



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

**Summer 2023**

**No. 63**

**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

Dear YURA members,

In Toronto, the transition period of late Spring/early Summer has a peculiar way of bursting upon the scene and within a very short span of time, the trees acquire abundant foliage and colourful blooms abound. Patios and garden centres become some of the most crowded spaces we visit, as we delight in welcoming the launch of our Canadian Summer ---which starts officially in June, but unofficially during the May long weekend. The copy deadline of our Newsletter falls neatly between those two dates and thus gives us a chance to update YURA members about our celebration of Spring and Summer activities, with even a glimpse of the Fall thrown in for good measure.

### *Spring Outings and Activities*

We are truly overjoyed to see the resumption of activities that bring our members together. Our outing to the Gardiner Museum on May 3<sup>rd</sup> included a visit to a thought-provoking exhibit titled “Housewarming” by Karine Giboulo, and a delightful afternoon tea, superbly organized by Angus Anderson and Sheelagh Atkinson to whom we express our gratitude.

On June 6<sup>th</sup> Peter Victor led members on a hike along the Humber River and shared his knowledge of the history and flora and fauna of the area. Earlier, in April, for the first time in several years, the YURA



*The lower Humber River just north of the Old Mill.*

*View pics from this outing at:*

<https://www.yorku.ca/yura/walk-in-the-lower-humber-river-valley/>

Executive held its meeting in person on campus rather than by ZOOM. This occasioned many mixed emotions. There was a heavy dose of nostalgia about finding ourselves once again in Room 956 of the Kaneff Tower, a room redolent with memories of various meetings of the past. We seized the opportunity to take a group photo now found on our YURA website.

The York campus, always beautiful in the Spring, is fully alive. The University has resumed the lovely tradition of honouring retirees at a luncheon reception. Two such

celebrations were held (on April 12<sup>th</sup> and May 8<sup>th</sup>) to honour 2018, 2019, and 2020 retirees; YURA members who attended found the events delightful. From May 27<sup>th</sup> to June 2<sup>nd</sup>, York hosted the Congress of the Social Sciences and Humanities, with the theme “Reckonings and Re-Imaginings”. Among the vast number of volunteers were many YURA members. We thank all those who contributed so significantly to the success of this major event at York.

YURA also collaborated with the York University Centre for Aging Research and Education (YU-CARE) on VoltAGE, a symposium held on May 8<sup>th</sup> to showcase the research being conducted by students and trainees on current issues and opportunities related to aging. We thank YURA members Fran Wilkinson and Rosanna Furgiuele who served as judges at the event. A number of YURA members attended “The York Circle” lectures at the campus on May 6<sup>th</sup> that discussed the topics of virtual reality technology in health care and managing obesity to conclude the 2022-23 series devoted to COVID’s impact on Canada’s health care system.

We note also that a Joint Committee consisting of members of the York Administration and of YURA Executive members has been launched, with the aim of supporting the continued scholarly, creative, professional, and volunteer endeavours of retired members of the University. This Committee affords us an opportunity to discuss the continued participation of retirees in the York University community.

At YURA, we have received enquiries about the Professional Expense Reimbursement (PER) accounts of retired faculty members and we take this opportunity to remind all retired faculty members that they should be aware of the expiry dates of their accounts; the relevant information can be found in the upper left-hand corner of the e-report for your PER account/s.

This *Newsletter* also brings an opportunity to celebrate the contributions of two of our long-serving YURA members. **Charmaine Courtis** (Past Co-President) has been honoured with a Tribute Award from CURAC (College and Universities Retiree Associations of Canada) for her many contributions to YURA, particularly with fund-raising and with creative responses to the challenges brought on by the pandemic. We congratulate Charmaine on this well-deserved award. (Full details are found at: <https://www.yorku.ca/yura/wp-content/uploads/sites/243/2023/06/230531-Charmaine-Courtis-CURAC-Tribute-Award.pdf>) We extend our heartfelt gratitude also to **Fred Fletcher** who has represented both YURA and ARFL (the Association of Retired Faculty and Librarians at York University) for four terms on the board of CURAC, serving as its Vice-President of Communications and newsletter editor. Fred has generously shared his experience and insights and has offered extremely valuable guidance to YURA.

### ***Renewing your membership***

The month of July marks another important time for YURA – this is the month of

membership renewals. You will soon receive information about renewing your membership. We have decided to maintain the membership fee at the modest amount of \$25.00 where it has been for many years—consider this a small anti-inflation measure!

This year, we have made some changes to the process. Renewal communications and confirmations will be sent by e-mail, thereby reducing costs and paper use. We will of course send letters via the postal service to members for whom we do not have e-mail addresses on file.

We will be reducing the number of complimentary parking visits for those who request this on their Renewal Form. Complimentary parking for YURA members has historically been provided to encourage retirees to actively contribute to the life of the University through volunteer activities, research and scholarly collaboration, attending academic meetings and partaking in campus events and services. A recent analysis shows that YURA has a significant number of unused parking visits, that as few as 25% of HONK promotional codes are being used by YURA members. Knowing this, we need to make a reasonable adjustment because there are costs assumed internally within the University for YURA's complimentary parking, whether it is used or not. This change is not meant to be a disincentive for YURA members to contribute to the life of the University -- a YURA member requiring additional visits may contact the YURA Office when their initial parking code has been exhausted. More details are forthcoming.

Also, the annual YURA Membership Card is being discontinued because, in recent years, members have found that its traditional uses are now covered by the YU-Card which has become the official identification card for all York University members, including retirees. To obtain or renew a YU-Card, please visit <https://www.yorku.ca/yucard> .

We continue to encourage members to renew their membership by e-transfer and e-mailing of their renewal form; please note that mailing a cheque with the renewal form remains an option for those who prefer this approach.

As we embark on our membership renewal for 2023-2024, we are simultaneously reaching out to new retirees to invite them to join YURA.

### *Upcoming*

Earlier this year, the YURA Executive decided to continue YURA's participation in the TCS Toronto Waterfront Marathon Charity Challenge in October 2023. We are very pleased that sufficient funds were raised over the past four years to endow YURA's Graduate Student Awards, and we note that there are other important areas where YURA can assist the University and its students. For 2023, all funds raised by YURA in this year's 5 km walk will support the YFS Food Support Centre, which has experienced an unprecedented increase in demand during the past 2022-2023 year, with more than 2,500 students relying on the student food bank by academic year-end. Clearly, success at university cannot be

achieved if students are hungry or not getting the nutrition they need. YURA invites both participants for this year's 5 km walk as well as sponsors, who will receive charitable tax receipts for their donations. As an Association, we hope we can raise \$10,000 for this cause.

We are pleased to announce also that the **YURA Café** will be back this Fall, and we are delighted that Fran Wilkinson will continue to share her expertise in the role of Café moderator.

And as mentioned in a previous newsletter, we encourage you to mark on your calendars that **YURA's AGM** will take place on **Friday October 27<sup>th</sup> at 11:00 a.m.** The AGM will be in hybrid format to ensure that as many YURA members as possible are able to attend. Details of the AGM location, and of the lunch for those who are able to attend in person will be announced at a later date.

Our **guest speaker** will be Dr. Eileen de Villa, Medical Officer of the City of Toronto. See her bio at:  
<https://www.yorku.ca/yura/wp-content/uploads/sites/243/2023/06/230605-Eileen-de-Villa-bio.pdf>



**Dr. Eileen de Villa**

It promises to be a very busy summer for YURA with our second office move this year, this time out of our temporary space in the Bennett Centre to our permanent home in the Lorna Marsden Honour Court. We wish everyone a relaxing and enjoyable summer and look forward to welcoming members to our new office space in the Fall. In the meantime, enjoy any travel you may undertake and please consider sharing your travel memories and pictures of interest with other YURA members in a future *Newsletter*. We also welcome your reflections on life at York and your adjustment to retirement.

**Diane Beelen Woody and  
Steve Dranitsaris**

## **MANIFESTO FOR AN ECOSOCIAL ENERGY TRANSITION FROM THE PEOPLES OF THE SOUTH**

The countries that have most contributed to global warming and pollution are located in the north of the globe. However, the countries of the South, which are less developed technologically, often occupy environments that are less green and warmer than the rest of the world, already warmer, already suffer more ecological disasters and anticipate even more. Their manifesto, in the link below, is too long to reproduce herein but is very eye-opening.

<https://www.juancole.com/2023/02/manifesto-ecosocial-transition.html>

### **LIFE AS IT WAS BACK THEN**

*Our 42<sup>nd</sup> Reminiscence is that of Allen Koretsky who retired in 2005. At the time, he was teaching in the English Department. He has entitled his Reminiscence, "A Maritimer from Boston."*

My father, Leo, was born in Russia, or, more precisely, in Ukraine, in 1904. He immigrated to the New World in 1921 with his mother who was known to me and her other grandchildren and her great-grandchildren as Baba. She was the first hero of the Koretskys in America, the brave matriarch of the line. When she came to America in 1921, Baba had already suffered

a major tragedy. An older son, Samuel, had died in Russia. In coming to America, Baba and my father Leo were following familiar immigrant experience: Husbands would often come first, to get established by obtaining a job or starting a business. When they felt secure, they would send for their wife to join them.

My grandfather, Harry, had started a corner grocery store in the adjoining Boston "suburb" of Chelsea, Massachusetts. The word today may imply a cozy bedroom community of manicured lawns strewn with tricycles, skipping ropes, and dolls. Nothing could be farther from the reality of Chelsea in those days. For in truth Chelsea was nothing less than a transplanted "shtetl," a piece of Ashkenazy Jewry. There were many synagogues, in fact one was directly across the street from our house.

When Baba (whose name was "Raetza" in Yiddish, "Rachel" in English) joined my grandfather, Harry, they began the second part of their family. These children were, in order of birth, Sidney, Shirlee, and Irving, my Koretsky uncles and aunt. There were already many other Koretskys in Chelsea. Some of the women stayed at home but others worked as did most of the men in factories and offices. One opened a dry clean business, and another was a cab driver. The young immigrant family grew, worked hard, studied diligently around the kitchen table. My father, Leo, was very bright. He went to Harvard and then to the Jefferson

Medical School in Philadelphia. He was a gifted linguist. Although he was 17 when he arrived in America, he learned to speak perfect English without a trace of an accent. In conversation you simply could not tell that he was born abroad.

Philadelphia is a major turning point in this history, for it was there that my father met the woman who eventually became my mother. As Leo was completing his medical education with an internship in Springfield, Mass, tragedy struck the family back in Chelsea. My grandfather, Harry, contracted a poison in his bloodstream and soon thereafter died. This was in a time before penicillin, which would have saved his life. The family now faced a crisis. Baba Rachel didn't know if she could keep the family business going, for although she was a very accomplished seamstress, she spoke only Russian and Yiddish. At this point Leo stepped in. Overnight he had become the man of the family. He said, "Ma, you've got to keep the store. It's the only way the other kids will be sure of getting a good college education."

Upon completing his internship, Leo did two very important things: He began his medical practice as what was then called a general practitioner, and he proposed to Edna. She accepted and they were married in October 1936. Edna was also gifted intellectually. Born in 1914 to a fun-loving mother and a father she adored, she was a dreamy socialist. Edna grew up in

very modest circumstances. She won a scholarship to the University of Pennsylvania. The original plan was to go to medical school, but the money ran out. Edna Coplin was very American. She grew up in the age of flappers. She knew and danced them all: Charleston, Black Bottom, Downtown Strutter's Ball. To the immigrant Koretskys, she brought sophistication, warmth and love. If I write less of my mother's family, it is not because I was any less fond of them. I simply did not know them so well. Geography was against us. We did manage the car ride once or twice a year, and of course they came up to Boston to visit us Koretskys.

I remember my wonderful Uncle Arthur. He was into politics. Al Smith was his political hero. But it was a very different interest of his that made a lifelong impression on me in an early childhood visit to Philadelphia. Uncle Arthur took me to my first Major League baseball game at Shibe Park. I fell in love with this wonderful game at once, and I am still a fan.

I was born in Boston in November 1937, and grew up in Chelsea. That was my first hometown, and I spent the first nine and a half years of my life happily there. What do I remember of those early Chelsea years? Even though many people like my father drove cars, I still recall the horse-drawn wagons that patrolled the streets, leaving horse droppings that were swept away several times a day. On the street, I recall

the vendors yelling “Heiss, Heiss, Heiss” as they gripped huge blocks of ice and delivered it straight to the kitchen ice box. They seem in retrospect distant signs of a bygone era, but they were real and colourful with their ice pincers, dressed in their slick, rubber aprons.

Despite these sights, sounds, and smells of the Old World which gave a distinctive character to Chelsea, we Jewish kids who were the children of secular and American parents had a pretty normal American childhood. After school I played with my friends Normie and Jackie, listening on the radio in those pre-TV days to my favorite serials, like Captain Midnight, Tom Mix, and The Lone Ranger. The one trauma of those days was the haemolytic anemia I suffered. I got this disease from my unusual congenital condition, spherocytosis. I was hospitalized in the summer of 1945 and operated on the very day the Japanese surrendered, thus ending WWII. My splenectomy was one the first performed in Boston.

When I was nine and a half years old, my father moved his practice and the family moved its home to the nearby suburb of Medford, Massachusetts, a town about ten miles north of Boston. We were a happy family in those early Medford years. Father was busy with his medical practice. Mother was absorbed by her career as a professional book reviewer, this before she switched to a career in local politics. I had two younger

sisters, Beebee and Ilsa, who were respectfully five and ten years my juniors. Beebee was very smart and strong-willed. She became a successful corporate lawyer in an age when it was assumed that cute, petite women would naturally go into family law. Ilsa was from the beginning a precociously gifted ballet dancer. She was on her toes at the age of five, and although she got a law degree along the way, as a nod to conventional practicality, she is still today, seven decades later, dancing daily and teaching dance at university and in her community.

Medford was a blue-collar town. Although it was only a few miles from Chelsea, it was a world apart. Ethnically it was an interesting mix. Italian and Irish Catholic dominated. There were some Armenians, a fair number of blacks and enough Jews to support a small Jewish Community Center, a Rabbi, and a Hebrew school. We lived in West Medford, a pleasant neighborhood of tree-shaded streets. Our house was a lovely old-fashioned one built in 1901. It had three floors, the top story having gables. With a new home and new school there came new friends, many of them, for whom I am profoundly grateful. Many of the boys and girls I first met in elementary school and later in high school I am still close to, a half century later. Others are now gone, but their memory brings a smile and bittersweet solace.



I pass quickly now to my high school years. I was a good student, perhaps more diligent than truly gifted. My teachers back then were men and unmarried women. hey, especially the women, were dedicated professionals who took pride in their work. Medford High was a comprehensive school. It covered the lot, from vocational training and, for girls, secretarial skills, to the academic stream for those planning to go on to college. My parents could have chosen to send me to Boston Latin School where several of my friends went who were sons of professional families in Medford. I would also have received a better academic education and would have enhanced my chances of getting into an elite college. But, instead, my parents chose a principle, their belief in public education and it turned out that I and my two sisters were accepted by Harvard. Yes, I felt a little outclassed my first year when some of the freshmen used words like “dichotomy” and “iconoclastic,” but I figured I had the big advantage over those boys of meeting in high school a much broader swath of society.

I was friendly to many kids and they reciprocated. I knew and was on good terms with some of the athletes and with girls in the secretarial stream. But my close friends were in the academic stream, college bound. Even so, they were a pretty diverse set, in religion and ethnicity. Boys and girls, Roman Catholic of Irish background, and Italian, WASP, Armenian, and Jewish. I did a range of extracurricular activities. The

most important, demanding and rewarding of these was the school magazine, *The Little Giant* of which I was the literary editor, responsible for soliciting, vetting, and editing submissions. I was also active in the Classical League and after-school bowling.

In the summer of 1952, after I had finished my first year of high school, there took place in Chicago an event which had a profound effect on the rest of my adolescence and well into my early adult years. The Democratic Party nominated Adlai Stevenson for President. Stevenson was a man of principle, one of a group of northern liberals elected to office in 1948. Here was a politician who said the same thing about civil rights in Richmond, Virginia as he did in Harlem. Beyond that he was a very appealing candidate. Urbane and with a self-deprecating wit, he was eloquent on the campaign trail. His speeches were often poetic, and he frequently punctuated them with epigrammatical wit. To a New England schoolboy and to millions of other Americans as well, a Stevenson speech was an occasion. His cadences and eloquence were distinctive. The speeches were delivered in that taut, clarion voice. Here was an orator rarely heard before or since in American politics. Four years later, I attended the Democratic Party National convention again in Chicago to see in person the renomination of Stevenson. It was a heady experience.

My senior year of high school was a wonderful mix of emotions as all personal transitions containing a fundamental rite of passage are. The big day took place in March and was the six-hour day of the scholastic aptitude test and the particular academic subjects. I got into Harvard. Four of us from Medford High did. Remember, in those days not everyone went to college, especially not everyone from a big comprehensive high school. Graduation was a happy series of ceremonies and celebrations. I enjoyed my high school years. I realize now what a privileged, sheltered life I had been given.

Although I was not the first Koretsky to go to Harvard, I was the first in the family to have lived on campus. I lived in the famous Harvard Yard the first year as all freshmen do. I lived in one of the Houses in my last years. I am deeply grateful for the enriched experience that living on campus provided. I can now see what a great experience Harvard College was. Over my first three years at Harvard there was a dark cloud hanging and it was going to break sooner or later as my graduating year approached. I was acutely aware that I come from a medical family, and it was generally assumed by all, including me, that I would follow family tradition. The problem was that I did not have the aptitude for science that is a prerequisite for medicine.

Then at the end of my third year, disaster struck. But it turned out in retrospect to be

the proverbial blessing in disguise. Harvard at that time unofficially informed students of their final grades before the release of the official transcript. You simply bought an open postcard, addressed it to your home address and on the open face of the card you wrote three things: the course in question, Final Exam grade, and the Final Grade for the course. Sure enough the postcard came to my home address one afternoon in May while I was working at my summer job. There for all to see was the report: the grade for the final exam in Organic Chemistry and the Final Grade for course. My father took the news with bitter disappointment. This was the end of his dream for me. As for me, although I had not planned it this way, I could in my final year turn my full attention to my literary studies.

I mentioned above that one course I took in my third year had a profound effect on my future. This was a course in literary myth taught by a man I had never heard of before, Northrop Frye, a visiting professor for that year. Later I learned that Frye was a Canadian and that he taught at Victoria College in the University of Toronto. Another happy coincidence turned me to the North. A close buddy of mine at Harvard turned out to be a Canadian as well. Not only that, he happened to be the son of a professor of English at the U of T. When he heard I was thinking of doing graduate work in English, he suggested I go to Toronto for a visit. His parents would host me and show me around the campus. So it was that one

snowy evening in March of my junior year I boarded a bus in Boston for the long ride to Toronto. Eight years later I earned my PhD from the University of Toronto. I had also married my beloved wife, Ruth, and we had a new son. During the winter break of 1967 the three of us went to the old home in Medford, where my parents still happily lived. It was the last time I saw my father alive. It was a joyous family reunion.

– Allen Koretsky

### **HAS MINOR HOCKEY REACHED A TIPPING POINT?**

*(The anonymous writer of this article has extensive experience. He has either played or coached hockey for over 55 years, both house league and elite hockey, he has spent 15 years as Director and Vice President of a large Ontario Hockey Association, and Head Coach overseeing over 200 coaching staffs, Safety Director, Convener, Rules Director, Finance Committee member, and more particularly, Discipline Director. He was also coach and hockey parent.)*

--or a sickness from which it can no longer extricate itself out without an amputation of some sort? I would argue that we may be very close to such a point. This sickness I speak of is the continued disintegration of hockey etiquette, or clear movement away from once respected values of hockey (e.g., fair play, camaraderie, teamwork, discipline, commitment, and respect). As a collective

group (i.e. parents, players, coaches, referees, directors of boards of hockey), we have shattered any semblance of a code of ethics that we had once committed to maintain. As a result, we can barely recognize hockey these days. Just like the recent bad press surrounding Hockey Canada (provide two links), there has been an acceleration of poor/negative behaviour at all ages of minor hockey ever since we have been empowered by the “me movement” and ‘released from Covid isolation.

**Observations:** It is not uncommon to see in full view the following behaviours in minor hockey activities at a rink near you:

1. Games are being video-recorded by parents on their cell phones with the focus of capturing missed or controversial calls by referees, or recording outrageous behaviour by coaches and/or parents. The video recordings are then sent to league officials and directors.
2. House league games which do not permit body-checking, now exhibit increase numbers of player ‘bumping’ and practicing interference: The players may be as young as seven. And these skills are being taught by hard core/old guard coaches who feel this behavior is totally acceptable.
3. Players intimidate other players, either by their size or mouthing off.

4. Players have been raised in the “Me generation” love to cry foul for any questionable incident.
5. Games lack monitoring and oversight by league disciplinary officials. Ice rinks have turned into lions’ dens that are repeatedly left open and unchecked, where arguments fester between coaches, parents, players, and referees without any fear of retribution. There is no accountability.
6. Codes of ethics are being clearly forgotten by members: Codes of ethics exist for coaches, parents, referees, and players and they must be read and acknowledged as a pre-requisite for member registration every year. Now, it’s as if they’re checked at the door once the season begins.
7. Coaches continue to overvalue winning above all, a priority that is fueled by an environment where hockey has become a 12-month activity for many young children.
8. Proliferation of referee abuse. Everyone forgets that referees are human and cannot be expected to catch everything that happens on the ice.
9. Verbal abuse of girls in mixed hockey. For instance, boys will call the girls b\*\*\*\* and c\*\*\*.
10. Overly reactive/sensitive parents and/or coaches circumvent well-established complaint procedures, creating unnecessary duplication of time and effort, and paperwork. These behaviours complicate the

proper vetting of “real” incidences and complaints. Trigger- happy complainers often forget to follow a 24-hour rule to see if they feel the same after a 24-hour-cool down period before submitting any written complaint.

### **Some reasons for this disintegration**

Players/parents/referees/directors/etc., have been cooped up during Covid and have forgotten the art of person-to-person respect, kindness, and tolerance. Furthermore, at the systemic level, no matter what anybody says, the old guard (too often populated with alpha characters) has unfortunately not left the sport. If one looks at the makeup of various boards of directors in hockey associations, there is rarely real change in overall management that would trigger improvements and modernization of the game in Canada. Enduring turf guarding and internal rivalries often stifle any recruitment of new blood into the system. A recently formed Independent third-party organization to handle complaints in Hockey Canada has received over 800 complaints this year. The sheer number is of great concern, regardless of how many turn out to be ‘minor’ or ‘nonsense’.

Other issues also continue to eat away at the fabric of minor hockey in Canada. To begin with, governance and association finances are often left unaudited. Some associations have too many funds (poor neighborhoods have none) and follow no guidelines on

what would qualify as a healthy rainy-day fund. A decrease in membership in the past few years has placed additional stress on fielding sufficient teams at house league and competitive levels. What were once healthy organizations have seen their numbers reduced by 10% to 25% in recent years. Blame can be placed in many areas including costs, demographic changes (due to a failure to attract immigrant and minority groups), over-programming of kids in more than one sport/activity, and what I call “cell phone gaming hypnosis.”

There are also fundamental inequities that exist between house league and competitive leagues. The house league player is frequently treated as a second-tiered child, and is often provided with less ideal playing hours due to the ice allocation processes that favours teams with larger budgets (which tend to be found in competitive leagues) and/or self-centered coaches that sometimes threaten to leave if they don't get their requests fulfilled.

Further, lip service, rather than actual changes in behaviour is applied to recommendations provided by Hockey Canada on the subject of proper player development strategies and encouragement of hockey principles. For example, Hockey Canada recommends that house league players have at least two hours of practice (i.e. player development) for every hour of game time. This often does not occur.

**Conclusions:** The issues presented above should have you alarmed as to where minor hockey is headed in Canada. Left unchanged, minor hockey will no longer be a happy place to be emotionally, interpersonally, or ethically. The best of volunteers, coaches, referees, directors, and the like, will be wondering if there is something else that they should be doing instead of lending their time to hockey and becoming a victim to its sickness. If hockey is to progress in Canada, it must be changed at the base, starting with the ejection of the old guard at all levels. As well, Hockey needs to be more representative of our present demographic profile.

## AVIGNON AND SURROUNDING SITES

I took my first solo trip to the south of France in 1993. I stayed in Avignon with the plan of visiting surrounding cities such as Arles and Nimes, among others. In Avignon I stayed at the Hôtel d'Europe, which had been a private residence (“hôtel particulier”) and was elegantly furnished and agreeable. It is located only a few minutes from the Palace of the Popes.

Avignon is a very pleasant city with its historical center intact as well as are some of the ramparts. Now more and more people go there in the summer for the Festival of the Arts and many cultural activities take place at that time. At some point, I got lost and a

student nicely offered to take me back to my hotel: Avignon is a university centre. I am told that they have added a Ferris wheel more recently. I spent many days visiting the Palace of the Popes and perambulating in the streets very pleasantly. (The popes remained in Avignon from 1309 to 1423 and the city remained in the possession of the Vatican until about 1790.)

I don't know if this is still the case, but while I was there, I would go to the train station where buses would take tourists to various surrounding cities in the morning and return them to Avignon at the end of each day.

Thus, the second city I visited was **Arles** which had been a very important Roman City and had many monuments still intact and I am told that since then more archaeological discoveries have been made and there is even more to see in this domain. One can visit a Roman amphitheater, circus, theater, various walls, and an arch. In addition to the Roman ruins, I found Arles to be a very interesting city; it has retained some of its medieval charm which attracted many artists such as Picasso and even Van Gogh in 1888. It has many museums which unfortunately I had to skip for lack of time. In the summer, there are many more artistic activities, including a photography festival. In itself, Arles is a city which would deserve at least a week as it is cloaked in history, from the Phoenicians to the Romans and then the Middle Ages—all have left traces.

On another day, the bus took me to **Nimes**, which is also a center of Roman architecture. Some structures are extremely well preserved such as the amazing Maison Carrée or Square House which maybe one of the best-preserved temples of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately for me, the day I visited there was an exposition which was ultramodern with many pieces in black and I felt that it detracted badly from the beauty and the peace of the place. There is also, just as was the case at Arles, a well-preserved amphitheater. I recall visiting a very fine Museum which had a lot of mosaics, frescoes and sculptures from buildings that had been excavated in and around the city.

The third Roman city which I visited was **Orange**. Apart from the Square House in Nimes, Orange contains the monuments that I remember the most and in greater detail because they were so striking. The first was the Roman Theater which is incredibly well-preserved and has such good acoustics that it is still used for performances and concerts. But above all else, the reason why I remember it so well is because there is, in a large alcove, the famed and wonderful statue of Augustus Caesar. I stayed there for hours. The Triumphal Arch is the other monument which I recall well because of all of its sculpted decorations. But Orange itself is, like the others, a very pleasant city to visit. For instance, if you go to the Hôtel de Ville, many narrow streets begin there that later emerge onto nice and well-shaded small squares. It was a very pleasant place to be.

On another day, I took a taxi to go to a place which had been on my list from the very beginning because of its importance in French Medieval history; **Les Baux-de-Provence**—photo to the right. (Les Baux were a powerful noble family.) The most interesting part is a ruined village and its fortified castle, all built in the 12<sup>th</sup> century, situated on top of a hill or series of hills of sharp whitish rocks that are bizarrely delineated against the blue skies. One has to have a good sense of balance to visit this perched place and, at the time, I immensely enjoyed this solitary excursion. It was very challenging and scenic.



I also went to the small village nearby and, before I visited the ruins, the taxi had brought me to a hotel/gite very typical of the area which was partly underground against a cliff, decorated according to the centuries past and which would have made for a very interesting stop-over. This type of habitation is called a *mas* and is pictured to the right.



But probably the best time I had in all of this sightseeing was in the perched village of **Gordes**--which I subsequently visited twice again as part of tours, each time discovering hidden lanes and new vistas. Not only were the views from the village over its surroundings breathtaking, but the village was built of wonderful old light stones and retained its medieval character with its meandering narrow streets.

One of the unfortunate things about these wonderful perched villages of the south of France is that too many of the houses have been converted into art studios as well as shops for tourists or are rentals during the French vacation periods. Others are owned by outsiders, especially French TV and cinema personalities and rich Parisians, hence displacing the locals who can no longer afford to live there.

–Anne-Marie Ambert

## MORE YURA ACTIVITIES



*YURA members at the Congress volunteer training session in May. Congress 2023 ran for 7 days, hosted 67 scholarly association conferences, drew 10,310 registrants, offered 200 talks from York academics and 160 York-led open activities, boasted 450 volunteers and staged the largest Fair-Trade event in Canadian history. For more details and photos, please visit:*

<https://yfile.news.yorku.ca/2023/06/02/congress-2023-a-success>



*The Gardiner Museum, located on Queen's Park Cres., just below Bloor Street West in Toronto. Photo F. Leonardo. View pics of YURA's May 3<sup>rd</sup> Gardiner Museum Tour and Afternoon Tea at:*  
<https://www.yorku.ca/yura/gardiner-museum-afternoon-tea/>



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### YURA Office Hours

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

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