



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

Winter 2022

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

Dear YURA Members,

Happy 2022! Even though our new year has not started as we had hoped, it looks like it will end better than it started. And today, as we write this, the sun is shining, there is a blanket of clean white snow on the ground, and we are staying positive. In spite of all the challenges of 2021, YURA raised more than \$25,000 for **graduate awards**, which put us at about \$90,000 toward our goal of \$115,000 for an endowment!

Omicron has put a bit of a cramp in our plans for the start of the year, so for now we will continue to use Zoom and plan and program events for YURA as we did over the past year. Our **coffee hours** will continue thanks to the generosity of Fran Wilkinson who will chair them again. Because the topics we are discussing are so engaging, I expect that more of us will join in during the coming year. It is a great opportunity to meet new friends and reconnect with others.

Our planning committee continues to host seminars and online activities to keep all of us connected with each other and with useful and stimulating activities. We are also thinking ahead to the time – hopefully not far distant – when we can plan in-person events. And we are already planning our participation again in the Scotiabank Toronto Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge to raise the rest of the funds needed for the award endowment we have committed to. Stay connected to the YURA web site for upcoming events and other useful information: <https://yorku.ca/yura/>.

YURA has been able to engage a Research Assistant to help us do a **survey of the YURA membership**. The survey will help YURA to better support you as a retiree and will help YURA to offer a broader range of activities and services to its members. You can complete this survey in less five minutes, or if you choose you could take longer to provide more detailed suggestions.

We have a deep interest in your input. Over the next few weeks, you will hear more about this by email.

We appreciate you taking time to complete the online questionnaire when it is sent to you.

We do not want to lose touch with you, so please make sure that we have the appropriate email on file for you. The yura@yorku.ca email is where to send any changes.

Our office in Central Square will not open now until it is safe for all of us retirees to be on campus. However, the YURA **email** is checked every day, and thanks to Agnes Fraser, the **phone** line is checked once a week to make sure that there are answers provided to those of you who make enquiries.

Both of us anticipate that we will return to a new and better normal in the months ahead. We hope you will stay safe and continue to be engaged with YURA.

Keep up your spirits!

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



**Sydney's harbour fireworks photographed by
Christine Furedy from her balcony,
January 1, 2022**

NEW MEMBERS

James Alcock
Tammy Chi
Jayne Greene-Black
Ruth Grogan
Selladurai Jeyakmarani
Katherine Laird
Michael Lanphier
Michael Law
Maria Luisa Malisani
Alex Neumann
Joseph Ratnasingham
Narda Razack
Anne Russon
Alan Simmons
Yvonne Singer
Pam Smith
Vivianne Vatavalis
Hennessy Wang
Cheryl Wilson

THE ENVIRONMENT: ADANI COAL MINE AND THE GREAT REEF BARRIER

There was an excellent and shocking French documentary last Fall regarding the Adani coal mines along the Great Barrier Reef in Australia. It is owned by an Indian company, has its own roads which are closed to the public, and a port where the coal (the most polluting energy source) is loaded aboard ships bound for India. It covers an enormous territory and has its own town for the employees (who don't believe in climate change). It is polluting the environment and contributes to fragilize further the corals in the reef.

The company and the government of Australia are planning on opening a second mine, an even larger

one and this is creating a great deal of controversy, as one can well imagine.

Please google the words <Adani in Australia> for details and interesting information.

DISCOVERING CANADIAN INDIGENOUS LITERATURE

Starlight by Richard Wagamese. 2018. McClelland & Stewart. (Subtitled "An unfinished novel.")

Wagamese is a well-known Canadian Indigenous writer, author of award-winning books. *Indian Horse* is one of his best-known books. He died before the completion of *Starlight*, but the publisher had known more or less how the author wanted to conclude this book and a tentative ending is sketched.

Although this novel is about a young Indigenous man, Frank, it stands on its own as a Canadian work of literature. Frank, or *Starlight*, lives content on his farm with a companion who works for him but has learned to accept Frank's lifestyle. Frank often disappears into the back country for days and even weeks, with practically nothing as he simply lives off and with the land. His survival skills themselves are a high point in the narrative.

The story focuses on the arrival of a young white woman who is on the run after having been physically and sexually abused all her life. Emmy runs away to protect her 9-year-old daughter, Winnie, who has known nothing else but brutality in her short life. Both females are deeply wounded psychologically and will eventually heal with the care, respect, and compassion that Frank gives them. Their scars retreat as they learn how to adapt to the wilderness that he inhabits and that inhabits him as he becomes one with the land. All the while,

her abusers are searching for her and this is part of the suspense that is built into this story along with the developing relationship between Frank and Emmy.

I truly loved *Starlight*. This book is the best I have read in quite a while. I read it twice in a row, something I have not done since my classical education when I was an adolescent. If a novel is a “page-turner” as this one is, I read it once quickly to know the storyline and to get a feeling for the work. But, in this case, when I finished, I reread it simply to luxuriate in the sheer poetry of the work: the beautiful descriptions of nature narrated in ways that we don’t generally encounter in the literature today. I loved the descriptions but also the perspectives presented on the environment in the back country of BC, how nature can be perceived by people who have lived within it and followed its laws, and how it can change souls for the better. This is contemporary literature at its best.

Another very interesting Indigenous book that we should all read is **Seven Fallen Feathers** (2017) by Tanya Talaga. Talaga is a well-known journalist who worked for the *Star* for over twenty years and now writes for the *Globe*.

This is a difficult and painful account to read because it reports the events surrounding the seven adolescents who disappeared in Thunder Bay while they were away from their families who were living on distant reservations. These adolescents were boarding largely with strangers while in high school. This book tells it the way it was. It also explains very clearly the cruelty of these lives and their wanton losses. The focus also is on how casually the police and local authorities treated these disappearances. There is a wealth of other information in *Seven Fallen Feathers* that allows us to understand the history of the “Indian” treaties, among other things.

–Anne-Marie Ambert

BIO SKETCHES

Ian Greene, Co-President. Ian grew up in a small town in Alberta. After doing his undergrad at the University of Alberta, he did his grad work at the University of Toronto in political science, focusing on problems of delay in courts. He worked for the Alberta government for several years and taught at a community college in B.C. and the University of Lethbridge before joining the Political Science department at York in 1985. He became Chair of Senate in 2003, Master of McLaughlin College in 2004, and helped to found the School of Public Policy and Administration in 2006. He has written or co-authored nine books on judges, the Charter of Rights and ethics in politics.

Ian has been happily married for 40 years. He and Eilonwy have three adult children, the youngest of whom is a York University student.

Ian retired in 2013 at 65 (“turned out to be a good choice”), joined YURA immediately and began to participate in the rich YURA activities. He soon learned that retirement is the best stage of life because one can build on the past but have new freedom to enjoy the future in an age when we retirees are in the prime of our lives.

He joined the executive of YURA in 2017. He became co-chair of the executive of YURA in 2019, honoured to serve with co-chair Charmaine Courtis and to succeed his mentor, John Lennox.

From Ian’s perspective, one of the amazing benefits of YURA is that we get to know our colleagues – both retired faculty and staff – as PEOPLE, not just in their former roles, which hid many of their amazing qualities from our view. We get to know our former colleagues as whole people, which restores our hope for the future and gives us joy.

Anne-Marie Ambert, Editor. She grew up in the east of Montreal where “I often ended up doing battles with the English-speaking boys who would call us French kids ‘frogs, papists, F-C pea soup, etc.’” At age 17, she was sent to secretarial school by her parents who were waiting for her to get married. But she inadvertently discovered that she could get a BA by attending university at night and on Saturdays. For several years, she did secretarial work and other jobs to support herself and pay for her studies. She particularly recalls working for a huge English advertising agency on Stanley street, where the few French-speaking employees were paid much less than the others, were segregated on a separate smaller floor, did not get the latest equipment such as electric typewriters like the others, and so on. Before leaving the agency to do her M.A. full time, she remembers casually asking the head of the agency if it was not a mistake for “the English” to discriminate so obviously against the French because “we were more numerous.” Sort of prophetic, although she never was a Separatist.

In 1965, she went to Cornell University for a PhD in sociology—despite her professors at the U de Montreal pushing her to go to Moscow. Tired of being a student, she did the minimum two years of required residence and, in 1967-68, she taught in an all-black college in Augusta, Georgia, and saw first-hand how dangerous it was to be black. After that, she followed her husband and taught in various institutions in and around Austin, Texas, again being paid lower salaries, this time because she was a woman.

She accidentally ended up as the director of a research center on developmental delay sponsored by the NIMH (National Institute of Mental Health). This is where she discovered her passion for researching, writing, and publishing, especially books.

Again, in an accidental way, she was hired at York on a one-year contract in 1971 and retired in 2006. After that, until 2015 she did a great deal of consulting work for agencies and corporations, especially in the USA as she enjoyed these new challenges and the free travelling involved. While at York, she traveled regularly (often with her small children), mainly for leisure. She enjoyed photography, volunteer work, activism, and editorial work for scholarly journals and for the newsletters of the various groups she joined. In 2009, she created a website to help condo owners understand their rights. The resulting activism forced the government of Ontario to revise the Condo Act. Above all, she was very involved with the women's movement all her life and started many women's groups, the latest being at Christie Gardens, the retirement residence where she now lives. She began as editor for YURA in 2011 at Sandra Pyke's and Janet Rowe's invitation—something which she has enjoyed immensely. The first *Newsletter* she edited was no. 19.

EULOGY TO IGNACE

I don't really remember when I first met Ignace. He was enrolled at York but was not a student of mine. Somehow we connected and during the 1990's we became good friends. Ignace was a Tutsi from Rwanda and after the genocide, he made his way to Toronto. Ignace had lost his entire family, except for two nieces who were in a religious orphanage and suffering from malaria. While I knew Ignace both nieces passed away, leaving Ignace very alone.

Early in our friendship I loaned Ignace money to study and secure his teaching certificate. Upon completion of his teacher training, Ignace was hired by the Catholic School Board to teach French in an Etobicoke high school. During part of the 1990s, I

was on leave from York to help run Bellanet at the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) in Ottawa. I would visit with Ignace when, on occasion, I made it back to Toronto. As he could, he was slowly repaying me the funds I had loaned him. Everyone who met him, including the staff and students at his high school, loved him. He was gentle, kind, and caring.

For some reason people gave him pairs and pairs of sneakers (running shoes) although he didn't run. I gave him the one and only suit I had ever had custom made. It was from a tailor in Aix-les-Bains, a French town in Savoie near where I was living on the shores of Lac du Bourget when I worked for the UN in Geneva.

When I returned to York from the IDRC Bellanet Secretariat I moved in with Ignace in his two-bedroom apartment next to campus, at 500 Murray Ross Parkway. That reduced what he still owed me. That was in 2000 and late that year I bought my farm here in Prince Edward County. I had a move in date of Mid-March 2001.

Ignace maintained a pleasant external demeanor but was increasingly depressed. His school days went well, since he was doing what he loved: teaching. The weekends were hell since he mainly sat and thought about his life. He took to drinking, not as an alcoholic, but as an escape to numb his feelings. He knew little about alcohol and drinks, behaving as though a glass of gin or vodka was the same as a glass of wine. I tried to caution him, and he promised that when the winter weather was over, and especially in the summer when he was not teaching, he would come to the farm for a period rest and rehabilitation.

Shortly after I moved out of his apartment at 500 Murray Ross Parkway, Ignace did not show up for

his Monday classes. This so alarmed the principal that she sent the school custodian to his apartment building. The custodian and the building superintendent went to Ignace's apartment and found him dead, sitting in his living room armchair. He had died of a broken spirit and a broken heart. Sadly, I was traveling to a UN meeting in Geneva at the time of his funeral and could not attend.

Because they loved him too, several of my administrative staff friends attended the funeral on both my behalf and their behalf. He was buried in the bespoke Aix-les-Bains suit I had given him. I remain eternally indebted to the women from York who could attend his funeral, and to this day I miss you Ignace.

--Sam Lanfranco

LIFE AS IT WAS BACK THEN: REMINISCENCE

Our 36th Reminiscence is written by Ron Pearlman who retired in December 2008. At the time, he was University Professor and Senior Scholar, Department of Biology. After retirement, he remained very active at the University and research continuing to hold tri-council and other grant funding as well as collaborations with colleagues, and in science outreach and science literacy activities. He has chosen, as a title, "Growing Up In Western Canada In The 1940s And 1950s; How This Shaped My Future Life."

I was born in 1941 in Calgary, Alberta. At the time, Calgary was a quite small, homogeneous, white, English, Christian town with a small but vibrant Jewish community. My parents were immigrants from 'white' Russia, now Belarus, who initially settled in Winnipeg in the first decade of the 20th

Century. Both came from large families of seven siblings, my mother the youngest of three sisters and four brothers, my father the second youngest of six brothers and a sister. Except for my mother's two eldest brothers who settled in New York City and Los Angeles, respectively, all others initially settled in Winnipeg and some later moved to and settled in Calgary. I grew up within a large, close family of uncles, aunts, and first cousins.

I unfortunately did not know any of my grandparents, some of whom died before I was born. One of my grandmothers was institutionalized, most likely suffering from a mental illness and died there. The stigma of mental illness then was even more profound than now. The shame of it meant that she was not mentioned at all and I knew almost nothing about her. Not knowing any grandparent is a sad part of my life. Our family was very involved with Jewish culture, tradition, and the Yiddish language, but we were not religious. The story is told that, in Winnipeg, my father's unreligious family shared a house with quite religious cousins. The cousins chose to live upstairs while my father's family occupied the downstairs because upstairs was deemed closer to God.

My parents shared the same last name, but the relationship was very distant. My father was in business and my mother was a teacher. She and a sister taught in rural Manitoba, an adventure for two young women. My parents were married and moved west to Calgary in the late 1920s. My father and an older brother purchased and ran a franchise for the manufacture and sale of soft drinks including Seven-Up, Orange Crush, and their own brand of flavoured sodas. Two brothers worked in the business as well. The other three siblings, including a very prominent doctor, remained in Winnipeg. My mother continued to teach and was also a homemaker. Although my parents' families were only distantly related, they were known to each other and three brothers on my father's side married

two sisters and a cousin on my mother's side. I therefore had a number of what we call 'double cousins.'

Our Calgary families were close and shared family celebrations, occasions, and holidays. The Calgary and Winnipeg branches were also close with many visits between them. In particular, my mother and her Winnipeg sister were very close and I and my cousin, Marshall Rothstein, a recently retired Justice of the Supreme Court of Canada, spent 6-8 weeks in summers of alternate years in Calgary or Winnipeg. When in Calgary, we often spent time in Banff in a rented cabin with my mother looking after Marshall and me, usually my sister Marsha, and frequently other relatives. A few of those visits involved getting Marshall out of Winnipeg during serious flooding prior to construction of 'Duff's ditch' which was later built to alleviate some of the consequences of the regular flooding.

We boys were enamored of the railroad and spent much time in Banff around the railroad station watching the comings-and-goings of the CPR transcontinental passenger trains, the Canadian, the Dominion, and the Mountaineer, as well as freight trains. We knew all the schedules and more. In Winnipeg, we spent much time playing on the retired steam locomotive, The Countess of Dufferin, that was located outside the CPR hotel, The Royal Alexandra, now demolished. During his university years, Marshall worked for the CNR on transcontinental trains between Winnipeg and Vancouver. Family travel between Calgary and Winnipeg was by train and I vividly remember at age 14 a solo train trip to visit my sister Marsha, five years older than myself, and my newborn niece who were then living outside Madison, Wisconsin, on the Frank Lloyd Wright Taliesin Fellowship. I was treated royally by the train crew and explored all aspects of the train while enjoying fancy steak dinners on white linen tablecloths and fancy cutlery in the dining car.

Another Winnipeg memory is that an uncle was a milkman and he delivered with a horse and wagon. I was favored with a number of rides with him on his route, a true excitement for a young boy. My father's eldest brother and his wife spent a month most summers in the mountains in Radium Hot Springs and my family drove them between Calgary and Radium with the result that I spent much time in summers in the mountains. These visits also involved large family celebrations in Calgary of my aunt and uncle's wedding anniversaries that were celebrated during their western visits.

My schooling until grade 5 was in the secular Jewish school, the I.L. Peretz School, named after the well-known Yiddish writer, which existed in many communities. The Calgary school was founded in 1927 and my parents and family were very involved with its founding and functioning until it amalgamated in 1987 with the Calgary Hebrew School to become the Calgary Jewish Academy. I actually started kindergarten at three years old because my mother was the kindergarten teacher and having no one at home to look after me, she took me to school. The school was associated with the Workmen's Circle (der Arbeiter Ring), a socialist-leaning education and social justice group. The curriculum focused on Yiddish language, history, and culture and although we learned some Hebrew language, the school was not religious. We celebrated major holidays, but from a cultural and historical tradition without a religious focus.

The school was a two-room rather than a one-room prairie schoolhouse with a half-day of Yiddish and a half-day of the standard provincial public-school curriculum. Classes were mixed with grades 1, 2, and 3 together, and 4 and 5 together. Despite these constraints, students for the most part did very well and managed seamless integration into the standard provincially mandated public-school curriculum when they entered in grade 6. We continued with Peretz School education evenings and Sundays from

grade six until high school. Many students did exceptionally well in future schooling, careers, and life. That period had a profound influence on me and on my cultural and social democratic values.

Both my parents and later my sister, when her children were growing up in Calgary, were very involved with the Peretz School organization as well as with other Jewish cultural organizations in the city and Canada. They and their friends were definitely social democratic-leaning supporters of the CCF and later the NDP. They were not communists as most social democrats were labelled in the very conservative Social Credit funny-money era of Premier Bible Bill Aberhart and Ernest Manning with his weekly Sunday radio broadcasts from the Prairie Bible Institute in the long years of provincial governance by the party.

In 1951 at the age of 10, I contracted polio. Polio epidemics were dreaded yearly summer events in those times. Luckily for me, 1951 was a year between major outbreaks so my disease was quite mild. I had severe flu-like symptoms and a very stiff neck which we didn't realize at the time is a tell-tale symptom of polio. In fact, I was never diagnosed with polio and did not realize what my 'flu' really was until a week or so after recovering when on a lovely summer day in our back yard, I announced to my parents that 'my left hand is useless'. This was in pre-Salk-vaccine days and there were no treatments. The therapies dealt with the physical consequences but not with the disease. Iron lungs (ventilators being the equivalent today for COVID-19), and application of 'hot packs' for less severe cases were all there was. I recall my mother donning a white nurse's uniform although she had no nursing training and setting me up in the spare bedroom with an old-fashioned ringer washer present. She cut up woolen blankets, boiled them in water, rung them in the washer by hand-cranking, and applied them to my left arm three times a day. This procedure was neither curative nor therapeutic

in any way but constituted the medical advice of the day and I underwent such ‘treatment’ for a few months at home and missed school as a result.

Polio was a summer childhood disease and I recall total quarantine of homes with children every year for many years with big yellow quarantine signs posted on the front doors of such homes. Swimming pools and other activities were closed most summers. I lived through that and other quarantines like those for scarlet fever long before this past year’s COVID-19 experience. In fact, my sister spent time in isolation in a hospital with scarlet fever around that time. Many friends contracted polio and suffered more severe paralysis than I did. My cousin Marshall visited Calgary that summer and lived with us. He had the same flu-like illness with severe stiff neck not diagnosed as polio but, thankfully, he suffered no paralysis. My paralysis was visible, remains visible and forced me to give up piano lessons and not pursue the clarinet which I had attempted after stopping piano. Other than giving up music, consequences of the disease for me involved no major limitation although I did have minor surgery in my late teens to improve my mobility. Thankfully, I have no symptoms of post-polio syndrome which quite commonly appears in those who suffered from polio in the late-1940s to mid-1950s prior to the development of the life-changing vaccines.

After grade five in Peretz School, the rest of my elementary, junior and senior high education was in the Calgary public school system. I and other Peretz School graduates were well-prepared by our compressed curriculum. We integrated well into the public-school system and as a group performed well academically. Many individuals did exceptionally well. We attended neighborhood schools and we knew many of our classmates, but we were the new kids on the block as far as school was concerned.

Although I was somewhat privileged, Calgary was very conservative, homogeneous, and Christian.

The Jewish kids were exposed to covert anti-Semitism and some overt examples. The covert examples were mostly connected with exclusion. Although we integrated and interacted well at school, most non-Jewish friends from school and the neighborhood were members of social and athletic clubs that excluded Jewish members. Many of us including myself were involved in community athletics such as hockey but for the most part had no or few close non-Jewish friends because we moved in different circles. Many of the kids in the neighborhood and school were children of oil company executives from Oklahoma and Texas who moved to Calgary in the early oil boom period. I don’t recall name-calling or bullying, but we were clearly different and didn’t run with the pack. I was almost never in the homes of non-Jewish schoolmates or neighbors and, in fact, recall regular interactions in non-Jewish friends’ homes during my public-school years with only two people, one a neighbor with whom I developed a close friendship and another a high school classmate. My sister, five years older than I, had similar experiences although she became friendly with our neighbors across the street who had a son her age.

I recall one instance of overt anti-Semitism in grade 9 with a remark in class by a teacher. The incident was reported by the Jewish students in the class and the teacher reprimanded although he was not fired. My postsecondary education at McGill began in another interesting political time in Quebec with the Union Nationale Duplessis government. It was the ending of a difficult period for Jews in Quebec, mostly in Montreal. Quotas for Jewish students at McGill, mostly in professional programs, were ending. My experience living away from home in an interesting city was very positive. Overall, my private and public-school education in Calgary was likewise positive and along with strong parental support and mentoring from my sister, prepared me well for my future education and career choices.

Some final thoughts about family and growing up in the Jewish community in Calgary in the immediate postwar years. We lived in the moderately affluent community of Mount Royal and I led a fairly privileged life with access to most of life's amenities. I was never a strong athlete, but I did partake in many neighborhood sports activities, particularly hockey where I played on the community team and spent much time skating and playing hockey outdoors in sub-zero temperatures on flooded rinks on natural ice. The family including my father did not attend synagogue although one uncle did attend high holiday services and I would often accompany him. I'm not sure why I went, certainly not to pray, but to partake of the experience. Some Winnipeg cousins of the family that I mentioned previously, the ones who lived upstairs closer to God in the shared family home, were accomplished singers. Some were cantors who had cantorial roles in high holiday services. They were periodically contracted to officiate at high holiday services in Calgary and on those occasions, as family support, my father and some others would purchase seats and attend services. We did celebrate holidays as family and at the Peretz School, but these were not religious celebrations.

I was bar-mitzvahed, in fact in an orthodox synagogue, but arranged some non-traditional features for the ceremony. Because I had no musical talent at all, I recited/declaimed my maftir rather than chanting, a very non-traditional thing in an orthodox synagogue. Because of numbers, we wanted to do things in our home where we had hosted and celebrated many family weddings and other occasions. We had two evening celebratory events, one for family and close friends, and another for community members from the Peretz School and other groups that my parents were involved with. An anecdote of that event illustrates family and community solidarity in a difficult situation. To

prepare for the two parties with many guests, my mother and aunts spent time in the weeks prior to the event cooking many turkeys. Because there was not enough room to freeze and store these turkeys in our homes, a community friend was able to freeze and store them in his large poultry facility and warehouse. Tragically, three days before the Bar Mitzvah, the facility burned to the ground and we lost all of our turkeys. The fire was in the middle of the night so thankfully there were no injuries or loss of life but to have lost his business was a tragic occurrence for our friend and community member. It was amazing to see family and friends rally to support my parents with a three-day blitz of cooking turkeys in every available oven space. Bottom line is that even with the devastation of the fire on all of our minds, the Bar Mitzvah celebrations were wonderful, and nobody left the parties hungry. I recall eating turkey leftovers for many weeks. A community initiative that I remember well and that has left a lasting impression is my parent's involvement with resettling young Holocaust survivors (referred to as 'displaced persons') in foster homes. This was an intense activity. Stories and reports about the Holocaust were certainly present in our home and I recall my parent's passionate commitment. I often accompanied my mother and others to meet these young people on their arrival in Calgary and I became friends with many. They integrated well with their very welcoming foster families and continued to be valuable contributors in the community, marrying and raising children in Calgary. One became Principal of the Peretz School and one carpenter and one electrician were key contractors when we constructed a new home in the 1950s. I was very young during the war, remember little, and was not impacted to any extent but I do vividly remember being excited every week watching my father who was in the reserve dress in his uniform and, most impressive, put on his highly polished black boots before attending training at Mewata Armory.

Despite Calgary's lack of diversity, geographically, the city, with the prairie to the east and the mountains to the west, was a wonderful place in which to grow up. I was fortunate to be raised in a comfortable environment within a nurturing family that was heavily involved in education and very supportive of my sister and me in all our activities. Every aspect of my early life influenced my subsequent years including my social consciousness and the successes and contributions of my academic career.

--Ron Pearlman

COLOMBIANS FINALLY DISCOVER THEIR COUNTRY

The following is a distillation of a French programme called *Echappées Belles* which I watched last year. There are two principal sets of information. Before going on, let me say that this was a very scenic programme because it showed not only many Colombian cities but a great deal of countryside in an enormous country that is very green, forested, and mountainous.

As the viewers visited many places in Colombia, we saw cities which until now have not been frequented by Colombian tourists themselves or by tourists from other countries: For decades, these were dangerous places where drug traffickers and terrorists essentially ruled, and killings and kidnappings were rampant. Now with the agreement that the Colombian government have reached with FARC whose members were terrorist rebels and narco-traffickers (they were basically supporting each other), a great part of Colombia is now quite safe for tourists of all kinds. These troubles have lasted for decades and it was not safe for anyone to visit many cities such as Medellin or the countryside. Only Cartagena on the coast received some tourists in the past decade.

If I can inject a personal note to this, I had to live in Colombia twice for a few months in 1974 and again in 1978, and 30 years of the Great Terror had just finished while trafficking in drugs was about to explode. There was no social welfare and many hundreds of thousands of small children lived alone on the streets of Bogota, the capital, where I went. I would encounter them everywhere, begging and many were carrying a small brother or sister, red with fever. At night, they would come near the hotel where I lived and dive into the kitchen trash cans and drink and eat whatever they could that was coming out of it with their hands. In themselves, they were not dangerous, but there were also a great many thieves and pickpockets and kidnappings of foreigners.

Both times I went, the residences of regular Colombians were surrounded by fences that went all the way to the second floor, and middle-class as well as upper-class Colombians had armed guards in the front of their houses. It was actually a very frightening place to be. I was very careful, wore no jewelry, and dressed in black as a widow because my skin and hair colouring were only too obvious, so I tried to be as unnoticeable as possible. Although I witnessed frightening incidents happening to regular Colombians, I was warmly treated.

I also remember that once I took a taxi to visit parts of the city as a tourist. At the time, I was not fully aware of the dangers in the countryside, so I asked the driver when we reached the edge of the city if we could go down the hill which looked like the entrance to a luscious forest. He said that he could not do that, because it was too dangerous; therefore, I never saw anything of the countryside.

Upper-class persons in Bogota went to Aruba for Easter vacations, for instance, never anywhere in their country.

HISTORICAL PHOTOS

In the television programme, many young Colombians entrepreneurs were opening new job opportunities in tourism such as bird watching in the forests, rafting the rapids of some rivers, and visiting what used to be dangerous slums hugging the mountainsides of cities. And Colombians were becoming tourists in their own country at last. I hope that this will last because the first issue of *The Economist* for 2022 discussed a resurgence of coca grow ups in Latin America and illegal drug trafficking even in countries that had not been involved until now.

The second part of the documentary focused on the fact that Colombia is the second most prolific exporter of flowers after the Netherlands; therefore, the TV programme visited many types of flower shops in cities as well as flower farms and industries on a large scale. On the one hand, there were those Colombians who had been gardening flowers for a very long time and were doing it with pleasure and love within a rather ecologically healthy format. On the other hand, there are about 300,000 Colombians who earn very meager wages with no benefits and who slave for long hours in huge enterprises where flowers are grown within an environmentally and humanly degrading context.

For instance, the reporter used hidden cameras to show young women workers who were planting thousands and thousands of bulbs of a given flower and were injecting hormones in the seedlings so that these plants would grow faster. (An operation detrimental both to the health of these young *women and to the environment.) Later, in order to further encourage growth, these flowering plants would be sprayed with pesticides that are no longer allowed in the EU. The Colombian flowers received and sold in Canada, among other places, originate both with the huge flower conglomerates and with the individual market growers. It is impossible to tell the origins of the flowers from Colombia which are shipped here.

--Anne-Marie Ambert



Washington, D.C., circa 1919. Walter Reed Hospital flu ward. One of the few images in Washington-area photo archives documenting the influenza contagion of 1918-1919 which killed over 500,000 Americans and tens of millions around the globe.

(Contributed by **Rosemarie Nielsen**)



Parking cars in NYC in the 1930s

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