



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

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Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

The coming of September always feels like a new beginning to those of us who have spent decades of our professional lives working in an academic environment. The cooler Fall weather re-energizes us and the start of the academic year keeps the focus on new projects, on goals we hope to realize and on the possibility of a fresh start in those areas of our lives where a re-set may be useful! We hope that you have enjoyed some lovely time of relaxation during the summer months, in the form of meaningful moments with family and/or friends, and perhaps the joys of travel and the discovery of new places. Although it sounds a bit odd, we wish you a “Happy New Year!” as we share details of what promises to be an exciting new year for YURA.

As we write this message, we are completing our second move during this calendar year and by the time you read this, we hope to be happily ensconced in the Lorna Marsden Honour Court. These new quarters are more spacious, have more natural light, and offer a better layout – all features that make it a more pleasant space for our volunteers and for all our members. We encourage you to visit us on campus, just to the east of the York University subway station on the Common, walking towards Keele Street. It is our intent to improve signage and to include a visit to our

office for all those participating in this Fall’s Charity Walk.

Our plan this year is to hold our Charity Challenge walk on the Keele campus on Tuesday, October 3rd -- this will allow us to showcase our new space, increase YURA’s visibility as part of the campus community, and most importantly, draw attention to the cause for which we are fund-raising. This year, we are raising funds for the Student Food Bank given that, according to a recent Campus Well-Being survey, one in four students struggles to afford food. The challenges of high rents and food insecurity make it hard for these students to succeed academically. We hope that you will support us, by making a donation and/or by joining us on the walk. Full details of the starting time, rain date and walking route will be posted soon on our website. In the meantime, questions can be sent to our Team Captain Steve (yura@yorku.ca) and tax-deductible donations can be made at <https://raceroster.com/events/2023/65909/2023-tcs-toronto-waterfront-marathon/pledge/team/528606>

The Fall will also mark the return of the online YURA Café, to be hosted by Café founder Fran Wilkinson on the second Tuesday of each month at 10:00 a.m. This is a very enjoyable way to stay in touch with other YURA members, to share tips and strategies for meeting various challenges as

they arise, and to engage in discussion of topics that relate to our ongoing learning. The monthly dates can be found on the YURA website. A couple of days in advance of each session, YURA members also receive an email reminder that includes the specific topic(s) of discussion.

We hope that you have marked October 27th at 11:00 a.m. on your calendars for our Annual General Meeting with our guest speaker Dr. Eileen De Villa, Medical Officer of Health for the City of Toronto. Her talk will focus on Public Health Challenges and Opportunities. The AGM will be a hybrid event, offering the online option to ensure that all those who prefer to attend virtually are able to do so, and also an in-person gathering over a light lunch to provide an opportunity to reconnect with friends and colleagues in the magical way that being together allows. More details will be forthcoming.

Our annual membership drive is underway. We heartily welcome new members, we thank all of those who have renewed their membership. And we gently remind all others to please renew their affiliation with YURA by submitting the form and the modest fee. We encourage you also to reflect thoughtfully on making a commitment to YURA, in particular, whether you might consider volunteering in the YURA office. Our office is open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Ideally, we would

like to have a sufficient number of office volunteers so that the commitment for each individual would be one shift of 4 hours every two weeks. If we could aim for 2 volunteers per shift—which would make each shift much more enjoyable!-- we will need a total of 12 volunteers. Duties would include answering the YURA email and phone calls, greeting visitors to our office, processing registrations for YURA activities, and assisting with the management of records/documents. We will, of course, provide training and checklists.

Another area where assistance would be greatly appreciated is that of events planning. If you have suggestions for outings, connections with organizations, or any other ideas, we'd love to hear from you and welcome you aboard! YURA has a very diverse membership, and activities and outings that are of interest to you will most certainly appeal to other YURA members. The outing to Ward's Island on August 15th is a wonderful example of an outing that brings us together to learn, to be physically active and to enjoy one another's company. We know that we need to appeal to a wide range of interests and only broad participation of our members can help us do that! Please contact either Diane or Steve to share your ideas and to let us know of your willingness to volunteer with YURA.

In closing, we would like to celebrate a particularly successful event. On May 19th, YURA organized a Scholarly Presentation

Skills workshop in collaboration with the Faculty of Graduate Studies. At these events, graduate students present their research and receive feedback on their presentation skills (rather than on the content). At the May 19th event, six students gave presentations and received feedback from a panel of three faculty retirees: Bill Whitla, Ron Pearlman and David Leyton-Brown. Twenty-two other graduate students attended as observers, to benefit from the feedback, the encouragement, and the supportive collegial ambiance. The Faculty of Graduate Studies made a point of expressing deep appreciation to David Leyton-Brown of the YURA Executive for his efforts organizing these panels that are a very valuable contribution to graduate education. We ask that all YURA faculty retirees consider being members of future panels at these workshops. Once again, simply let Diane or Steve know of your interest in doing so.

Finally, the members of the Executive have been delighted to meet in person last April and we will be doing so again for our September meeting. This has allowed us to share some thoughts on the books we have been reading and the music we enjoy. If you imagine a bookcase behind our group photo, that would be our “shelfie”see below in this Newsletter for a partial list of items on our collective “shelfie”. We hope that some of these may be of interest to you as cooler months approach.

Looking forward to seeing you at various events this Fall and, in particular, at the AGM.

--Diane Beelen Woody and Steve Dranitsaris, yura@yorku.ca

YURA Walking Tour of Ward’s Island





On August 15th, a number of enthusiastic YURA members took part in a Walking Tour of Ward’s Island, led by two residents of the Island who provided insight into the Island’s homes, gardens, green spaces and history – as well as the lifestyle of the residents. Additional photos of the excursion can be found at:

<https://www.yorku.ca/yura/yura-walking-tour-of-wards-island/>

A “Shelfie” of the YURA Executive Members

For the first time in several years, members of the YURA executive committee met in person on April 11, 2023. 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 layered with memories of various meetings we have attended in the past. Most of all, there was delight in seeing one another in person. We seized the opportunity to take a group photo to update our YURA webpage. We invite you now to ignore the plain background of that photo and imagine the shelf behind us with the titles of books that we as a group are reading or intend to read (or re-read), and the podcasts and CDs and music that we enjoy.

Here is our collective “shelfie” of books and then of music/podcasts with items in an unordered list and not attributed to any specific member of the Executive.

Book, Fiction, *Fellowship Point*, a novel by Anne Elliot Dark from 2022. Insightful portrayal of a friendship that has lasted for decades, a clever Dickens-like twist at the end, and sensitivity to ecological themes.

Book, Fiction Mystery Series: Louise Penny’s series of mystery books featuring Armand Gamache of the Quebec Sureté and frequently set in the bucolic village of Three Pines in Quebec’s Eastern Townships. The recurring characters are complex and likable. The murder mystery stories themselves are great, but what sets these books apart is Penny’s skillful interweaving of reflections on right and wrong, good and evil into those stories.

Book, Non-Fiction, *Scarcity: Why having too little means so much*, by Sendhil

Mullainathan and Eldar Shafir, from 2013. Using the metaphor of how we all behave when pressured for time, the authors explore the dynamics of scarcity and its tragic impact on those who live in conditions of need. Very thought-provoking and compassionate.

Book, Fiction, *Olive Kitteridge* by Elizabeth Strout, from 2008 and *Olive Again* from 2020. Recommended for the wry humour and the gentle reminder that senior “feistiness” is a good thing—in moderation of course!

Book, Fiction *The House of Izieu* by Jan Rehner (a York retiree), from 2020. Inspired by true life, the book tells the story of a Jewish woman during WWII, who tried to save a group of Jewish children from the Nazis by hiding them in a country house in France. The everyday lives of the children in this haven are depicted within the context of the fear and danger that constantly surrounded them. The book is both tragic and uplifting – and beautifully written.

Book , Non-Fiction Memoir: *Call Me Indian* by Fred Sasakamoose , from 2021. The book is the thought-provoking story of Sasakamoose, who is known as the first Treaty Indigenous person to play in the National Hockey League. He shares his experiences and emotions as he moves from a reserve in Saskatchewan to a residential school (where a priest – against the backdrop of cruelty and despair that

characterized those schools – encouraged him to develop his hockey skills) to his move through the hockey system, culminating in playing several games with the Chicago Blackhawks to his return to his family on the reserve, spending the rest of his life fostering Indigenous culture, supporting healthy living, and working with the NHL to promote diversity and equity.

Book, Fiction *American Dirt* by Jeanine Cummins, from 2020. The story of a Mexican woman and her young son escaping Mexican cartels to reach the US. The novel has been the source of some controversy with accusations of cultural appropriation.

Book, Non-Fiction *Fashionopolis: The Price of Fast Fashion and the Future of Clothes*, by Dana Thomas, from 2019. A well-researched and engagingly written book that explores mindless consumerism and the many labour and environmental issues associated with “fast fashion”. She also explores developments that give hope for the future. Particularly thought provoking is the discussion of blue jeans.

Book, Historical Fiction *The Four Winds* by Kristin Hannah, from 2021. The story of a family that is forced to leave their home in Texas during the years of the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression.

Book, Non-Fiction *Ageing with Grace : What the Nun Study Teaches Us About Leading Longer, Healthier, and More*

Meaningful Lives by David Snowden, from 2002. This book, mentioned by Prof. Gary Turner from York's Centre for Aging Research and Education (YU-CARE) during a YURA Café session, is on the required reading list of Faculty of Health students enrolled in the "Certificate of Aging". The book focuses on old age as years of promise and productivity and of intellectual and spiritual vigour. It also offers a wealth of practical findings relating to

- Why building linguistic ability in childhood may protect against Alzheimer's
- Which ordinary foods promote longevity and healthy brain function
- Why preventing strokes and depression is key to avoiding Alzheimer's
- What role heredity plays, and why it's never too late to start an exercise program
- How attitude, faith, and community can add years to our lives

Music, *CBC Listen* app for streaming various playlists. A true "embarrassment of riches". Some favourites are the various Classical offerings, Smooth Jazz for relaxing with friends, and the some of the Country/Folk lists—the latter are especially good for when sorting photos and memories.

Music, CDs by The Piano Guys. Amazing what a pianist and a cellist can do when paired !

Music, CDs by Brad Paisley. His song "So much cooler online" with its gentle mockery

of our online selves is especially appreciated.

Music ---our GOAT selections (Greatest of all time):The "GOATs" are those haunting tunes from the days of our youth: Bryan Adams ("Summer of '69", "Everything I Do"); Sarah McLachlan ("I Will Remember You", "Angel"); the Beatles ("Hey Jude", "Let It Be"); Leonard Cohen ("Hallelujah", "Suzanne"), to name just a few. It's hard to imagine a time when these songs didn't exist!

Music --Canadian Legend Gordon

Lightfoot: from his amazing songbook, here are some of our favourites: "Early Morning Rain", "Carefree Highway", "Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald", "Did She Mention my Name?", "If You Could Read My Mind", "Rainy Day People", "The Canadian Railroad Trilogy", "I'll Be Alright", "Song for a Winter's Night", "Alberta Bound", "Black Day in July", "Go My Way", "Softly", "The Way I Feel", "Beautiful", "Pussywillows, Cat-tails". Especially loved is "The Canadian Railroad Trilogy", the version illustrated with Canadian images, available at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yzo6Otpgj-E>

Music-Canadian Folk Singer Stan

Rogers: in particular "The Mary Ellen Carter", "Northwest Passage", and "MacDonnell on the Heights".

YouTube site “Great Art explained” This site, the brainchild of Dr. James Payne, launched in 2020, aims to explain great works of art and enhance our appreciation of them. Especially insightful is the session devoted to the Mona Lisa.

<https://www.youtube.com/@GreatArtExplained>

We hope that you will explore some of the favourites we have shared and that you will consider sharing what is on your “shelfie”, for a subsequent YURA Newsletter.

LIFE AS IT WAS BACK THEN

Our 43rd childhood Life as it Was Back Then is that of Romana M. Bahry. Her childhood reminiscence of 1950s Hamilton is extracted from chapter 5 of her Recent Book about Dr. W. S. Kindraczuk: “Forgotten Chemist of Łańcut and Pioneer of Probiotics” which was published in 2018 and reprinted in 2021. When she retired in 2019, Romana was teaching in two departments: the English department and the Division of Humanities. Her career focused on eastern cultures, language, and histories.

My first memory of Dr. Wolodymyr Sylvester Kindraczuk, my grandfather and Maria Antonina Kubaty Kindraczuk, my grandmother (whom I called “Dziadzio” and “babcia,” Polish and Ukrainian for grandfather and grandmother) is from 1951.

I was 4 years old. They had just arrived in Hamilton and both were standing by my bed as I woke up. My grandmother was smiling her radiant smile and I felt sunshine in the room. Her eyes were bright blue, and her hair was pure white. My grandfather was beside my grandmother. They were both smiling and happy, which made me feel joy and warmth and an instant bond. I felt I knew them. I did not know at the time that they had spent the first year of my life with me in the refugee camp in Salzburg, Austria. My parents, Myroslawa and Jaroslaw Bahrij (Polish/German spelling) and I had arrived earlier on February 6, 1948 at Pier 21 in Halifax on the American navy ship called USS General S.D. Sturgis that was being used to transport refugees from Bremerhaven, Germany in post World War II Europe. The passenger lists of displaced persons that have recently been released by the Arolsen Archives in Germany list my occupation as “baby”. From Halifax we travelled to Hamilton to join my father’s uncle Peter Bahry who sponsored us. He had immigrated to Canada earlier in the 1920s with his wife and 3 daughters from Zboriv in western Ukraine ,which before WWII was part of Poland.

My mother’s siblings, my aunt Anna (Hania) had arrived before my grandparents, as did my uncle Ihor. He had arrived in Hamilton two years earlier from England, but, as he suffered from tuberculosis, he soon had to leave us and spent many years

in a Hamilton hospital. He was eventually cured and returned to live with us in the same house. At the time of the arrival of my grandparents in Hamilton, my parents were living in rented rooms on the second floor of a small house. Previous to that, we had lived in one bedroom of a rooming house full of immigrants, where each immigrant family lived in one room. I remember my grandfather took me for walks. He was a very tall and thin man (six feet tall). He had blue eyes and at one time his hair had been blond, but he was bald now. Seventy years old, he was somewhat stooped due to a broken collar bone he suffered in his pharmacy in Łancut, Poland, during World War II.

My next memory of my grandfather is when we moved into a new house, which was actually an old house built in 1918 with no furnace or basement. The whole family was sitting around a cast-iron Franklin stove. It was very cold. This house that my father had bought was in the east end of Hamilton, near Stelco where he worked. It was also next to a welding shop that operated 24 hours and was very noisy. Hamilton was an industrial city with a steel industry and pollution that increased yearly. Although Hamilton was situated on Lake Ontario between beautiful Hamilton Bay, with its Royal Botanical gardens, and the Niagara Escarpment, which Hamiltonians call “the mountain,” the industrial pollution of the steel mill covered the city in a thick, yellow, sulphurous cloud.

My grandparents, parents, and I were all World War II refugees and had come to Canada with no money and no material possessions except documents and photographs. My grandparents and parents had lost everything in the war. My grandfather and grandmother lost their pharmacy business, their house and property in Łancut while my father, lost his seven-room house in Zboriv as the Communist regime confiscated all private property. Because of the Iron Curtain imposed by the Soviet Union, he never saw his mother again, and my grandfather never saw his sister again.

My grandfather’s Ph.D. in Chemistry and his M.A. in pharmacy were not recognized in Canada, and at age 70 he was too old to work anyway or start a new career. Neither did he have a pension as the Canadian government did not introduce the Canada Pension Plan until 1965. My grandparents, along with my parents, all of whom had university educations also lost their identities and professions as they suffered downward mobility. They initially had to work as fruit pickers and later as factory workers because they did not know English. They knew Polish, German and Ukrainian, but these were of no use in Canada. My grandmother who had obtained her pharmacy technician degree in 1918 in Kraków worked in a shoe factory and my mother, who had spent the entire war as a

student at the university in Vienna, worked in a brush factory. My father, who was called “Jerry” in English, was employed in the steel factories of Stelco as a millwright supporting the whole family. His work was very hard—he worked rotating shifts, including the night shift. In addition to this job, he also worked part-time as a dock worker in the shipyard and also as a farm labourer for a farmer. My aunt Hania, who was younger than my parents and had obtained her pharmacy degree in Graz, was still single upon her arrival in Canada in 1950. This allowed her to take courses at the University of Toronto in 1951 and write qualifying exams and become a licensed pharmacist. She soon married and left to live with her husband, in Gary, Indiana.

As a young girl growing up in Hamilton, I remember Dr. Kindraczuk, my maternal grandfather, telling me that he had once discovered a bacterium in *huslanka*, a type of milk product of the Hutsuls (who were Ukrainian Carpathian shepherds). He told me he named it *carpathicus* after the Carpathian Mountain region where it originated. It was near where he was born in the town of Horodenka in 1882 in what was then the province of Galicia in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. (Today Galicia corresponds to southeastern Poland and western Ukraine.) When I was researching his life for his biography, I discovered that he obtained his MA in Pharmacy in 1909 and PhD in Chemistry in 1910 at the

university in the city of Lviv (called Lemberg at that time) and that in 1912, at the University in Vienna, he published in a German language scientific publication in Vienna his ground-breaking discovery of a new probiotic *Lactobacillus* bacterium which he named *Bacillus carpathicus*. World War I interrupted his research and his discovery was forgotten.

Growing up in Hamilton in the 1950s, I was acutely aware of what I was “foreign,” not English Protestant, that my family and I were immigrants, and that my family did not speak English. Whatever language they spoke at home did not matter. What was important was that we did not speak English. My parents and other “foreigners” were even ridiculed and called the derogatory “DP” (Displaced People) or World War II refugees. Neighbours made fun of my name. Some children had their names Anglicized by schoolteachers, i.e. Bohdan became Dennis, and Miroslawa was translated as Shirley.

English Protestant culture dominated Ontario in the 1950s and I remember singing *God Save the King* and *Rule, Britannia!* in my first year at school. A year later, in 1952, we were singing *God Save the Queen* as Queen Elizabeth II had assumed the throne. The elementary school that I attended was called Queen Mary, named after Queen Elizabeth’s grandmother (wife of King George V) and there was a life-size portrait of her in the school hall. This was in the

1950s, before the Canadian government introduced the policy of multiculturalism 20 years later in 1971.

As a result of the insensitivity of the Hamilton public school system to immigrants and refugees in the 1950s my first early experience in school was not a positive one. One of my memories of school from 1951, which is also related to my grandfather, is a bad one, but not because of him, but because of the kindergarten teacher. Since my parents had to go to work, my grandfather was assigned the task of walking two blocks with me to school. My grandparents would not let me leave for school until I ate my oatmeal porridge, which I disliked, and so I was late. The kindergarten teacher, Miss Smye, was angry that I was late and asked me who brought me to school. Since I did not know the word for grandfather in English, I was silent. Then she started, “Was it your father?” “No,” I answered. “Was it your mother?” “No,” I answered. “Was it your aunt?” “No,” I answered. “Was it your uncle?” And so on—“Brother, sister...” she asked. “No!” was my answer. It never occurred to her that my grandparents lived with us as an extended family in the same house. I wanted to say *dziadzio* (Polish for grandfather) but I knew she would not understand. Relentlessly, she started the litany of family members all over again, beginning with father. That was the closest to grandfather and thus, in desperation and

resignation, I said “Yes!” She then became very angry, because she said I had lied the first time, and she took a ruler and hit me over my hands as punishment for “lying.” Although I was only five years old, this upset me very much, for I knew I did not lie. I simply did not know the word for grandfather in English and did not think I deserved to be hit with a ruler for this. I never told anybody about this. In spite of this negative kindergarten experience in school which I remember vividly to this day, I liked school and the neighborhood library. The environment I grew up in was very multicultural and our family home was culturally very rich. My mother who had suffered a nervous breakdown as a result of the war and the refugee experience eventually returned to her piano studies, became a piano teacher, and in the 1960s gave piano lessons to children in our home. In 1959 a new member arrived in the family, my sister, Adriana Maria, who was born in Hamilton, just as I had started high school. In addition to the piano and the music in the house, the languages I was surrounded with were English at school, Ukrainian and Polish at home, and German when my mother shopped in German stores, as she knew how to speak German. There was also Latin in the Roman Catholic church and Old Ukrainian Church Slavonic in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church. I attended the Holy Spirit Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in Hamilton with my parents where my father

sang in the tenor/bass choir and where Peter Bahry was a cantor. The church provided a lively spiritual and cultural community for the many young refugee families who had arrived after World War II. There were many concerts where the children sang and danced. There were also plays such as the Christmas nativity pageant. With my grandmother, I also attended the local Holy Family Roman Catholic Church which had English-language sermons, but a Latin-language Mass. There were also Ukrainian language summer camps in nature in the country that the parents organized for their children.

I remember life in Hamilton included financial hardship and struggle. The most important values were those of family, hard work, education, and faith in God. We all lived together in one house as an extended family. The early Christmas and Easter family dinner gatherings were filled with survivor stories from World War II. My entire family had been traumatized by World War II, which they simply referred to as “The War,” and always used the expression “The War erupted/exploded!” They all suffered from some sort of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression. Yet they had a positive attitude and as early as the summer of 1951, my father and grandfather started clearing the rocks in the backyard in order to plant a vegetable garden. My father was a plant scientist, specializing in sugar beet production. He had studied agronomy

(agricultural science) at the Hochschule für Bodenkultur in Vienna but was unable to continue his profession in Canada and so was well-prepared to start planting a garden.

Our family life was centered on the garden, the kitchen, and food. The kitchen was the center of activity and replaced the pharmacy for my grandmother. Instead of preparing medicines, my grandmother treated the kitchen as a laboratory where she prepared all sorts of delicious “gourmet” meals and put-down jars of pickled vegetables and fruits. My grandmother’s assistant in this culinary “magic” was my mother. My grandparents continued to pursue their interest in medicinal plants, picking herbs, and drying them in the house. The garden that my father cultivated consisted of a magnificent variety of vegetables. In addition, there were berry bushes and flowers such as sunflowers and roses that were edible and from which my mother and grandmother made a rose jam. By the garage, on the door of which there hung a “lucky horseshoe” that my father and grandfather had found while preparing the garden, there was a legendary apricot tree that provided golden apricots for the whole neighborhood.

—**Romana Bahry**

For Francophones and Francophiles: RECENT CHANGES IN THE FRENCH LANGUAGE

I do watch French television from Quebec, France and Switzerland daily. About three years ago, I started noticing some very strange expressions that I had never heard on the same channels and in my French-speaking life.

For instance, a much-used term now, instead of saying "I am working," or "I am going to work," people say "je bosse" or "je vais bosser." What is particularly interesting is that, in Quebec especially, a boss means one's supervisor or manager. It's an English word that even when I was small we were using. And the new expression is not a matter of social class because everyone is using "bosser," including television commentators.

Another very frequently used term to mean "I am having a lot of fun" or "I enjoy myself" is the new expression, "je m'éclate" or "on s'éclate." What is strange about this is that this word actually means I burst, or we are bursting. With pleasure. With fun.

Related to this, a new expression that seems to cover one's happiness within a whole range of activities or experiences is the use of the expression "c'est du bonheur"

(it's happiness) or "ce n'est que du bonheur." For instance, if we are walking in a pleasant scenery, one of the walkers may exclaim, "ce n'est que du bonheur." Or if eating at a good restaurant, someone may say or summarize the experience by saying "ce n'est que du bonheur" or "c'est du bonheur."

We used to say, "I am going to Paris" but now they are saying "I am going **on** Paris." Or "I live on Paris," not in Paris. "Je vis sur Paris."

Another change resides in the fact that, instead of saying that something is very beautiful, they say something "is too beautiful" or if a food is very good they say, "it is too good" as in "c'est trop bon."

Finally, there are expressions that people now say so often that when, for instance, I see two French persons on tv who are about to start a project, a climb, a walk, one of them will unavoidably say, "c'est parti," as they get going. If you add to these words such as "d'accord" or "voilà," with proper hand movements, you can pass for French...!

--Anne-Marie Ambert

THE FATAL FLAW OF TITAN

I last taught my “Matter and Structure Natural Science” course over 20 years ago, and I was reminded of it when the ill-fated visit to the Titanic took place recently. In the second term we had discussed macroscopic aspects, including aspects of unexpected failure of things like aircraft and marine vessels. I hope most of the students would never expect to see the Titan again because of the Critical Crack Theory we had discussed in that course.

A question was posed in the media asking, “*how could the Titan have survived the first trip to Titanic and then imploded later?*” This was a question first answered back in the 50’s by an engineer called Griffiths when a British “wunder-jet”, the Comet, exploded over the Mediterranean. He developed the maths to show how repetitive, even modest, stress reversals can cause a crack to initiate and grow, unnoticed, until it reaches a critical dimension and become a lethal entity in an instant.

Oddly, we must all be aware of this phenomenon because we use it a lot to break things apart for convenience. Who hasn’t bent a thin piece of material up and down repeatedly until it splits? A crack may start as a misplaced atom or two in a structure from the start. Application of stress may cause it to spread, taking energy from the stress. So long as it needs more stress energy

to expand, it isn’t critical. However, the stress will go a bit further with each reapplication of stress. The stress which should have been carried by the cohesive material then travels to the tip of the crack before it can get to the other side and be contained again. However, it is now a much larger stress locally, being concentrated around the tip of the crack, so it can help the crack spread even further.

The stress magnification can be calculated by the radius of the crack tip, which may be as small as an atom or two. It seems contradictory, but the maths tells you that you can reduce the amount of magnification by making that radius larger by drilling a hole there and spreading it over the larger radius. Alternatively, you can laminate the material sections, making the crack try to turn though 90 degrees into the next sheet. The maths contains a cosine term and $\cos 90 = \text{zero}$, so the crack is stopped. An unplanned advantage of riveted sheet construction, but Nature knew it from the beginning and all of our stress-bearing tissues contain laminated layers. We caught on early by observing plant growth such as vines.

As the crack grows, the tip magnification grows and will eventually *locally* exceed the tensile stress capability of the bulk material. That is when it spontaneously explodes to completion. Thus, the Titan could carry out several dives, a small insignificant fault

growing with each trip, almost certainly hidden from view until, like the Comet, the crack went critical and instant disaster ensued. In properly regulated systems, where possible the design should have a visible critical crack length value.

To highlight this, the students did an experiment in the lab course, which you can do at home. Hang a strip of paper, maybe an inch wide, with a weight attached at the bottom. Use a pair of scissors to start a horizontal crack on one edge of the paper, and slowly snip in until the paper tears itself and drops the weight. At first you imagine it is the *width* of the uncut paper that had exceeded the paper tensile strength. So cut another strip, the width of the resulting tear in the first part. Carefully hang the same weight from it. It will not tear, in fact you can even cut a new, but shorter, “critical crack” into this paper before it will tear itself again, proving that the first failure was not a simple tensile stress limit. The Titan failed because it was never fully tested to destruction in the first place. An interesting YouTube video poses the same criticism [Oceangate Submarine Disaster - What REALLY Happened - YouTube](#) .

--Clive Holloway

FRIGHTENING FLIGHT

Like many other YURA members, I have flown so many times in my life that I can't count them. And I have encountered only one really bad experience that did not affect me but was traumatic and life-changing for many others.

In 1998, I was leaving Greece where I had been on a rather adventurous trip of many Greek Islands, and I was admiring the coast below and the Alps which were emerging in my window. It was a very large Boeing and I was sitting at the end of an isle that had four seats. There was a man sitting in that same row on the aisle seat. As we were flying along the Alps, he got up to go to the bathroom and I decided that now was a good time for me to do so as well.

I came back to my seat before him and I had barely had the time to buckle up when I heard a great commotion and screaming in the back of the plane and I turned to look back when I saw my neighbor levitating totally horizontally close to the ceiling of the plane. I didn't feel anything at all, and I was terrified for him when immediately he fell back flat down in the aisle while people were still screaming all over the place.

He was white as sheet and I thought for sure he had broken his back, but it turned out fortunately that he was badly shaken up but

was intact. I held his hand while he sat down on his seat and buckled up and then I looked behind me and saw people tumbled all over the place, including some flight attendants.

Then the pilot came on and announced that we had encountered an unforeseen air pocket and had dropped 500 ft and they were going to make an emergency landing at Heathrow Airport. Among the injured, there were two persons who had been in toilets and had been bounced against the walls and had broken many bones. Flight attendants carried them on stretchers which were lowered to the floor of the plane and tied down to the legs of various seats so that they would not move. One flight attendant who was passing by me had a long bleeding gash on her leg, but she was going about her job helping others.

There was also a lot of baggage which had fallen off the compartments as well as food trays that had flown away. It was a real terrifying mess. The rest of the flight to Heathrow was very very smooth and when we arrived there the pilot told us that he had never before been so careful about keeping the plane level upon landing in order to avoid further pain for those who were wounded.

We had to remain on the plane at Heathrow Airport for 6 to 8 hours because the incident had to be investigated by the International Aviation as well as Heathrow Airport and

the company that was flying us. What took very long was that the injured did not want to be taken to a hospital in London and wanted to fly back to Toronto and be hospitalized there. Besides the ones who had broken bones and severe bruising, there was a pregnant woman who had bumped her head to the ceiling and whose blood pressure had become uncontrollable but, yet, she also did not want to disembark.

Most of these persons were Canadian citizens of Greek origin who had gone back to visit relatives and were fearful of being stranded alone in London. Finally, a few of them were convinced to be taken away by ambulance because a flight attendant agreed to accompany them and remain with them until further notice. The other injured passengers remained on this flight and were picked up by ambulances when we arrived in Toronto where the Press was waiting.

I considered myself very lucky because had I been returning to my seat just a few seconds before the plane hit the air pocket or had I been in the washroom, I would have been badly hurt or worse: I already had broken my back at age 18 and also suffered from spinal osteoporosis. Incredible luck. The other amazing fact is that I didn't not even feel the drop because I was strapped to my seat unlike the poor people around me who had been less lucky. What a trauma for them!—**Anne-Marie Ambert**

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