



**A Newsletter for members of the York University Retirees’ Association (YURA)**

**Fall 2021**

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**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

It has been a summer that has given us a little hope. Some of us have been able to engage in modest travel. Some of us have put more time and effort into our gardens. And we have taken advantage of opportunities to visit family members that we haven't seen for a couple of years.

Some of us have been searching for something we can do to help. Eleven of our members have signed up for the **Scotiabank Charity Challenge** by agreeing to walk at least 5 kms any time in October and finding sponsors to contribute to our grad scholarships. To date, they have already raised more than \$18,000!

Every year, the graduate students we have supported through our scholarships have testified that they could not have continued without our help. This year, that help is more than ever needed. Some promising grad students will drop out without our help. Please consider helping grad students in need by sponsoring one of our York University team members or signing up to walk/run for us in the virtual marathon at any time in October. **It has never been easier. Here is the link to donate:** <https://raceroster.com/events/2021/48139/2021-scotiabank-toronto-waterfront-marathon/pledge/team/316799>.

**It is too late to sign up to do the walk at this point, but the team could use your support and sponsorship if you have not done so already.**

Our YURA website has been re-designed and upgraded: [York University Retirees' Association YURA](#). Thanks to Steve Dranitsaris and Steve Glassman for all the work they put into it. We are also pleased to have a new member on our web team: Alex Neumann, who was the web master for Liberal Arts and Professional Studies before retirement.

Effective, September 14, 2021 **our mail address is changing** (however, our physical location remains the same at 101 Central Square). We have been reassigned another member of staff for support. **The new address is YURA c/o Charles Bisram, Faculty Relations, Room 276 York Lanes, York University, 4700 Keele Street, Toronto, Ontario M3J 1P3.** Charles will do our backroom computing and help us keep our records straight. Welcome to Charles.

**YURA Membership Renewal** is in full swing. Have you submitted your request to renew complete with parking requests? On our web page you can scroll to "YURA Membership" to **download and complete the membership renewal form** if you have not already renewed your membership for 2021-2022. We have been processing membership renewals all summer, trying to keep up with the mail and getting the memberships out. To date, more than 300 of our members have renewed.

There are still many of you who have not returned your forms electronically or by post. **We encourage you to so do according to the instructions which are on our YURA web page.** If you have not renewed your membership, please do so now. Remember that parking passes are limited. If you need additional help with this, please contact us by email at [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca) and we can assist. Our office will remain closed due to the health emergency until further notice, but we are doing our best to monitor our email and telephone messages from our homes.

We are looking for volunteers to help us with office hours on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays before and after noon hour once the university re-opens, and, at the moment, to monitor telephone messages and YURA email from home. If you have

an interest in doing so, please contact us at [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca).

Many of you will have noticed that we have new activities advertised for the fall. Of course, at this time all of them are virtual – available on-line. If you have any ideas for on-line activities for our members during this pandemic, please send an email to Donna Smith at [djsmith612@gmail.com](mailto:djsmith612@gmail.com).

We are delighted that **Dr. Brian Goldman has agreed to be our speaker at the YURA Annual General Meeting on Friday, October 29<sup>th</sup> via Zoom**, starting at 11:00 a.m. Dr. Goldman is a veteran ER physician and an award-winning medical reporter. As host of CBC Radio's White Coat, Black Art, he uses his proven knack for making sense of medical bafflegab to show listeners what really goes on at hospitals and clinics. He is the author of The Night Shift (HarperCollins: 2010) and The Power of Kindness: Why Empathy is Essential in Everyday Life (HarperCollins: 2018). You can read more about Dr. Goldman on the YURA web page.

We very much look forward to “seeing” you at the AGM, and we appreciate your fundraising help for the graduate scholarships. Through small steps, we can make the world a better place.

Sincerely,

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

## The US and Canada share a troubling link concerning the establishment of Residential Schools

The following link contains information we need to know if we are to understand the history of Residential Schools:

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/world/united-states-canada-residential-schools-1.6114085>

## Breaking Boundaries: The Science of our Planet

There are nine Systems Boundaries that need to be respected to hold the world stable and to assess the risks of crossing these boundaries. The Netflix film “Breaking Boundaries” discusses tipping points beyond which the impacts are irreversible:

1. Climate – tipping points of arctic ice-sheets and sea level rising
2. Bioms – CO2 levels from 350 to 415 with 450 as tipping point. Impacts include savanization of the Amazon and other forested areas.
3. Biodiversity – 68% of wildlife gone: example of bumble bees. We are beyond the boundary and the needed action is zero further loss
4. Fresh Water – needed for human use – the biggest percentage for food production. Possible actions: increased vegetarian diet, less meat.
5. Nutrification: Flow of Nitrogen and Phosphates: Run-off from overuse in farming.
6. Ocean Acidification that has caused mass extinctions in the past. We are near the limit and relates to CO2 levels in the bioms.
7. Novel entities released into environment: e.g., plastics, radioactive waste, novel chemicals which are too new to have measured limits or a tipping point. Waste reduction is clearly a key action in this and other boundary risks
8. Aerosols: particulate matter, air pollution: damage from this pollution is known but no limit or tipping point is currently established.
9. Ozone Layer: we have crossed this boundary and a global treaty has pulled us back within this limit and started to repair the Ozone Hole.

--Summarized by **Walter Whiteley**

## I REMEMBER BILL DAVIS

It was 73 years ago next month when I first met Bill Davis at our Freshers Weekend in University College at the University of Toronto. I clearly recall his open and friendly manner as we compared notes – about our appreciation for our public-school education which we greatly prized, our enthusiasm for participation in sports (his for football and mine for hockey and track and field) and other matters. Not long after, we ran against each other in a student election for first year representative on the University College Literary and Athletics Society. Guess who won in a walk, a result that I attributed to the fact that I was a day student while he was in the College residence and even then had the backing of the Ontario rural community.

Of course, ever since, I have claimed that I launched him on his electoral career!

Later, we shared a totally different relationship when he was Premier, and I was the Deputy Minister of Treasury, Economics and Intergovernmental Affairs. I vividly recall one occasion when the Premier went to a public meeting in Streetsville for the formal announcement of the proposed Regional Municipality of Peel. My Minister had another commitment that evening, and I was asked to accompany the Premier, along with two other civil service colleagues, to provide technical support. The tension in the room was palpable as the result of unease in the community about this proposed new level of government. In his characteristic relaxed manner, Bill Davis surveyed the hall and began to acknowledge a number of those present individually. “Charles, how have the crops been on your farm this year? Mary, I guess your children have just been returning to university during the last few days.” This went on for some time, interspersed with good-humored remarks about Brampton and the community of Peel. By the time he began his presentation, the environment in

the room was considerably more congenial and all ended well.

On a personal note, I am forever grateful for opportunities that he created for me: as a member of the iconic Kimber Committee on Securities Legislation in 1964, to be part of the founding Board of Directors of TV Ontario in 1970, chairing his Advisory Committee on Confederation when the PQ government was elected in Quebec in 1976, and presiding over the Committee on the Funding of Primary and Secondary Education in 1984.

In recent years, I would call him one or two days before his birthday. Since I was a month older, the opening line in our catch-up conversation was always the same. “How is my young friend, Bill.” Sad to say, he could not take my last call two weeks ago, but I plan to drop by University College next month and reflect on that significant day in 1948.

--**H. Ian Macdonald**, President Emeritus

## Life as It Was Back Then: Reminiscence

*Our 35th Reminiscence is written by Ken Carpenter who retired in 2004 as Chair of Visual Arts. But Ken did several years of post-retirement teaching. He has chosen to entitle his Reminiscence, "My Early Days."*

I was born in the tiny town of Cabri, Sask. - current population 399 - on March 5, 1939.

I was extremely fortunate in my parents. If I had been free to choose my parents, first schools and early living circumstances, I couldn't have done much better, and I owe so much of what I am and became to them.

For a while in the 1930s the provincial government had been unable to pay my schoolteacher father's salary, and everyone in the town built up "a tab," but thankfully, by the time I was born that was no longer the case. Despite his modest means, my

father had a collection of recordings of classical music. By the age of five or six, I had my favourites: Ravel's *Bolero* and Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus*. As if *Bolero* was not repetitious enough in itself, I used to demand that it be played for me time after repetitive time, until one day my exasperated father told me, "Kenny, that record is broken now." An intense love for classical music remains with me today: I subscribe to several music series each year, occasionally fly to another city to hear a special concert, and have a large collection of recordings, including seven different ones of my favourite composition, Johann Sebastian Bach's *B-minor Mass*.

My father soon took the family to Saskatoon where I remember walking downtown with my parents and Aunt Agnes to enjoy the celebrations at the end of World War II. My dad worked as a political reporter for the Saskatoon *Star-Phoenix*, and I very much wanted to share his involvement with the news. Shortly after fighting broke out in response to the United Nations' establishing the state of Israel in Nov., 1947, I created on brown wrapping paper a huge map of Palestine, put it on the living room floor and used different colours of poker chips to stand for the various forces. As each new event of the war occurred, I would move the chips around to represent the new situation, such as the fall of Beersheba to the Israelis, and so on.

I also remember my father's allowing me to stay up late at night to listen on short-wave radio to the Czechs pleading for help from the west when the Communist coup was taking over the country in Feb. of 1948. Of course, help never came. Foreign Minister Jan Masaryk fell to his death – probably pushed out a window – and the Iron Curtain was well on its way into being. "This will be very bad for the world," my father worriedly advised me. I was not quite nine years old, but I have been intensely political ever since, and I take great pleasure that my own son is also.

I was keenly aware from an early age that my father was a writer. He was not only a newspaper reporter, but he had also published a book, *The Red River Insurrection, its causes and events*, in 1936 or so, and he had been very bold in soliciting financial support for its publication. (That boldness in addressing positions of power remains with me today.) Shortly after I had learned to read and write at St. Joseph's school I attempted to write a novel, "There was a stallion..." While I soon realized that I was not yet at all ready for writing, the urge remained.

My mother was quite different, not political at all, not the educated person my father was, having dropped out of school in grade nine so as to help the family with a late harvest, and very skeptical about my father's taste in music. She gritted her teeth every time he played Wagner and concluded that she "hated opera," a position she maintained for decades until I finally got her to see one by Verdi. But she studied with the distinguished painter Ernie Lindner in Saskatoon and used to attend the celebrated soirées of the Frederick Mendel family, which were of considerable importance in the development of Saskatoon's artistic climate. She would come back in awe of their home, "with Chagalls on the wall, and orange crates for furniture," she would say. Now I wonder just how true that was. Much later Mr. Mendel had a central role in creating the Mendel gallery, which opened in 1964 and did a great deal to advance the careers of notable Saskatchewan artists like Dorothy Knowles, William Perehudoff, Otto Rogers and Robert Christie. It is now the home of the Children's Discovery Museum, and the art collection has moved to the new Remai Modern Art Gallery.

My mother was her farming parents' daughter: a keen gardener. She grew potatoes, corn, carrots, and much else in the back yard, and flowers, especially her prized tiger lilies, in the front yard. I would help harvest the potatoes and cart off the stalks from the corn to make a fort. To her great regret, after

Saskatoon we never lived in a house again, but I bought mine on Roselawn Avenue in 1971 in part because it had a good-sized yard and seven fruit trees, now long since departed, in the back yard, and I have been a keen member of that wonderful organization, the Ontario Rock Garden and Hardy Plant Society, for many years.

In 1953 my father got a job with the *Vancouver News-Herald* and our family moved to B.C. The trip out west on the train was an eye-opener. Looking down from the train to the Fraser Valley below you couldn't see the houses. Only their chimneys remained above water. It was the worst flooding of the Fraser since 1894, and an astonishing sight for a boy from the flat and dry prairies.

Having settled near Kitsilano Beach, my mother insisted that I quickly learn to swim, the first one in the family to do so. I became a beach boy, which eventually led to my working as a lifeguard in Banff in the summer of 1962. But my beach days in Vancouver were restricted at first when the epidemic of poliomyelitis peaked in the very year of our arrival. There were almost 9,000 cases in Canada and 500 deaths. It was the worst epidemic in our country since the 1918 influenza pandemic. The Pacific National Exhibition in the summer featured an unfortunate polio victim in an iron lung. It was a frightening sight for a young boy who wanted to relax on the beach and put his new swimming skills to use.

My mother also took me to see the Emily Carr paintings in the Vancouver Art Gallery, but their impact was subliminal at best. When we moved to Ottawa in 1953 so that my father could become Executive Assistant to Ralph Campney, the Minister of Defense in the St. Laurent government, my mother insisted on taking me to the National Gallery, located at the time in the old Victoria Memorial Museum Building on McLeod St. My memories of it are vague. But if my mother had not provided me with such a rich range of experience in the visual arts, would I have become a practicing art critic with over a hundred publications? Would I

have become Chair of the Visual Arts Department at York University and President of the Canadian Section of the International Association of Art Critics? I count myself fortunate to have had such wonderful parents as models.

-- **Ken Carpenter**

## CHINA COLONIZES AFRICA: THE CASE OF ETHIOPIA

On Monday Aug 9th, a French documentary presented a rather crushing account on the increasing Chinese domination in the Ethiopian economy and life. I should add that there have been many other such documentaries on the expansion of Chinese industries including mining (I should add polluting mining) and industrial agriculture in various parts of Africa with the attendant exploitation of Native workers.

We could see aerial pictures of huge industries built with low quality materials which contained a variety of Chinese products planted in Ethiopia because of the country's cheap labour force. The reporter was allowed inside one of the industries to watch the daily lives of the employees who were all Ethiopians. All of the supervisors of rank were Chinese with the exception of a few Ethiopian supervisors who were themselves heavily supervised.

The workers put in days of 9-12 hours with only one brief pause for lunch. The Chinese plant manager was proudly saying that they were paid 49€ per month and that similar work done in China would result in a salary of 300€ per month. He shrugged his shoulders and said: "Obviously this allows us to make more profit."

What I was watching were workers sitting in tight rows, under excruciating supervision, gluing or sewing what looked like straps or belts. At the

slightest mistake, they were chastised and berated like children. The manager said: "Obviously the workers here are not as competent or disciplined as those in China" and his tone was very dismissive and condescending. What was also interesting was that each day began with military-type exercises in a large paved courtyard. The plant manager would order "march, left, right, arch" and then the workers would have to chant motivational slogans.

The reporter was saying that no worker had agreed to talk to him because they were so afraid of losing their job, which often happened. But, when no one was looking, a worker gave him a late-night appointment to show him where he lived. He brought the reporter to his "housing" which was a small hole in the wall that was the size of a bed. In there, he had to sleep, store his meagre possessions and eat. He paid 30€ for this pitiful housing so that he had very little left and often ended up indebted to the company at the end of the month. This reminded me of other situations where slaves were replaced by indentured labourers who never became free economically. Some workers' salaries were docked after they had made 2-3 mistakes.

The second interesting part of this documentary was the fact that many peasants have their land expropriated by the government and are thrown out with no place to go and no means of survival. These expropriated farms are then handed over to large companies, mainly foreign ones, and especially Chinese.

The third part showed how visible the class system still is in Ethiopia under these new economic arrangements. There were vast apartment buildings where a budding middle class stays along with some developments of one-family homes for another level up the social class. Finally, and most shockingly, there were huge Hollywood-type mansions. The developer who seemed to be Ethiopian said that out

of the 789 that he had built and were planned, all were sold and accounted for. These were for the upper class, whoever this includes.

All in all, it was a heartbreaking documentary. No care was paid to the impoverished population and exploitation was rampant. But, obviously, many in power benefited from this exploitation. All this building expansion is bizarre, and grotesque given the civil unrest in the region.

--**Anne-Marie Ambert**

## BIO SKETCHES

### **Ed Lee-Ruff**

Geographical trajectory pre-Canada arrival:  
Shanghai->Hong Kong-> Vienna-> Paris ->  
Montreal.

Post-secondary education: B.Sc. and Ph.D. McGill University. Post-Doc- Columbia University (N.Y. City) 1967-1969.

Ed started at York in 1969 at half the salary which was offered by Dupont Chemicals (Wilmington, Delaware). In retrospect he says he made the right decision coming to York. He avoided conscription during the Vietnam conflict but witnessed the student riots at Columbia (what an eye-opener having come from the placid surroundings of McGill).

During his active research years, he enjoyed directing a research lab with about 60 students and post-docs passing through.

Ed's more senior administrative responsibilities include Graduate Programme director; Associate Chair and Chair of FGS graduate council; member of Tenure and Promotion committees at the department, faculty and senate levels; member of the senate committee on honorary degrees and ceremonials – the latter graced by the presence of our former president, Lorna Marsden with whom he enjoyed interacting.

Ed officially retired in 2001 but he frequents the campus daily, having his office there (routine has changed with the Covid-19 lockdown). He still keeps active in terms of writing scholarly works with colleagues in the US and here.

His three children, one of whom resides in California, have given him four grandchildren.

### **Patricia Murray**

Patricia has an undergrad degree in Physical Education from U of T and MSc degree in Exercise Physiology from the University of Alberta.

Patricia spent 38 years at York as a faculty member (Sc.) in the School of Kinesiology and Health Science, retiring in 2010. Her role within the School changed over time from instructor, lab demonstrator and coach, to an administrator in Sport and Recreation. In 1995 she became the Director of Sport and Recreation at York, a position she held for 13 years. When she began her career at York, she coached badminton and synchronized swimming and continued to do so for 20 years. Coaching got her involved in volunteering in community sport and eventually she became President of Artistic Swimming Canada (Synchro Canada) and an executive member and vice president of the Canadian Olympic Committee. She was fortunate to attend six Olympic Games around the world during her tenure with these two organizations. She also served on the executive committee of the Toronto bid for the 1996 Olympic Games.

On the inter-university front, she served as a board member and Vice President of Canadian Interuniversity Sport and as Canadian Chef de Mission of the 2005 Summer Universiade in Izmir, Turkey.

Over her 38 years at York, she served on the University Licensing Board, was a Senator, and an Academic Tutor in Stong College. She also took an active role in Bethune College as a Faculty member.

Patricia joined YURA when she retired and has served on the Executive Board for several years.

## **ESSAY/REVIEW: INCEST IN CHILDHOOD**

This past winter, I was reading in *The Economist* a review of a book entitled *La Familia Grande* by Camille Kouchner, which had just appeared in France. The review attracted my attention simply because I was very familiar with the names mentioned. Camille is one of three children born to Dr. Bernard Kouchner (a dashing and charismatic minister in the Mitterrand era, and co-founder of *Médecins Sans Frontières*) and his wife at the time, the equally accomplished and much talked about, Evelyne Pisier, who had been Castro's mistress at some point. The couple divorced and the children spent much time with their mother and her new husband, also a very well-known member of the French intelligentsia, Olivier Duhamel. (Kouchner always travelled a great deal for his humanitarian work.)

Pisier and Duhamel were a very powerful couple. Especially in the summers, many well-known French intellectuals and artists spent time at Duhamel's countryside home. In her book, Camille describes the libertine social environment of the evenings where alcohol flowed and where adults, children, and adolescents swam naked in the family pool, without constraints and without rules. No one was surprised by the fact that photos of the naked Kouchner children adorned the walls of Olivier's house.

At that point in the 1980s, Camille's twin brother confided in her that their stepfather was sexually molesting him; they were 13 and he made her promise not to say anything. At the beginning of the 2000s, nearly 20 years later, he decided to confront his mother with this past. She did not react well and took her husband's part. In 2011, the affair quietly

resurfaced and the police met with the victim who refused to give evidence against his stepfather. It is only at that point that he told the story to his own father, Bernard Kouchner, who was totally ignorant of any of this. Camille waited until after their mother's death in 2017 to write her book. The stepfather, however, is still alive and finally heavily censored in France.

Without delving any further into this book about French tolerance up to now of issues concerning incest, the main point is that I suddenly recalled events that would have taken place around 1972-3 when I was 31 years-old and still new at York and in English Canada. I had not thought about these events in several decades. At a Toronto conference pertaining to children and the family, I was approached by a married couple in their mid-forties who were child psychologists, and had three small children, the oldest a boy of about nine and the girls about five and one years old, respectively.

This psychologist couple presented me with a notion that I had vaguely heard elsewhere to the effect that young children and children in general should be liberated sexually. The ideology held that children should have the right to have sexual relations with adults. (How convenient for pedophiles!) What is more is that this couple believed that parents should help their children learn how to pleasure themselves from a very young age. In other words, parents should teach their children about their sexual parts and show them, without touching them, how to masturbate themselves and each other.

In their little family, the small children were masturbating each other. I should add that when other children came for sleepovers, they were subjected to sexual touching by the two older children and one can imagine the child and family consequences of these situations. (The psychologists thought with disdain that these

children's parents needed to be enlightened.) The only thing which this couple had not yet found a solution for, they said, is that the older children often "felt up" the one-year old who didn't seem to like it.

I simply couldn't believe my ears. I was appalled morally and professionally, in the latter case because I had a strong child development academic background from Cornell U. I assume that my jaw was dropping because the couple looked at me and they both said pretty much together, when I mentioned that this could give rise to serious problems later on as these children grow older, that I was naive and that I had to get on with the most recent "advances" in these respects. (It often occurred to me that people who promote such ideologies do so because of their own hidden or never-resolved hang-ups.)

I never saw this couple again as they were practicing in another city in Ontario (I did not have their name or address because I had met too many new persons on that day). I remained very concerned and even worried that it should perhaps be my duty to mention their case to appropriate authorities. However, as mentioned, I was fairly new here and not sure at all whom to approach and about how my concerns would be received or even believed and what unanticipated negative consequences it might have for that family and the children. But, I am still appalled as I remember and write this.

At any rate, the book by Camille Kouchner sort of made a circle for me because, obviously, incest with children was something that was tolerated among certain groups of the French intelligentsia and, as I never returned to similar conferences after, I don't know what developments occurred in this domain here in Canada. It was probably a fringe movement that soon died, as I never encountered it in the scientific literature on child development, except in

the literature on child abuse and among those of my (generally women) students who reported having been sexually abused by an older brother (which was the case for the couple's baby), stepfather, grandfather, uncle, and even father or friend of the family. (There are also resonances of Woody Allen versus Farrow in all of the above, which would bring an additional and complementary perspective via the social analysis of the power structure in the film and media industries.)

--Anne-Marie Ambert

## SCENIC NORWAY

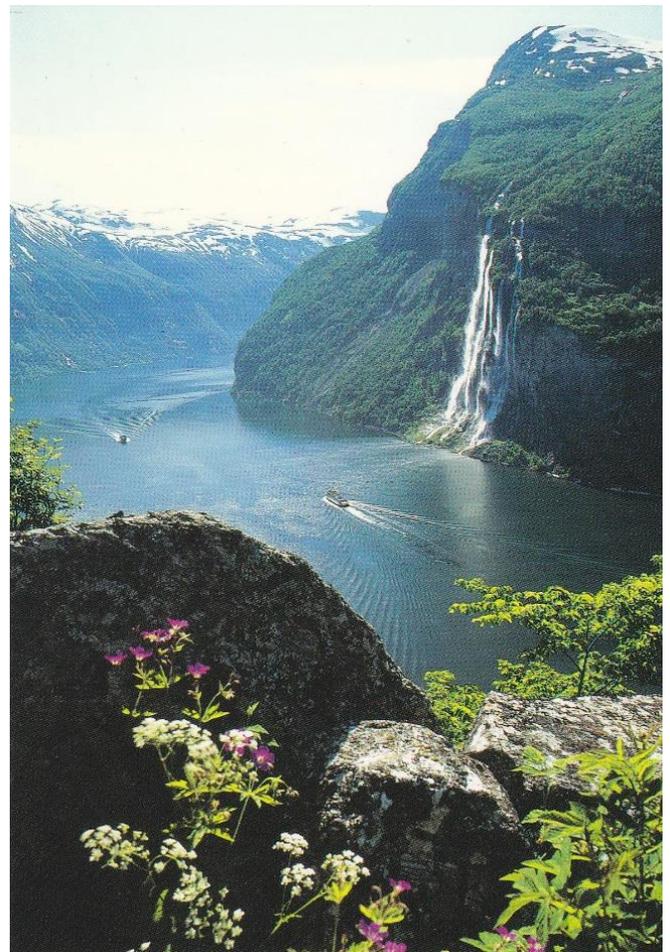
### A Very Different Way to Cruise!

While big cruise ships can only scratch the surface of Norway's rugged coastline, the Hurtigruten line offers return cruises along their beautiful west coast linking the hamlets, fishing villages and cities. While it hops amongst 34 ports with many stops, hugs the coast so sees more wildlife, and is also sheltered from ocean turbulence by many offshore islands.

Here's another difference....Hurtigruten began as a ferry service in the late 1800's to allow isolated coastal residents to move about, and to facilitate movement of commercial products to/ from the outlying communities. Over the years, towns & population grew, and tourists became interested. Hurtigruten now has 6 ships per month sailing this "**Classic Return Route.**" Their main purpose is still to serve the locals & commerce, but they warmly welcome tourists and treat them very well.

Six times a month, year round, one of these ships begins its Northbound Route out of the stunning city of Bergen with its UNESCO site, and winds its way to the many ports, even crossing the Arctic circle en route, until it reaches the town of Kirkenes on the border with northern Russia. The same ship

turns back from Kirkenes for the Southbound Route, hopping between different ports during the return trip to Bergen. Small towns and fishing villages are often colourful and charming. Larger towns and cities frequently have distinctive architecture, and lovely walking streets. Nowadays the ships have sun decks, promenades, include dining on Norwegian specialties with locally sourced ingredients, and feature friendly staff, and comfortable cabins in the usual range of sizes. Ships have a relaxed and informal atmosphere, although some people tend to change for dinner.



Geirangerfjord—2002

Because there is a different ship leaving each day, it is easy for tourists to customize their trip by combining their preferred starting date, with the ship they prefer, and their choice of 50 shore or

water excursions which vary by season. In the early spring with the “Arctic Awakening” you may experience three seasons in one journey as you travel from a spring/summer climate in Bergen to full winter in Kirkenes. In summer, daylight extends around the clock when above the Arctic Circle, so you may find yourself having to choose between sleeping & scenery! In the Fall, they include a visit to the breathtaking Hjørundfjord, excursions, and there’s a chance of seeing the Northern Lights above the Arctic Circle. For many visitors, the most special time is winter when one explores the wild untamed Norwegian snow-covered landscape in the far north, with excursions to share activities with locals, different wildlife sightings, sled dogs, and the very best chance to experience the Northern Lights as you sail in pitch darkness deep within the Arctic Circle. It wouldn’t be my choice, but it would definitely be a unique experience!

I have not yet actually taken this Hertzgruten trip but have heard glowing reports from friends who have. As a result, I’m actively considering signing up for a 2022 sailing when Covid is hopefully no longer in the picture. However, we once had some extra time in Bergen and visited the tourist office. There we bought a “do-it-yourself” ticket pack with directions for using the bus to a dock on a nearby fjord where we sailed a gorgeous loop and saw pretty hamlets, local farming and everyday life in bright sunshine. We loved the trip so much that we went back and bought a similar ticket pack for another reasonably nearby fjord! It was a wonderful way to end our time in Bergen. We also chose to go from Bergen to Oslo on the Flam Railway, reputed to be one of the world’s most beautiful rail journeys. Whatever you choose, will surely be a memorable journey.

**If you need more information**, the reservation staff will happily answer questions at 1-800-323-

7436, but you may wish to first check the webpages. **The main English language webpage is [USbooking@hurtigruten.com](mailto:USbooking@hurtigruten.com).**

This is a good place to find details on the ships, layouts, cabins, etc. right down to their décor which ranges from art deco, to classic, to paintings by Norwegian artists, etc. Each is different. In addition to their coastal ships in Norway, Hertzgruten also has a division which specializes in excursions to Greenland, Iceland, Antarctica, etc., on ships with ice-strength hulls.

--Dianne Craig

## Good Read

*A Gentleman in Moscow* by Amo Towles. Penguin Books. 2016

This book is truly a good read. Although it has a fairly simple plot, it is absolutely captivating. The novel opens in 1922 and closes in 1954. It is the story of a young, well-educated Russian nobleman who, as the Bolshevik revolution begins, leaves Russia in order to secure his grandmother’s safe passage to France. Count Alexander Rostov returns in 1918 and settles in the style to which he is accustomed in his richly decorated suite at the Metropol Hotel in Moscow. In 1922, by then age 30, because of his social status, he is sentenced to house arrest in the same grand Metropol...but must live in an attic room.

We follow the young man who adapts to his situation amusingly and amazingly well. With a subterfuge lasting decades, he still manages to live in style while he becomes acquainted with the staff as his new family. One day, a 5-year-old child is suddenly left in his care and this sub plot lasts to the end of the book as we see how he copes with this new role and what becomes of the child as she ages into an accomplished artist. It is a peaceful read,

full of literary mentions and truly amusing anecdotes with a totally unexpected ending. It's a lot of fun to read and, in its civilized way, quite suspenseful. Very creative.

--Anne-Marie Ambert

## HISTORY in PHOTOS

A policeman in San Francisco scolds a man for not wearing a mask during the 1918 influenza pandemic



A Serbian soldier sleeps with his father who came to visit him on the front line near Belgrade, 1914/1915



(Contributed by **Rosemarie Nielsen**)

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