. These were at first Trafalgar, Insight (both British and part of the same company) and to a lesser extent Globus (Swiss). I also used three Canadian companies twice each, Butterfield & Roberson for hiking—a luxury tour company I highly recommend—as well as Canadian Seniors’ Tours, and Adventures Abroad. Later, around 2008, I discovered Tauck Tours and took as many trips as I could with them: top hotels, excellent food, interesting places and people—the works!

After receiving these catalogues or looking at them online, I focused on a tour that went only to the country I wanted to visit or to a region of it, to see the place in depth and at a more leisurely pace, which both Insight and Tauck tours provided. (Many tours visit several countries, which is exhausting and does not create memories.) I prefer tours where we did not change hotels every night as this is tiring and a waste of time. Trips where we stayed at a smaller number of hotels for two or three days and went touring from these are ideal. The two tours I took with Canadian Seniors were excellent in this respect as we stayed at the same hotel for three weeks: one was in Malta and the other Cyprus. (This said, I didn’t much like that Company at the time. But things may have changed.)

**Additional days:** After a while, I discovered that most tour companies can reserve additional days at the beginning and the end of a trip at the hotel of arrival. This means that, if you arrive in Rome and want to visit parts not included in the itinerary, you can arrive a day or a few days ahead and visit at

your leisure. Some of the Companies will even pick you up at the airport as if you were arriving on the scheduled day. These additional days are great for those who suffer from jet lag because one can rest before the tour starts early the next day. I have also had my travel agent book me at another (better) hotel for a few days before tour departure. However, it’s important that the tour company knows of your whereabouts and vice-versa.

For those who do not like flying or have long flights (such as going to Australia), you can book two tours back-to-back, generally ending and starting at the same hub. In Europe, a lot of tours begin and end in London, Paris, Vienna, and Rome.

As well, when space is available, some companies may allow you to start with a tour and later leave you at a place where you would like to stay longer, and the next tour that follows, a few days or a week later, picks you up and you complete the tour with a new group. For instance, in 2007, I took a tour of the eastern coast of Australia from Sydney all the way north to Cairns, returning by air. The tour included a couple of nights each at several islands such as Fraser and Hamilton islands. However, I absolutely wanted to stay at Hayman Island. It was arranged that the tour would drop me at a marina where a Hayman launch picked me up and returned me five days later. After that, I continued the rest of the tour with another group for the few days left. The trick here is to make sure that the second tour does not forget about you, especially if they are at a different hotel or you have to meet them at a nearby location.

**Single supplements:** I often took tours on my own which means paying a single supplement or sharing a room with another unknown woman. Some people choose not to pay the single supplement betting that they will be the only single one, and therefore, get a room by themselves for free. This is more likely to be a stroke of luck for a male traveler as most men

travel with a female companion on a tour. I always paid the single supplement, and this was a good idea for me. I even did so when travelling with a friend or relative—separate but adjacent rooms.

**Other arrangements:** Also, often, when I arrived at a hotel that had a nice view only on one side, and the tour rooms were located on the other side, I paid the hotel directly to move me to a more expensive room with the view I wanted. With some tour companies, one can reserve a room with a view beforehand for a supplement. In other instances, one can be lucky and get the view. Some tours, such as Tauck, nearly always guarantee a room with an excellent view.

**Optional tours and meals:** Most tour companies offer optional tours and dinners—in other words, we have to pay additional fees for these. These dinners often take place in an interesting place or include a concert or local dancing. One has to be careful because these can add a lot to a travel budget. Often, these optional tours leave behind the rest of the travelers with no place to visit, which can be frustrating or a bonus if one needs a break. The tour companies usually list them ahead of booking time. If they don't, ask for the list.

**Lunch times:** The main thing that I rarely liked with tours is that most lunches are not included and, as both driver and guide need a break, the tours would stop at one of the destinations on the list, drop us on a street, show us various restaurants with hand gestures and we were off on our own. Unfortunately, this two-hour pit stop is the only opportunity to see what a very nice village, city, or scenery may be and may also have been one of the reasons why you chose that tour.

Being able to manage the basics of several languages, I would tag along with some members of the tour to a restaurant, use the toilet, leave and find a market or small food shop and get a packed lunch

(generally baguette and cheese) and start walking. That way, I saw many more places than most of my fellow travelers who spent their lunchtime sitting, eating, and chatting. I was also able to take far more photos and do more local shopping. I always made sure to use a tall building or monument to help find my way back and return on time. It is also a good idea to write down the address where the bus will pick you up again. I would say that, in over half of the tours I took, someone returned late, which meant we had to wait, and often the guide had to go in search of the missing traveler.

All in all, coach touring is a practical and interesting way of seeing places. It is also an opportunity to make new friends among fellow travelers.

—Anne-Marie Ambert

### **New Book by YURA Member Who Retired in 1995**

**Mary Williamson**, who retired from York in 1995, has just had her most recent book published: *Mrs. Dalgairn's Kitchen: Rediscovering "The Practice of Cookery."*

When *The Practice of Cookery* first appeared in Edinburgh and London editions in 1829, reviewers hailed it as one of the best cookbooks available. The book was unique not only in being wholly original, but also for its broad culinary influences, incorporating recipes from British North America, the United States, England, Scotland, France and India.

Catherine Emily Callbeck Dalgairns was born in 1788. Though her contemporaries understood her to be a Scottish author, she lived her first twenty-two years in Prince Edward Island. Charlottetown was home for much longer than the twelve years she spent in London or her mere six years' residency in Dundee, Scotland, by the time of the cookbook's

first appearance. In *Mrs. Dalgairns's Kitchen*, Mary Williamson reclaims Dalgairns and her book's Canadian roots. During her youth, the popular cookbook author would have had experience of Acadian, Mi'kmaq, and Scottish Highlands foods and ways of cooking. Her mother had come from Boston, inspiring the cookbook's several American recipes; Dalgairns's brother-in-law lived in India, and that fact is reflected in the chapter devoted to curry recipes. Williamson consulted the publisher's surviving archives to offer insights into the world of early nineteenth-century publishing, while Elizabeth Baird updates Dalgairns's recipes for the modern kitchen.

Both an enticing history of a seminal cookbook and a practical guide for readers and cooks today, *Mrs. Dalgairns's Kitchen* offers an intimate look at the tastes and smells of an early nineteenth-century kitchen.

Mary F. Williamson is a culinary historian and a collector of early cookbooks. She lives in Toronto.

McGill-Queen's University Press

<https://www.mqup.ca/mrs-dalgairns-s-kitchen-products-9780228005339.php>

## Wuhan: A Different Look

Probably all that we know about Wuhan is that it is where Covid-19 started and from where it spread. We also know that the authorities covered up the beginning of the then-epidemic and imprisoned the physician who alerted the authorities (he later died in prison of the disease). We also know that the epidemic in Wuhan itself was rather drastically stopped with measures only acceptable in a regime such as the one in China.

Five years ago, one of my brothers, who is a long-time Italian citizen and teaches theology in Bologna and Rome, heard from his superiors that students at

one of the universities in Wuhan wanted to know more about St. Augustine's work and subsequent influence and were inviting Catholic scholars to come and speak to them – something that was rather unexpected from that country. My brother jumped at the opportunity, along with another Dominican (priest) colleague, and they then went to Wuhan, all expenses paid by the Chinese authorities. One of my brother's colleagues spoke sufficient Mandarin so that they could orient themselves more freely in this new environment.

They were very well received, and many students attended their lectures which were given in English. These students were keenly interested and asked many and diverse questions – without fear of being censured, it seemed. My brother travels widely for his work, including in Asia, and mentioned that he found Wuhan, a large metropolis of over 10 M inhabitants, to be quite an attractive city.

–Anne-Marie Ambert

## ANOTHER INTERESTING BOOK

*Family Papers* (2019) by Sarah Abrevaya Stein, published by Farrar, Strauss and Giroux. The author is an award-winning historian who focuses on Jewish communities in various parts of Europe and of the former Ottoman Empire. The subtitle of this fairly small book is "A Sephardic Journey through the Twentieth Century." Although she begins with the 19th century life of the older generation of the family she studies and includes material from the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

Saadi Besalel Ashkenazi A. Levi (1820-1903) and his two successive wives had 11 children who survived into adulthood and all but one had children of their own. The number of descendants is therefore considerable. Fortunately, at the beginning of the book, an extensive genealogical tree is presented from the early 1820s to today. As well, a

map of the world shows where the various members of this very mobile family spent a considerable part of their lives or moved to permanently.

The oldest child discussed in this book was born in 1862. The family members, their lives, lifestyle, religious and political activities, writings, the immigrations, travels, Holocaust experience in some cases, and relationships are studied through their memoirs, collections of letters to each other across the continents. This was complemented in the 21st century by interviews that the author had with some of the descendants as well as the letters she exchanged with them. She also collected many photographs, some of which are reproduced in the book.

The book is divided into short chapters focusing on individual members of the family in order to illustrate the historical circumstances under which they lived. In turn, these chapters are grouped in sections which more or less follow the family through the upheavals of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, beginning with their lives in the former Ottoman city of Salonika, which we now know as Thessalonica in Greece.

The Jewish community in Salonika was very large and well organized, “made up mostly of Ladino-(or Judeo-Spanish) speaking Jews” expelled from Christian medieval Iberia in 1492 and given refuge by the Ottomans who largely treated them as good citizens. They even had their own newspapers in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, some in Ladino. This political and social tolerance contrasts with how poorly they were treated once their city passed into Greek Orthodox' hands—not to omit the fate that befell some of them later under the French Vichy regime in WWII.

Strangely enough, the family counted one War criminal judged at the Nuremberg trials, the only

Jewish man known to have committed Nazi-related atrocities. However, this book does not cover the Holocaust as much as it might have given that several members were killed (and a few survived the camps).

**--Anne-Marie Ambert**

### **HISTORICAL PHOTO**



**A Normandy Beach landing photo they don't show in textbooks - Brave women of the Red Cross arriving in 1944 to help the injured troops, WWII**

(Contributed by **Rosemarie Nielsen**)

## YURA Executive

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## 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.

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