



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

**Spring 2025**

**No. 70**

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

YURA is also a member of the international organization AROHE, the Association of Retiree Organizations in Higher Education

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YURA Executive

York University Retirees' Association

## Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

Warm and sunny days are becoming more frequent now that Spring is imminent, and the longer days are a harbinger of pleasant summer evenings to come. We hope that you are enjoying watching the piled-up snow disappear----may that sight bring some joy to help off-set the stress and dismay caused by the current news-cycle!

Within YURA, we are pleased to have been able to launch the year with a number of activities to bring our members together. Fran Wilkinson continues to host the YURA café, with January's session offering members an opportunity to reflect on resolutions and activities/classes for the New Year, and with February's session devoted to a discussion of "resilience" and ways to increase one's physical, emotional, social, mental and spiritual resilience (based on a talk by Dr. Donald Meichenbaum at the 2024 CURAC conference attended by a strong contingent of YURA members). During the March café, we had an opportunity to voice concerns about the current turbulent news-cycle and to share some of our preferred coping strategies.

In-person outings have also resumed, starting with a Feb. 23 outing to Roy Thomson Hall to see stunning photography of the Great Barrier Reef and to hear marine biologist Erika Woolsey talk about her research. The March 13 outing to Walter Hall at the University of Toronto allowed members to hear the [Balourdet Quartet](#) perform works by Mozart, Beethoven, Bach and a 2023 composition by young new composer Paul Novak. That outing was so popular that we had to purchase additional tickets to meet demand—we are delighted to learn that so many YURA members enjoy classical music!

In addition to the above events which were open to all our members, YURA organized an online "meet-up" of Senior Scholars on Feb. 19<sup>th</sup>, with logistical assistance from the Office of the Vice-President Equity, People and Culture. Also invited to the meet-up were current active family members who wanted to learn more about the Senior Scholar option in retirement. The session featured six Senior Scholars from different programs and Faculties who shared details of their scholarly work and reflected on the challenges of post-retirement scholarship and on the supports offered by York University. YURA extends its deep appreciation to panelists Danielle Cyr, Lyse Hébert, Richard Hoffmann, Katherine Knight, Glen Norcliffe, and Harvey Skinner. They were articulate about their transition to retirement, generous with their strategies for staying motivated and productive, and passionate about their projects. YURA is very pleased to have been able, through this meet-up, to call attention to the research productivity of retirees and to increase awareness of the Senior Scholar option in retirement. From the feedback received, it appears that there

is significant interest among Senior Scholars about the work their colleagues are accomplishing; as well, there is interest among active faculty members who wish to learn more about how to maintain research productivity in retirement. We will reach out to ARFL and to Associate Vice-President (Faculty Affairs) Uzo Anucha to discuss ways to enhance further the visibility of York retirees and their scholarly contributions.

The YURA Executive Committee has also planned a number of additional events. On April 5<sup>th</sup>, YURA members are invited to attend the concert of the York University Gospel Choir; on April 8<sup>th</sup> the next YURA café will take place (discussion topic to be announced shortly). On Tuesday April 22<sup>nd</sup>, YURA members are invited to attend an Earth Day Intergenerational Climate Café organized by Harvey Skinner. It promises to be an engaging in-person event, open to YURA members and to students, that will offer a welcoming space to share stories, explore different perspectives on climate action, and foster community connections over coffee and light refreshments.

Further out on the horizon, the YURA Executive is focusing on several important events. One is a luncheon/reception in the Fall, being planned in collaboration with the Office of the Vice-President Equity, People and Culture. The event will honour new retirees and afford them an opportunity to learn about YURA and to meet our members in a setting conducive to socializing. We are also planning actively for our Fall AGM which will feature as our guest speaker, Christine O'Kelly, from Dublin City University. She is the Coordinator of the Age-Friendly University Global Network, an organization devoted to supporting universities to promote positive and active aging. The Network has developed a document called the "Ten Principles of an Age-Friendly University", available online at <https://www.afugn.org/principles>. Details about the AGM will be communicated to members in the near future. One final note on events: YURA had hoped to organize a major outing later this Spring to the Shaw Festival. However, we have decided to not proceed with that for a number of reasons related to logistics, the hefty increase in ticket prices, and the uncertain and tumultuous climate that has prevailed since the beginning of the year.

YURA is very pleased that regular meetings of the Joint Committee with the York administration continue. At our most recent meeting we learned of the morale boost to the University of the new medical school. We are encouraged by the opportunity to collaborate on the Senior Scholars' meet-up and the upcoming Fall luncheon (as described above). These collaborations strengthen the position of retirees as valued members of the university community.

We encourage YURA members to consider attending the CURAC (College and University Retirees Associations of Canada) Conference later this Spring in Montreal from May 21-23 with the theme "Well-being of the Person, the Community and the

Planet” (see <https://www.mcgill.ca/mura-arum/conference> ). We encourage members also to submit to the Newsletter reminiscences of earlier times in your life or of your time at York University. During our YURA café discussion of resilience, it was noted that sharing one’s story is a meaningful and effective way to identify strengths and survival skills and to build resilience. We look forward to hearing your stories and to seeing you at YURA events.

Diane Beelen Woody and Steve Dranitsaris

**In Memoriam 2024**

*YURA has made every effort to honour and remember all those who have passed, but if there are names that have been missed, we apologize sincerely and ask that those names be sent to us at [yura@yorku.ca](mailto:yura@yorku.ca) so that those individuals can be remembered in a future Newsletter.*

Natasa Bajin	William A. Jordan
Mary Bar	Gus Kandilas
Naomi Black	Israel Kleiner
Derek Cohen	Lillian Lerman
Joy Cohnstaedt	Barry Lever
Wallace Crowston	Robert Murdie
Jean Drake	Alexander Lovell Murray
Arthur Forer	Masaaki Naosaki
Arthur Haberman	Doris Olin
Stephen Hellman	<i>continued...</i>

Anne Oman	Ron Sheese
David Oman	Robert E. Simmons
Joyce Pereira	Sylvia Solomon
Alice Propper	Jim Streb
Judy Rennie	Johanna Stuckey
Hollis Rinehart	John Laurier Van Esterik
Pat Rogers	Mary Vise
Marilyn Santarossa-Roncali	Stanley Vittoz

## **Dave a reflection**

Richard Weisman

He ended up with a D in the course I taught. But he made an impression on me nevertheless. He was invisible- an absentee student until he had to do his book report in front of the class. Surprise! He was clever enough not just to understand the theory but to make it sound interesting. He was also irreverent and casually disrespectful towards me. No eye contact- no interest in my feedback. Just showing up to do the absolute minimum only to disappear until the final exam and then a dismal performance that earned him a charitable bare pass for the course. That was 1979.

Fast forward to 1993. A man in his thirties entered the classroom of my course on Law and Society. He wore a suit. I kept looking in his direction. I knew this was not our first meeting, but I couldn't quite place him. After the class, he came up to me and asked if he could walk with me back to my office. It didn't take me long to make the connection. He was Dave from 1979.

As we walked, he proceeded to anticipate the questions I might have before I even asked them. He explained what it was like being in my class when he was 18. He was living with his mother and her boyfriend at the time. Every night he would watch her get

beat up- he would try to intercede- she would tell him to go away. He was angry all the time. He thought he was going out of his mind. He couldn't concentrate on his work- he ended up flunking out in his second year.

Now he was living just outside of Toronto and he wanted to chart a new direction for his life. He was interested in applying to law school and he thought my course would help him. Dave from 1993 was the top student in my class for that year. He did apply to law school and I was able to write him a strong letter of recommendation. Apart from that, I felt that it took courage to return to a setting where you had experienced failure, but this time prove to yourself how much you had changed. I received a letter from him after the course ended. He told me that he had been placed on the waiting list for one of the law schools to which he'd applied but that he didn't quite make the cut. He said he was still glad he had tried.

After my encounter with Dave, I was less inclined to rush to judgement about the dropouts, the no-shows, the students who attended my classes in body only. In future years, I would learn that for every student I had, there was a story and when you got a peek beyond the person who showed up in the classroom, you learned to appreciate that they were just like other adults juggling the different parts of their lives, sometimes holding themselves together, sometimes falling apart.

# INTERGENERATIONAL CLIMATE CAFÉ

TOGETHER FOR THE PLANET

## WHO'S INVITED?

York University Students

Retired Faculty & Staff



## WHAT TO EXPECT

**Celebrate Earth Day**

Connect with different generations and share stories, experiences, and perspectives on climate change.



## DATE / TIME

Tuesday, April 22, 2025  
(Earth Day)

10:30 a.m – 12:00 p.m

## LOCATION

Health, Nursing &  
Environmental Studies  
(HNES) Building, Rm 140

## King. A Life a book review

Anne-Marie Ambert

*King. A Life*, by Jonathan Eig. NY: Farrar, Straus and Giroud. 2023.

This is the most recent biography of Martin Luther King. In fact, none has been published in about a decade. What is so fascinating about this book is that it focuses on the entirety of the life of King, on his humanity, his troubled emotional life, his sexual life, as well as his achievements as a reverend, scholar, and political activist.

It is a deeply personal biography in the sense that it is the first one that dwells extensively on his family life, spousal relationship, as well as his many extramarital affairs. What I also found particularly interesting was how obsessed Edgar Hoover, who was the head of the FBI at the time, was in his persistent pursuit of King, in part because he felt that King was influenced by the Communists.

It is in great part because of recently declassified FBI documents, as well as the discovery of audio tapes recorded by Coretta King after her husband's death, that we are able to have such access to aspects of King's life that were previously off limits to biographers.

Hoover was so obsessed with King that he had his many phones tapped, at his home, at his office, and at hotel rooms that he frequented since he was constantly on the road keeping the Civil Rights Movement alive and fighting his many battles against racism and segregation.

It is also enlightening to learn more about the relationship he had with the Kennedys and with Lyndon Johnson who became president after Jack Kennedy's death. King and other civil rights leaders obtained far more from Johnson than they did from Kennedy in terms of progressive legislation, especially regarding the war on poverty. Also interesting are the relationships that King maintained with other civil rights leaders as well as the dissensions that often occurred in the movement.

King lived in a very violent environment, both physically and psychologically. He was so often under the threat of being assassinated so that he finally reconciled himself to this possibility a good four years before it occurred in 1968. On top of this, he was often jailed for actions that one would find totally normal today.

What is less remembered about him is that he was also a very educated and scholarly person who wrote profusely along with being a very powerful speaker and preacher.

He was also an excellent tactician in terms of trying to figure out what should be the objective of each demonstration and where they should be held.

*King, A Life* is a well documented book, and often a page-turner because the reader wants to know what happened next. All in all, it is a fascinating book, especially for those who are interested in the Civil Rights Movement and other types of activism for equal rights.

\*\*\*\*\*

Martin Luther King was assassinated early in the evening on April 4, 1968. At the time, I was teaching at an all-black College in Augusta, Georgia. On April 5th, the next morning, I heard the news over the radio as I was getting ready to go to the College. The news also mentioned that riots were taking place.

At that point, I was wondering what I should be doing when the Dean phoned and said that he wanted to have all of the teachers, especially the white ones, go to the chapel of the College for a memorial service.

So I drove the usual way, in the dirt road that led to the chapel behind the college, when suddenly four black teenagers jumped out of the bushes, surrounded my car and started rocking it sideways. It was very hot that day and my air conditioning was on and I was rather terrified that I might have to turn off the motor and I would suffocate in the car.

I don't know how long this lasted because, to me, it felt like ages. I was terrified when a pickup truck arrived from the other direction and, as fate would have it, five or six students from the College jumped out recognizing me and shouted at the kids to leave me alone. The students apologized to me and accompanied me to my parking spot, after which I shakily went to the chapel for the service.

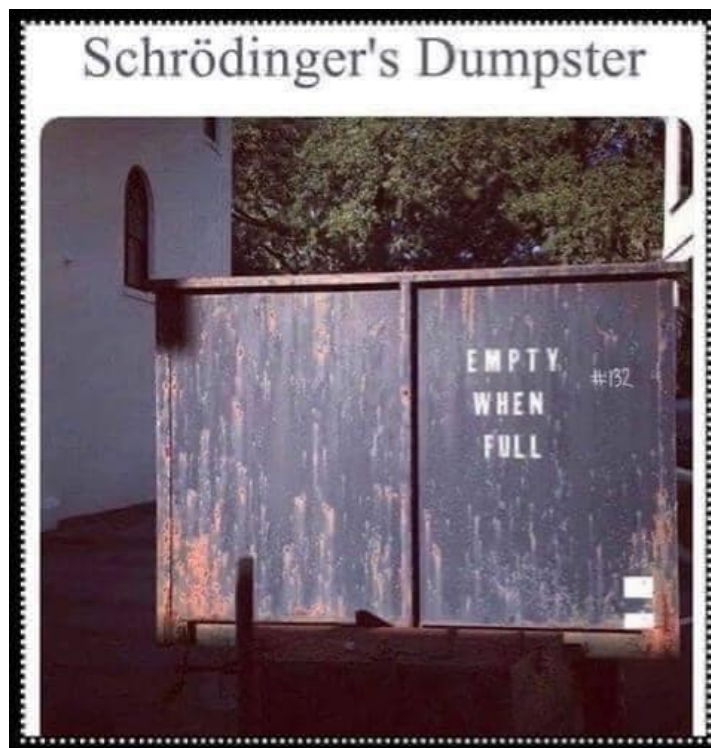
Reviewed by Anne-Marie Ambert

## And now the funnies

presented by Vivienne Monty



## Rare shot of an endangered species



## Just one more thing....

from the editors

Please remember! We want your submissions! Letters, questions, reminiscences, thoughts about retirement, and so on. And for those who did not recognize the location, this month's banner has a spring-time image of the entrance to Glendon Hall.

### Are You Missing e-mail Messages from YURA?

More and more during the past year, we have heard from YURA members that they have not been receiving e-mail communications from the Association about upcoming events or the link for the monthly YURA Café. As we have investigated, we have learned that security filters used by internet providers such as Google, Yahoo (including Rogers), Bell, Telus and others are modified from time to time. Some of these filters immediately flag a mass distribution of a common message as "spam" and direct messages into recipients' spam or junk folders. Because YURA broadcasts e-mails simultaneously to hundreds of its members, ***we encourage all members to check regularly the spam or junk folder on their computer for missed messages.*** You may also want to clear that folder regularly.

### Markham Campus Parking for YURA members

Arrangements for using the YURA promo code to park at York University's new Markham campus differs from parking at Keele and Glendon campus. You need to contact the Parking Office at 416.736.5355 and provide your name, licence plate number, date of your visit, and your YURA promo code. Parking for YURA members is available in the Remington Lot, located at 436 Enterprise Blvd. If you have a valid accessibility placard displayed on your vehicle, be sure to mention this to the Parking representative during your phone call, as this will allow you to park in the Markham Accessibility lot, located at the northeast corner of the campus. Please follow any specific instructions provided to you by the Parking representative with whom you speak. You may be given an alternate Promo code to use with your HONK app.

## Specsavers introduced as CURAC's newest affinity partner

CURAC (the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada), of which YURA is a member association, recently announced a new affinity partnership with Specsavers.

Specsavers is an optometrist-owned and -led business that provides Canadians access to comprehensive eye exams from \$99 including OCT (optical coherence tomography) scan, which typically is an added cost at other optical providers. Specsavers offers a full range of eyewear and contact lenses, including two pairs of eyeglasses for \$149 (with single-vision lenses, a scratch-resistant coating, and UV protection). Designer frames, progressive lenses, and lens upgrades are available at additional cost.

Retirees of CURAC's member associations such as YURA will receive a **60% discount on lens upgrades** such as thinner and lighter lenses, sun protection options, and anti-reflection treatments to cut down on annoying reflections and glare from screens or when driving.

To qualify, retirees will visit a Specsavers store, quote the CURAC membership code **202401**, and show evidence of membership in YURA, whether your confirmation e-mail/letter of membership, a pension statement, a university ID (YU-card) showing "Retired", or some other proof of retired status that is acceptable to the Specsavers store.

Founded in 1983 in the UK, Specsavers has over 150 stores in British Columbia, Alberta, Manitoba, and Ontario, with additional store openings planned in other provinces.

For more information, visit <https://curac.ca/en/member-benefits/health-specsavers> to learn more about Specsavers and for a link to book an eye exam.

Other affinity partners of CURAC include belairdirect (car and home insurance), Collette Tours, Johnson Travel Insurance, RTOERO, and Trip Merchant. For more information, visit <https://curac.ca/>

### For the benefit of members

There are other benefits and discounts available to us- check out [Membership Privileges | York University Retirees' Association](#) website.

### Senior Scholars: reminder

Gentle Reminder to Senior Scholars: please be reminded to check E-reports for the PER accounts (and other funds) to which you have access, to be aware of expiration dates.

# **YURA Executive**

## **Officers**

Diane Beelen Woody, Co-President  
Steve Dranitsaris, Co-President  
Marla Chodak, Secretary  
Melody King, Treasurer

## **Members at Large**

Cathy Boyd-Withers  
Sheila Forshaw  
Agnes Fraser  
Rosanna Furguele  
Debbie Hansen  
Stan Shapson  
Harvey Skinner  
Donna Smith  
Peter Victor  
Richard Weisman  
Marc Wilchesky

## **Ex-Officio**

Bruno Bellissimo, Rep. Pension Fund Board of Trustees  
Charmaine Courtis, Past Co-President  
Fred Fletcher, ARFL Rep.  
Steve Glassman, YURA newsletter editor  
David Leyton-Brown, Rep. Retirement Planning Centre Advisory Board  
Patricia Murray, AROHE Liaison  
Donna Smith, Rep. All University Pension Committee

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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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Steve Glassman, Editor  
Richard Weisman, Editor