

Retirees Association of Mohawk College

News Letter January 2005

Another year has passed during which we have had a number of memorable events, including the two theatrical performances since the last newsletter.

On Thursday Nov 4, fifty-six retirees and their guests visited the Shaw Festival at Niagara-on-the-Lake for a performance of *Pygmalion* Jack Freiburger reports on page 3.

On Wednesday, December 1, thirty-seven of us attended a performance of *It's a Wonderful Life* at the Grand Theatre, London. Marilyn Hodge reports on page 5

Coming Events

- Tuesday, March 8 – **Famous Peoples Players** – Toronto (See enclosed sheet).
- Wednesday, April 6 – *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat* – Stage West Theatre Mississauga. (See enclosed sheet).
- Friday May 6 – *Oklahoma* – Drayton Festival Theatre (See enclosed sheet).
- Tuesday, June 7 – **Annual General Meeting** (See enclosed sheet).
- Monday, June 27 – **A Day at the Fort Erie Thoroughbred Races** (See enclosed sheet).

Report on the October Board Meeting

Your board met at the college on January 4. It welcomed Steve Dunn as a new member of the board and Joanne Wolfarth who is assisting Ann Dunn.

The subject of membership in OCRA was again discussed. It would appear that some members of the teachers' pension plan object to contributing to OCRA, even though OCRA's mandate is to represent college retirees on all issues not just health benefits and pensions. The board therefore will be prepared to entertain motions from the floor on this or any other matter at the Annual General Meeting in June.

Geoff Brooker, having completed the maximum period allowed by the constitution, will leave the board after the AGM. He will be sorely missed.

Welcome New Retirees

Trish Anderson– Disability Services
 Millie Atkinson, – Mathematics
 Diane Carlson – Continuing Education, Health Sciences & Human Services
 Lois Cottrell – Co-Op Education, Graduate & Student Employment
 Bob Hilverth – Business Systems
 Gord Holmes – Business Management
 Sharon McCann, – Business Studies

Ray Price – Industrial & Mechanical Engineering Technology
 Christine Rea – Academic Scheduling & Student Records
 Lou Sartor – Business Management
 Tom Sutton – Mathematics
 Ted Thorpe – Educational Technology
 Sandra Valvasori – Payroll Services

Retirees Association of Mohawk College Newsletter			
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In Memoriam

It is with the deepest regret that we announce the passing of the following retiree: **John May** retiree from the Architectural Department
Our sympathy is extended to his family

Let's Do Lunch

By a rather circuitous, but legitimate route, Mary and your humble editor (yhe) came in possession of a \$100 gift certificate for Pepperwood Bistro at 1455 Lakeshore Road, in Burlington. Determined to put as big a dent as possible in it, we had glasses of wine and starters. Mary chose a salad and yhe the steamed mussels. Mary followed the salad with fish while yhe with the steak frites – a strip loin steak with shoe string potatoes. The steak was grilled "blue" as was requested and was excellent. We followed with desert. The food was excellent and the service prompt and courteous. Lunch with wine, tax, and tip was \$90.

Although we have lunched and reported on La Luna on Concession St, we had never tried the newer one at 306 King St W King St W at Queen. We found a very pleasant atmosphere – bright and airy – with subdued middle eastern music playing in the background. Mary took a half of Steam Whistle and yhe a full pint. Mary chose two starters for lunch which proved more than adequate. Even then a "doggy bag" was required to take home the delicious left overs. Yhe decided upon the "combination plate" which consisted of a sampling of several mid-eastern dishes and came with a deliciously fresh salad. All in all it was a very enjoyable dining experience. The food was fresh, delicious, well presented and complimented by prompt, courteous service. Lunch with beer tax and tip was \$42.

Fosters Inn on Downey St in Stratford, not far from the Avon Theatre, is moderately upscale. While in Stratford to see Henry VIII at the Festival theater we lunched there. We both had a Wellington Dark Ale; Mary the turnip soup – delicious and yhe the potato soup – also delicious. Mary chose the chicken panini and yhe the lamb sandwich; both were excellent and more than adequate. Fosters is noted for having a good chef. Lunch with beer, tax and tip was \$52.

More on Insurance

On November 12, a focus group met at the college to hear a report on the progress being made by the committee studying the thorny problem of health insurance and its cost. Harry Plummer, the union chair of the committee investigating alternative health and dental benefits for the retirees, was the presenter. In his opening remarks he stated that the preferred option of including the retirees in the employees group was a non starter. This was confirmed by two representatives of the Council of Regents who were present. Other means would have to be found to make the burden more tolerable.

The approach taken was to try to enlarge the group and to reduce the coverages. To this end, the three groups, support staff, administration and faculty would be taken as a whole rather than separate entities in arriving at premiums. In addition three separate plans would replace the two coverages that presently exists.

As noted in the recent OCRA newsletter, Plan One would resemble the present coverage with one major innovation Two would be similar to the present plan but with some reduced benefits, notably semi-private coverage, but would include some dental coverage. Plan Three would be even more basic and not include dental coverage. The major Innovation is the introduction of the ages of the retiree and, if applicable his or her spouse, i.e .under 65 or 65 and older.

The proposal includes a co-mingling of the various items covered in two or more of the plans by insurer in calculating premiums e.g. prescription drugs.

This a very brief summary of a very complex proposal and undoubtably a detailed submission will be made to plan members before a choice is required of you.

Voyage to Shaw's Pygmalion

It was a dark and stormy day as Geoff informed us that this play had nothing to do with hog farming, or even of tiny lions, but rather a myth about a Cyprian king, Pygmalion. Once the disillusioned left the bus there were still 52 ready for Shaw. Originally, we were to shop before lunch, but, given the high wind and steady rain, our driver Bob considerately drove us west along the Linc and over the Skyway Bridge to allow the skies to clear. In Niagara-on-the-Lake it still rained, so Bob toured us along the Parkway with a stop at the Kuntz farm market.

Back at the Niagara GCC, David and Pauline Cuthill, who already knew the play since he's from Language Studies and is an actor of note, joined us for an unremarkable lunch, and then the play. Our table enjoyed the genial beverage serving skills of Bob Almas and the football banter of Norm Marshall and Bob Dawson.

This play is one of Shaw's most famous, made more famous by its musical version, My Fair Lady. The play vents two of Shaw's favourite themes: the power of language and the emptiness of upper class life. Henry Higgins, abrasive language scholar (often considered an image of Shaw himself), turns the yowls of Eliza Doolittle, a cockney flower girl, into Oxford English and passes her off as a Hungarian princess, even though her conversation is (suitably?) trite. In the end, she elects to marry the foppish Freddy and become an English teacher, rather than return to Higgins and his more humane sidekick, Colonel Pickering.

Along the way we are treated to the opportunistic visits of Eliza's father, Alfred Doolittle, who first appears as being an "undeserving poor" (and very dusty) dustman, trying to bilk drinking money out of Higgins for his "use" of Eliza. Later, he returns, gaudily turned out (move over, Herb Tarleck) as

the London rep for a rich American's cause, now himself being bilked by "long-lost relatives" and pressed into respectable marriage by his common-law partner. He laments that his language skills have ruined his enjoyment of life. Father and daughter illustrate that achieving "respectability" is no blessing. In contrast, Freddy's pinched and anemic mother and sister show the soul-lessness of those who embrace the rituals of the idle upper-middle class. Shaw's audiences must have been masochistic to keep returning to see themselves mocked. Did you feel the prick of his sarcasm?

In the Greek myth, Pygmalion carves a statue of Aphrodite, falls in love with it and prays to the goddess to breathe life into it. She does, and the king marries his creation. While some of us wanted Eliza and Higgins to marry as the "happy" ending ... seriously, would it be happy for her? She came to him alive and he tried to make her into a statue. She has grown far beyond her teacher and is a triumph of the rude street and the language lab. Viva Eliza! Viva Ann and Geoff for this delightful outing.

Jack Freiburger

Spinning the Web – January 2005

After about seventy-five years of near-perfect health, my parents-in-law both took a down-turn in the last few years. My mother-in-law developed inoperable cancer while my father-in-law was stricken with Parkinson's. When Mom was hospitalized last fall, Dad came to live with us. But it was quickly apparent that he needed more care, so we arranged for him to go into a nursing home. The plan was for Mom to join him as soon as possible. Unfortunately Dad passed away and Mom is now in a nursing home by herself. Because they were both in poor health it fell upon my wife and her two sisters not only to make decisions concerning their parents' health and fill out all the forms and such, but also to clear out over fifty years of living from their home.

Needless to say, clearing out the house was a major chore. They had sold the house a few years earlier and had rented it back. When that happened, my Dad was forced to clear out most of his tools, hardware and odds and ends that were stored in a large shed behind the house, but the contents of the house were untouched. Many long hours were spent mainly piling clothes and other articles into boxes and bags to be sorted through later. Our homes were virtually overrun with the items removed from the house. Because it was being rented, and because their parents had very limited income, we had to clear out the house in record time. Then we had to take care of all the utilities.

I am happy to report that more and more organizations are beginning to recognize the convenience the Internet provides. In the course of moving my in-laws out of their home, I was able to use the Internet to cancel the electricity and arrange for a final meter reading (<http://www.hamiltonucorp.com>), stop the telephone and satellite TV services (<http://www.bell.ca>), and reroute the mail (<http://www.canadapost.ca>) - for a \$33 fee. I was also able to cancel one credit card (<http://www3.bmo.com/mosaik>) although I had to use a general feedback form rather than one for that specific purpose.

Getting information from the government was somewhat more daunting, although the information is certainly there. Changing a person's data or applying for new services, however, still requires that paper forms be filled out and mailed in. It is amazing to see how a person's data is spread out all over the country. Send the tax information to Newfoundland, send one parent's old age security information to Scarborough and the other to Chatham, and so on. I currently have the dilemma of not remembering which department has what information - and not knowing if they all access one central database or if they each have their own.

We tried to expedite a life insurance claim by going, physically, to the company's office (one of them) to no avail. They took none of the documentation, merely assuring us that we would hear from them within 72 hours. I assumed she meant three business days, but we're still waiting for a response more than ten days later. Guess they don't work over the holidays.

More and more I am hearing the sage comment that growing old is anything but fun. It's probably because I and all my friends are, indeed, growing older. I have concluded that growing old is to be avoided if at all possible, almost as much as the alternative.

Fred Oldfield

It's a Wonderful life

On December 1, 37 retirees and friends set off in fog and mist as we travelled from Fennell Campus to London, Ontario to attend the performance of "It's a Wonderful Life" at the Grand Theatre. As the trip was a little longer than most, Linda and Geoff Brooker passed out a quiz on candy and cake. Out of a total of 25, I believe, 18 was the highest score. Homemade jams were the prizes for first, second and third.

We arrived at 11:00am at The Hook Restaurant which offered a fine buffet. The service was first class.

The production started at 1:00p.m and when we arrived, we saw the largest group of elementary students lined up outside and in buses. Our bus driver, Victor Robinson, allowed us to stay on board until all the students had entered the theatre. Fortunately, we were not distracted during the show.

The Grand Theatre is truly a beautiful building. The painting on the circular dome is truly a magnificent piece of artwork. This movie, one of the most famous of all time, was shown in theatres in black & white in 1946 over the Christmas Season and starred James Stewart and Donna Reed. The cast of the stage play today was super and the music delightful as an angel, Clarence, shows a suicidal banker, George Bailey how important he has been to the lives of others. It is Christmas Eve and George is facing a crossroads in his life as he questions his worth. The play sparkles with the homecoming spirit and joy of the Holiday Season.

On our return home the sun shone and a beautiful blue sky enabled us to enjoy the tastefully decorated homes as we travelled through a residential area of London before encountering the 401.

As usual Geoff Brooker had several jokes to keep us amused and advised us of upcoming events for 2005.

Although Brad Berry, the organizer of this event was unable to be with us, Marie and Geoff made sure the day was great.

Marilyn Hodge

PROPOSED AUTUMN TRIP TO QUEBEC CITY (BREATHTAKING AND MAJESTIC!)

Sunday, Oct. 2 – Thursday, Oct. 6, 2005
(Single \$1099., Double \$869. and Triple \$799.)

Ann Dunn has completed a preliminary analysis of the proposed Fall Trip to Quebec City. The 5 days and 4 nights trip includes:

- Deluxe Motor Coach Transportation via the North Shore to Quebec City
- 4 Nights Hotel Accommodations at the Hotel Chateau Laurier, Quebec City
- 6 Meals: 2 Full Buffet Breakfasts, 2 Continental Breakfasts with 1 Lunch at the Fairmont Le Manoir Richelieu Hotel for a Savory Luncheon (this hotel is nestled atop the breathtaking hills of the Charlevoix Region) and another Lunch is planned at the Chateau Laurier Hotel at La Closerie.
- 3-hour Guided Walking Tour of Upper and Lower Quebec City
- 90-minute Narrated Sightseeing Cruise along the St. Lawrence
- Visit the Parc De La Chute-Montmorency
- 45-minute Guided Tour of Ste.Anne De Beaupre
- 3-hour Guided Walking Tour of Old Quebec City, (this includes visits & touring various historic sites).
- Free Time to explore
- Visit Casino De Charlevoix(Gaming incentives are offered with compliments of the casino.)
- Round Trip Baggage Handling of One Piece of Luggage
- All Applicable Taxes and Meal Gratuities

Please phone Ann at 905-383-9772 if you are interested in this trip and would like more details.
Whether planning goes forward or not will depend on the interest shown.