I Have My Own Crayon!!

Selma Wassermann

In the years that we lived dangerously, when a determined and lethal virus wreaked havoc with our lives, we learned many lessons from those terrifying times. We learned how vulnerable we are to infection, despite our 21st century knowledge of science, and how best to prevent the spread of germs. We learned that our doctors and nurses, worn to the bone from overwork, went beyond the pale in treating those who fell in such large numbers. We learned that we needed to rely on our own resources to insure that our children, kept out of school by quarantine, would not fall far behind their grade levels when they returned to classes.

And during these stressful times, when it was hard enough to remain calm, to keep a positive spirit, to follow guidelines that kept us safe from infection, we suffered as well from watching a nation’s divided loyalties, an assault on the halls of democracy, and the insanities of disinformation spread by late night news and the Internet. Keeping a positive spirit in the presence of all the negativism seemed impossible.

Slowly, the more acute danger ebbed and slowly children were returning to regular classrooms. In some areas, they had to come with face masks and teachers wore them as well. In some areas, masks were abandoned, not necessarily because they were not warranted, but because some of the powers behind local governments deemed them a denial of personal prerogatives. In other words, even when children returned to schools, the unrest and the uneasiness that had prevailed lingered, like a bad smell.

Teachers everywhere stood heroic, and faced whatever lay in wait; not the least of their worries was the possibility of infection, since they were open and vulnerable to whatever the children were carrying to school. Yet, as teachers always do, they persevered, staunchly, and carried on. In parents’ concerns about everything else, how many gave a thought to the bravery and the heroism of teachers, doing their lifelong job educating our kids.

In our concern, how many parents remembered to think of the teachers for all they do? For remaining on the front lines? For standing up for the needs and the benefits of children?

Ruben has just turned five and his school, located in the heart of the Slocan Valley, has included an early June orientation for children who will be attending kindergarten in September. Sometimes we forget what a magic moment this is in the life of a five year old. In a flurry of excitement, Ruben’s mom loaded him into the car, fastened his seat belt, and drove him to Brent Kennedy Elementary School for his kindergarten orientation.

Who of us reading this remembers that first day entering a school room? Who of us remembers the excitement, the unparalleled joy, the expectations of a five year old in those first moments in a classroom? Who of us remembers the smells of the chalk, the cafeteria serving up lunch, the smiles of the teachers welcoming

continued on page 4
President’s Report

Frances Atkinson

Dear members,

Just a few quick notes as I prepare to travel. At our September meeting, the SFURA Board voted to implement free membership for all SFU retirees effective from the AGM this Fall. That means that everyone will automatically become a SFURA member upon retirement, for their lifetime. More information will be prepared for the AGM.

Also to let you know that the benefits committee has now identified a package of improvements to our PBC health care plan. The committee is currently discussing how to navigate getting the package implemented. The mechanism identified by the University is complicated. We thank the committee for doing a great deal of hard work on this.

Meanwhile, the Early Arts book team has attracted the interest of a publisher and is working on a package of sample chapters to send later in the Fall, with the aim of striking a contract.

The SFURA Board is continuing to discuss ideas for restarting SFURA after the pandemic — two years off means that some things are a bit creaky. While we successfully organized three local events in the Spring and Summer — the Ides of March reception in the Wosk Centre downtown, lunch at The Admiral Pub and Grill, and the Vancouver Harbour and Indian Arm lunch cruise run by Harbour Cruises - the turnout was somewhat lower than in pre-pandemic years. We are proceeding with caution, understanding that not everyone is quite ready to attend public events.

In the Spring, the Board conducted a member survey that said people are somewhat interested in remote activities. We’re exploring ideas and would welcome your thoughts.

SFURA’s 25th anniversary is next year — we’d love to hear from you on what you’d like to see.

Finally, please mark your calendars for the Fall AGM on the evening of Thursday October 27 at Burnaby Mountain Golf Course. Details will be sent by email closer to the date. I hope to see many of you there!

Frances
us? For Ruben, it was a place of enchantment, something that might have come from one of his fairy tale books. He was mesmerized.

Sitting in one of those impossibly little kindergarten chairs, Ruben listened to what the teacher had to say and absorbed every word as if she were giving gifts of wisdom about what next September had in store for him. This normally highly active little fellow sat, as if he had been trained to sit and listen. At the end of the teacher’s presentation, each little five year old was given their own box of crayons. Although Ruben was never shy about his own collection of multi-colored crayons and felt pens at home, he received this gift from his future teacher as if it were precious metal. He clutched his box of crayons to his breast as his mom took his hand and they left the classroom and walked to the parking lot.

During the drive home, Ruben’s excitement was barely contained by his seat belt. He had a lot to tell his mom about the kindergarten orientation and his new teacher. He would be going to school in September. He would be learning to read by himself. **BY HIMSELF!**

In our busy and eventful lives, often full of problems that have yet to be resolved, we forget the enchantment of those first in-school experiences for our five year olds. We forget the magic that school holds out for them. We forget what a pivotal role teachers play in the lives of our children. We forget how school opens doors to the mind, to their lives, to their futures. We forget that teachers are the keys that open those doors.

When the car arrived back home, Ruben clicked open his seat belt and raced out to see his grandmother who was waiting for his news.

“Nana,” he shouted, “I’ve got my own crayons.”

Let us never forget the gifts that teachers give.

And yes, if you can read this, thank a teacher. ❖

---

**Every now and then, stories of Houdini pop up. Here’s another**

*By Shirley Cohn*

Prof. Theodore (Ted) Cohn, Emeritus, Political Science, was my late husband. His family had a very interesting connection with Houdini. Ted’s father, Dr. Daniel E. Cohn, was Houdini’s doctor at the time of Houdini’s death in Detroit, October 31, 1926 (Halloween!). Dr. Cohn was 25 years old and just starting his medical practice. He was the substitute doctor for the Statler Hotel at the time of Houdini’s Detroit tour.

Prior to coming to Detroit, the magician had been punched unexpectedly in Montreal by J. Gordon Whitehead, a McGill student. The student was testing Houdini’s ability to withstand abdominal blows, but without advance notice, Houdini had been unable to prepare his muscles, and suffered a ruptured appendix on October 22. Abdominal pain started later that day. Nevertheless, Houdini and his wife Bess traveled to Detroit, where he performed at the Garrick Theater on October 24. After that, he collapsed.

Houdini reluctantly went to hospital after being examined by Dr. Cohn, who consulted with the chief of surgery at a nearby hospital. The surgeon operated and discovered Houdini’s gangrenous appendix. With no cure in sight, Houdini remained hospitalized, with specialists consulting, to no avail. Dr. Cohn was able to spend time at Houdini’s bedside, getting to know him and even bringing him “Farmer’s Chop Suey,” a sour cream-raw vegetable dish he requested. The two men would eat together, as Dr. Cohn had time.
Several original documents related to Houdini's death sat in our home files for many years, placed in archival quality folders. Two of these documents are attached; a “thank you” letter from Houdini’s brother, Theodore Hardeen, and Dr. Cohn’s notes related to Houdini’s medical care and death. I wanted to ensure that these documents would be well-cared for, and contacted SFU’s Library, wondering if the Library wanted the originals, or if a librarian could direct me to an appropriate archive. I began corresponding with the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, one of two special Houdini libraries, and after a number of months (and the reduction of Covid restrictions for their staff), I signed a Deed of Gift. It gives me satisfaction, as it would Ted, to know that these documents will be preserved and made available for further research in the NYPL Houdiniana collection. Intrigue about Houdini continues.

Dr. Daniel E. Cohn,
Statler Hotel,
Detroit, Michigan.

My dear Dr. Cohn:

In writing this little note of appreciation and thanks for your untingering efforts in behalf of my brother, Harry Houdini, I can but faintly express the deep gratitude of the members of his family.

We know that if it had been possible for medical skill, modern surgery, and post-surgical treatment to have saved his life, we would have owed his life to none other than his wonderful corps of physicians and nurses.

In our grief over the passing of our brother, may we again assure you of our deep regard and most heartfelt thanks.

Most sincerely yours,

Theodore Hardeen
Opinion: To Understand And Forecast Inflation, Follow The Money

History shows that a rise in the cost of living follows excessive growth in the money supply

By John Greenwood and Herbert Grubel

Former Bank of Canada Governor John Crow was once asked whether the money supply had been used in the Bank’s economic model and forecasts he had just presented. His response was that although money was not in the model, he regularly looked over his shoulder to be sure the money supply was not growing too quickly. During his time in office, both the money supply and prices grew at satisfactorily moderate rates. Current Governor Tiff Macklem should have spent more time looking over his shoulder. In the first year of the COVID epidemic the money supply, as measured by “M3,” increased at an average annual rate of 13.4 per cent, almost double the rate during the preceding nine years. Even so, most academic economists and advisers to central bankers have blamed the current inflation — 8.1 per cent year-on-year in June — on disruptions in the global supply chain, COVID after-effects, the war in Ukraine but not excess money creation. In the press conference last month at which he announced a hike in the Bank’s target interest rate of 100 basis points, Governor Macklem did not mention the money supply once. Nor was the issue raised during later media interviews.

Money, however, is crucial to inflation. In the words of Milton Friedman: “Inflation is always and everywhere a monetary phenomenon in the sense that it is and can be produced only by a more rapid increase in the quantity of money than in output.” History shows that inflation follows excessive growth in the money supply with a lag, usually of about two years.

Events such as harvest failures, epidemics, floods, earthquakes, and wars do, of course, reduce supply and increase the prices of goods and services affected by these abnormal events. But these price increases disappear once normal conditions return. If they were to persist, consumers spending more on the higher-priced goods would have less income to spend on other goods, whose prices would fall correspondingly, leaving the average of all prices unchanged. Inflation, a persistent increase in the overall price level, can therefore only occur if increases in the money supply precede or accompany these disturbances.

What causes the money supply to increase? The first way involves commercial banks extending loans to private borrowers, granting them a corresponding amount of new current account deposits, which count as money in government statistics. These commercial banks see their assets (the loans to the borrowers) increase by the same amount as their obligations (the new money in the deposit accounts that the banks have created for the borrowers).

A second way the money supply can increase results from actions of the Bank of Canada. During COVID, the bank bought government bonds held by investment institutions. It paid for them by creating new deposits for the sellers. This added directly to the money supply and increased the central bank’s assets and liabilities by the same amount. Known as “Quantitative Easing,” (QE) this policy likely helped keep interest rates low: when a central bank buys bonds that makes things easier for people and firms trying to borrow money. Both commercial and central banks in effect create money out of thin air. The ability of the commercial bank to do so is constrained by regulations and interest rates set by the central bank, which influence private lending and thus the growth in demand for loans. The Bank of Canada, however, faces no limits on its money creation other than public and political pressures when the economy underperforms or inflation.
develops. The total amount of money created by Canada’s commercial banks and the Bank of Canada is known as M3. The share of money created by the Bank of Canada in the decade before COVID was three per cent but soared to 46 per cent in 2020-2022, which implies strongly that expansion of the money supply moved dramatically from the market-determined actions of commercial banks to the politically determined policy of the Bank of Canada.

The two lines in the nearby graph show six-month moving averages of monthly observations of year-over-year growth in inflation and money supply, with the twist that while the inflation numbers are current the money supply data is from two years earlier, which makes it possible to judge how much it may influence subsequent inflation. In the early years, as the graph shows, fluctuations in both variables were moderate. Even so the correlation between them was surprisingly strong, given other, non-monetary factors that also affected prices. The correlation after early 2020 is unmistakable, however, and supports the “monetarist” view that excessive growth of the money supply is the underlying source/driver of the current inflation.

What does the model say about future inflation? The vertical line marks May 2022, the latest data available at the time of writing. The single line to the right of it shows the M3 created over the past two years, which, according to the monetarist model, will largely determine inflation in the coming two years. The line suggests inflation will peak this autumn when the high 15.2 percent M3 growth has worked its way through the system. The subsequent reduction of M3 growth will exert some downward pressure on prices, but only for a short time since the slowdown has now been replaced by another period of accelerating M3. We conclude that inflation could accelerate again in mid-2023 and continue well into 2024. As always, this projection may prove to be wrong if other powerful economic developments occur: another wave of the pandemic, for instance. Still, analysts would be wise to take the possibility seriously. Excess growth in M3 in recent years was caused by the perceived need to finance record fiscal deficits, which QE did. These deficits and their monetization were made politically possible by the government’s adoption of two revolutionary new ideas in economics.

The first was that budgets no longer had to be balanced over the business cycle. Rather, deficits were fine so long as they did not bring the debt-to-GDP ratio above a certain, reasonable level. In fact, overall government debt has risen rapidly above any reasonable level from 86.8 percent of GDP in 2019 to 117.8 in 2022.

A second idea underlying the extraordinary growth in the money supply was politicians’ ready acceptance of “modern monetary theory,” which argues that governments can issue unlimited amounts of money in their own currency without risk of bankruptcy so long as inflation does not result. Inflation obviously has resulted, but this view has been used to rationalize unprecedented peacetime levels and growth in deficit spending. These theories are now being tested in the real world. The correlation between excess money creation and inflation seen in the graph suggests they are likely to fail. But only time, and possibly considerable economic distress, will bring the final judgment.


Herbert Grubel, MP from 1993-97, is emeritus professor of economics at Simon Fraser University and a senior fellow at the Fraser Institute.
I recently sent out an email to the SFU Retirees Association describing my favorite method of opening tight jar lids now that my hand muscles are getting weaker. I received many letters from members describing other favorite methods. I use two oil filter wrenches designed for cars, handily available at places like Canadian Tire. They involve two working parts with a bright yellow core and long wriggly black rubber straps. I get them in two sizes, and they work perfectly when all else fails. It’s rather fun having the flailing rubber edges spread out over my kitchen counter; it makes me feel like I’m doing real work.

Suggestions sent to me included whacking the rim of the jar lid, prying up one edge of the lid with an old-fashioned beer can opener or screwdriver, heating the lid in every amazing way ranging from hot water to holding over a gas flame, grabbing fiercely and growling, wearing rubber gloves, pounding the jar on the floor, and poking a hole in the lid with a sharp thing to release the vacuum! All wonderful, some needing more muscle power than others. I have various specially gadgets that grab, but still require hand strength. My default to the wonderful oil filter wrenches, however, is guaranteed to work with least effort, besides being rather colourful and fun. The only container that has totally foiled me is the latest Drano canister, which requires me to press hard toward the centre on opposite sides of the long lid and then twist open. That combo of three directions of strong pressure has me completely discombobulated. All tips are welcome.

But while getting into things poses one set of problems, getting out of things can also become a challenge as our aging muscles weaken. Years ago a friend told me that her mother was trapped in her bath-tub for four days, unable to get out, before she was rescued. The mother was a hefty old farm wife on a remote northern farm, living alone. By the time she was discovered, she was pretty wild. I realized that this bath exit was becoming a problem for me as I grabbed and slipped and slid while my weak legs needed help from my arms. I enjoy the luxury of a bath more than a shower, but it was so hard to get up inside the bathtub I thought I was exiled to miserable showers. To fight against this, I experimented and developed a sure-fire method with what I claim is graceful choreography. Its real value is that it works every time. For a right-sided tub exit, place a face-cloth on the bottom of the tub just under your right haunch and put your right foot on it, tucked in tightly so as to bear your body weight. With your left hand on a grab bar and right hand at rear tub top, push up with right hand, pull forward with left hand, and stand up briskly with that right foot/leg firmly bearing much of your weight, as it is directly under your body. Ta Da! Upright with no scary slipping, sliding, or banging. I practiced with a friend’s suggestion, rolling over in the tub and pushing up, but I knocked myself about too much, and when you slide in a tub, everything you hit is very hard.

When it comes to the combo of getting out of and into something, additional problems arise. Every time I try to get out of a dinghy and into a sailboat (or vice versa) a hilarious scene of drama develops. My brothers laugh and tease as I make my erratic progress, with arms and legs lurching and grabbing in all directions. This has never bothered me in the slightest because, as I explain to them, the problem is simple: I have too many arms and legs. I’m more like a spider than you understand. They have no come-back for that. The most mysterious problem of getting into and out of things occurred years ago to my mother on a sleeper coach of the old Northern Alberta Railway. She had a lower berth and tucked her underwear in the net sling-bag hanging on the window-wall of her berth. When she awoke and began dressing, she discovered someone had stolen her girdle overnight. Hard to beat that!

So, getting into and out of things can trigger creativity, drama, hilarity, and mystery.
Life Is A Lottery And Kindness Is More Than Money

By A. E. Curzon

From time to time in articles I have written for Simon Says I have mentioned my wife Mona. This time I will concentrate on her.

Mona was born in Hamburg in 1937 and had an elder sister, Janina. Her father was English and worked for the Canadian Pacific company and her mother was a pharmacist from Romania. Because I am a twin, not an twin, who venerates grammatical accuracy in connection with the indefinite article I now report that in 1941 Mona’s family was living in the Belgian City, Atwerp when their house was bombed by the Germans. They survived, set off for France in their car and after many dangers and adventures including losing their car, they ended up getting a boat from France to England. Not a single member of the family was injured.

My home during the war was in a place called Chessington. On one occasion in 1944 the engine of a German weapon called a flying bomb or buzz-bomb ceased working as it was designed to do and it quietly dived earthwards where it would explode when it hit the ground. As you surely realize, it did not hit me, but instead killed a pig on a farm. The escapes from France and from the buzz-bomb prove that life really is a lottery.

After the war, the UK government was benevolent and I received free school lunches and free bus passes to get to and from school. Later, the twins and our sister all got state scholarships and went to university, earning degrees and no debts. My brother and I both studied physics at Imperial College, London, and went on to get Phds. There was a German student in my brother’s research group and in 1959 he invited my brother and me to some event in Wimbledon. I do not remember what it was all about, but there I met Mona, my wife-to-be. We got married on Friday the 13th of May 1966. This showed we scorned the superstition that Friday the 13th was an unlucky day and also scorned the saying “Marry in May and rue the day.”

I became a lecturer at Imperial College, but one day an unpleasant individual was transferred from another section to my research group and I decided to leave. My brother was already at UBC so I applied to SFU for a position. The university had just received an electron microscope and had no one to operate it. Electron microscopy and diffraction were my areas of expertise so I was offered a job. Of course I accepted and SFU paid my moving expenses.

Mona and I were incredibly well suited to each other. We viewed the world in identical ways and tried to help people whenever we could. We also thought in similar ways. I remember one Spring day we were walking along when I was overwhelmed by the beauty of a huge blossom tree. At exactly the same time we each expressed independently our delight at the sight of it.

In 1974 I became Chairman of SFU Physics Department. This involved an increase in salary and it occurred to me that we did not need the money and so it could be used to set up a bursary at SFU. Mona and I always discussed important activities in our lives and she enthusiastically supported the idea. Money can talk and I did not want to benefit academically in any way from creating the Bursary, so we named it the Digman Bursary. Over the years in communications with the people who ran the bursary I mentioned that Mona was a strong supporter. When I retired Mona and I changed the name to the Curzon-Digman Bursary.

One year there was a strike of secretaries and technicians at SFU and I decided to give my lectures because I had an obligation to the students. I felt badly about this and placed in the mail boxes of Physics Department secretaries and technicians anonymous donations because of their strike-related loss of salaries. Shortly afterwards, when going for lunch I met a technician, Scott Wilson. He guessed I had been the donor and returned the money to me saying “Add it to the Curzon-Digman Bursary so that the giving may go on.” Scott died in a car accident on 4th August 2004 and his obituary in the Vancouver Sun ended with the words “Family and friends who so wish may make a memorial donation directly to the Curzon-Digman Bursary through Simon Fraser University.” I was absolutely astounded to see this. I think
Barbara Frisken may have initiated the subsequent establishment of the Scott Wilson Bursary involving Scott’s family. I transferred to this new bursary the memorial funds donated for Scott from the Curzon-Digman Bursary, matched those funds and there was a further SFU matching of funds, so that a new Bursary could be established and Scott would be remembered. It was Scott’s family and SFU who decided on the bursary’s regulations.

Over the years many of my colleagues have passed away and I have attended their memorial events. It made me sad to think that the very people so highly praised at the memorials were not there to hear what was said.

At the end of 2021 Mona became afflicted with cancer. Her friends are spread all over the world and I felt that a memorial service would not be suitable. She spent a great deal of her life being kind to everyone, including the recipients of the Curzon-Digman Bursary. I felt ashamed that she was not mentioned explicitly in the name of the Bursary so I consulted her in December 2021 to ask if she would approve of the name being changed to “The Mona and Albert Curzon Bursary” because we would both be named and she would go on giving. She was elated by the suggestion and the name change was made thanks in large part to Barbara Frisken whom I had asked for help.

Dear Mona passed away on 9 March 2022. We were greatly helped by a medical doctor, Manisha, the daughter of Onkar who had worked with me at SFU many years ago. She knew how to organize carers and everything to do with keeping Mona pain free.

All of the above experiences teach that life is a lottery and kindness is more than money.

---

Seeing Is Believing

By Dave Huntley

The scene is the Palmers’ living room. A bridge game is underway. The four players are a faculty member, a post-doc and two graduate students, all physicists, all who supposedly have a good understanding of statistics.

Bridge is normally played using two decks of cards. When a ‘game’ is finished one of the players gathers up the cards used in that game, shuffles them thoroughly and places the deck on his or her left on the table, face down, while the other deck, previously shuffled, is dealt to the players, one card at a time around the table; in this way each player gets 13 cards at random.

On the day and hand in question, one of the students had a surprise, all 13 spades, threw the cards on the table for all to see, and bid seven spades. The odds of this happening are so small that it is doubtful that it has ever happened, yet those who saw it seemed to believe it. Later I told Klaus Rieckhoff and my brother, both physicists and they did not believe it.

Now I can tell you the true story. When, after one of the ‘games’ the cards had been shuffled and placed on the table, I was sitting beside the shuffler, closely watching the bidding and playing of the next ‘game’; I picked up the deck of shuffled cards, and with some minor reordering of them arranged that every fourth card was a spade, and returned the deck to the table. I left quietly for the kitchen and told Evelyn what I had done.

For the next ‘game’, the new dealer picked up the treated deck, passed it to the player on the right to cut it, and dealt the cards. Cutting left every fourth card a spade, but randomized which player got all the spades.

This demonstrates how intent bridge players are so concentrated on the game that they are oblivious to events around them. I pulled this trick once before, many years ago. It is easy to do. I recall reading a mystery story (I forget which) in which a bridge player is murdered in plain sight, though unnoticed by the other players.
“He Mingled With Us”

By Meguido Zola

A while ago, I went back to East Africa to see my homeland again, where I’d spent my middle and late childhood and then my early years as a schoolteacher. And to share it with my then ten-year-old daughter, Marah. She loved it: the people, the wildlife, the land.

But as our days drew to a close, I regretted not having passed on to her something of me so that she could somehow better understand me. But what? And how?

It happened in the last moments of our visit, as we were leaving Zanzibar. The fabled island of Zanzibar, place of beauty — sun, water, spices and trade winds; also place of unspeakable evil — centre of the slave trade, with its deep-water harbour and a convenient jumping-off point for the colonial partition of Africa.

Fifty years on, I was reliving my years there, remembering my mother, recalling my father, who, for better or for worse, I am most like.

My eccentric, impossible father who, following the Anschluss of 1938, when Austria welcomed Hitler as conqueror, fled his country; renounced his citizenship to become a Displaced Person, and never spoke the language again; returned his degrees to the University of Vienna, the oldest university in the German-speaking world, and was ever after penalized for it in his work.

My hopelessly lunatic father who shunned his own to devote his life to the idealized ‘noble savage’ in whichever wild places he explored; with whom he identified in ways that brought hardship on his family; who never missed an opportunity to snub and lecture colonial administrations for whom he worked; who spent his time to be with those who needed him, as he saw it: the Asian tradespeople, the Arab clerks, the African labourers with whom, evenings and weekends, he’d spend hours on our verandah visiting, hearing complaints, adjudicating disputes, lending money, talking politics or. . . just being there with them.

I’d been reliving all this, as we were boarding the Arab dhow that would sail to the African mainland, when someone bumped into us and our host, Bosco, a classmate from St. Joseph’s Convent School, where I’d learned English and Arabic and Kiswahili and struggled to advance from 47th out of 47 in ‘Deportment’.

“Ah! Sheikh Mohamed,” our host, Bosco, greets a dignified, white-bearded gent. “Salaam aleikum.”

He introduces us. Sheikh Mohamed, once an office messenger, a lowly chit-wallah fetching and carrying for the colonial administration, is now Justice of the High Court.

Yes, he says, he well remembers the Zolas.

He clearly recalls the family strolling through the narrow lanes of the Old Stone Town at sundown, taking the cool, evening air. Children in front. Parents behind. Each pair, hand in hand.

“Very stout family,” Sheikh Mohamed smiles broadly. ‘Stout’ is meant as a compliment. A tribute to our substance both literal and figurative.

“And I especially remember your father,” he says to me. “Your grandfather,” he turns to my daughter. “A fine man. He mingled with us. Very much.”

He ‘mingled’ with us. What a quaint expression. But what a telling one; and what a gift to me from across the divide of the years, from beyond the grave.

It is said of Jesus that He ‘mingled’ with the crowds. With the tax collectors. The harlots. The winebibbers. The poor. Which, according to the story, really was the point of His stay on earth. Not that He did stuff, i.e. cure, but that He was, i.e. cared by mingling with the people, in this example.

And I realized in that moment how much I, as a man, as a teacher, have in one way or another valued and aspired to that. To mingling. To giving the gift of attention. To sharing the sacrament of presence.

Photo: Dmitry Limonov / Unsplash
Beyond Profits

By Joan Sharp

Ten alumni and faculty members from the Department of Biological Sciences have founded successful non-profit societies. With science and scientists at their core, these non-profit organizations collectively aim to educate the public, engage youth in conservation, and conserve our natural environment. The non-profit societies demonstrate how scientists can work respectfully with diverse community groups, support life-long learning about the importance of biodiversity, develop imaginative solutions to problems of sustainable resource use and conservation of the natural environment, be guided by Indigenous groups in combining traditional knowledge with western science, and make science more inclusive. Showcasing the inspiring stories of the diverse and successful non-profits that have been created by these biologists shows how a foundation in biological sciences can be a springboard for those wishing to make a difference in the world.

In March 2022, three of these alumni were honored as Distinguished Alumni Speakers. Rob Butler of Pacific Wildlife Control, context, and choosiness: Flipping the lens to see female plasticity in widow spiders

Dr. Maydianne Andrade, University of Toronto Scarborough

3:30 pm, Wednesday, November 9, SFU Big Data Hub ASB 10900

Dr. Kelly Ablard, Airmid Institute

Working Alongside Indigenous Communities Worldwide to Protect Medicinal and Aromatic Plants for Future Generations

3:30 pm, Wednesday, October 12, SFU Big Data Hub ASB 10900

Dr. Maydianne Andrade, University of Toronto Scarborough

Control, context, and choosiness: Flipping the lens to see female plasticity in widow spiders

You are welcome to attend the fall talks delivered by our alumni and may wish to look for other talks presented in Spring, 2023.

Ten alumni and faculty members from the Department of Biological Sciences have founded successful non-profit societies. With science and scientists at their core, these non-profit organizations collectively aim to educate the public, engage youth in conservation, and conserve our natural environment. The non-profit societies demonstrate how scientists can work respectfully with diverse community groups, support life-long learning about the importance of biodiversity, develop imaginative solutions to problems of sustainable resource use and conservation of the natural environment, be guided by Indigenous groups in combining traditional knowledge with western science, and make science more inclusive. Showcasing the inspiring stories of the diverse and successful non-profits that have been created by these biologists shows how a foundation in biological sciences can be a springboard for those wishing to make a difference in the world.

In March 2022, three of these alumni were honored as Distinguished Alumni Speakers. Rob Butler of Pacific Wildlife Foundation, Christine Rock of WildResearch, and Erin Udal of the Native Bee Society of British Columbia spoke about their NGOs and their impact, providing advice to students about how to build their own careers and help to solve environmental and social justice problems.

Two more Biological Sciences alumni and their non-profit societies will be featured in talks and workshops this fall.

Dr. Kelly Ablard is the founder of Airmid Institute, which works with Indigenous communities to protect fragile medicinal and aromatic plants around the world. In October, Dr. Ablard will be featured as Biology’s 18th Distinguished Alumni Speaker.

Dr. Maydianne Andrade is President and co-Founder of The Canadian Black Scientists Network (CBSN), which seeks to elevate, make visible, celebrate, and connect Black Canadians in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM). Dr. Andrade is also Founder and co-Chair of the Toronto Initiative for Diversity & Equity (TIDE). In November, Dr. Andrade will be presenting a Departmental seminar on her research on sexual cannibalism in black widow spiders. She will also deliver a faculty workshop on equity and bias in academe.

You are welcome to attend the fall talks delivered by our alumni and may wish to look for other talks presented in Spring, 2023.

3:30 pm, Wednesday, October 12, SFU Big Data Hub ASB 10900

Dr. Kelly Ablard, Airmid Institute

Working Alongside Indigenous Communities Worldwide to Protect Medicinal and Aromatic Plants for Future Generations

3:30 pm, Wednesday, November 9, SFU Big Data Hub ASB 10900

Dr. Maydianne Andrade, University of Toronto Scarborough

Control, context, and choosiness: Flipping the lens to see female plasticity in widow spiders

Beyond Profits

By Joan Sharp

Ten alumni and faculty members from the Department of Biological Sciences have founded successful non-profit societies. With science and scientists at their core, these non-profit organizations collectively aim to educate the public, engage youth in conservation, and conserve our natural environment. The non-profit societies demonstrate how scientists can work respectfully with diverse community groups, support life-long learning about the importance of biodiversity, develop imaginative solutions to problems of sustainable resource use and conservation of the natural environment, be guided by Indigenous groups in combining traditional knowledge with western science, and make science more inclusive. Showcasing the inspiring stories of the diverse and successful non-profits that have been created by these biologists shows how a foundation in biological sciences can be a springboard for those wishing to make a difference in the world.

In March 2022, three of these alumni were honored as Distinguished Alumni Speakers. Rob Butler of Pacific Wildlife Control, context, and choosiness: Flipping the lens to see female plasticity in widow spiders

Dr. Maydianne Andrade, University of Toronto Scarborough

3:30 pm, Wednesday, November 9, SFU Big Data Hub ASB 10900

Dr. Kelly Ablard, Airmid Institute

Working Alongside Indigenous Communities Worldwide to Protect Medicinal and Aromatic Plants for Future Generations

3:30 pm, Wednesday, October 12, SFU Big Data Hub ASB 10900

Dr. Maydianne Andrade, University of Toronto Scarborough

Control, context, and choosiness: Flipping the lens to see female plasticity in widow spiders

You are welcome to attend the fall talks delivered by our alumni and may wish to look for other talks presented in Spring, 2023.
Ten Reasons Canadians Are Unhappier

By Herbert Grubel / SFU emeritus professor of economics

I was surprised but not shocked when the latest international survey of happiness found that Canadians have become considerably less happy. In 2012, when the survey was first published, we were the fourth-happiest country in the world. This year we are 15th.

The index of happiness used to create this ranking is based on survey respondents’ subjective assessment of where on a scale of zero (least happy) to 10 (most happy) they find themselves. As in all surveys that rely on the use of subjective criteria, the results should be treated skeptically. But since the same reasons for skepticism exist for all countries in the survey now and ten years ago, the causes for this drop in our ranking deserve consideration.

The happiness of every individual is influenced by many things that are highly personal but it is possible to identify some factors that are almost certainly shared by most Canadians. For example:

- **Inflation** has caused real incomes to fall, recently at 8.1 per cent annually, with more price increases expected in the coming months. Policies to stop inflation are likely to cause significant economic problems.
- The cost of housing relative to income (affordability) is the most important component of inflation. It has risen sharply and has made Canada’s largest cities among the least affordable in the world.
- Canada’s federal debt has reached its highest peace-time level. When interest rates rise, as they are widely expected to do, the cost of servicing it and the consequent fiscal burden on taxpayers will increase as well.
- Health and health care have serious effects on Canadians’ happiness. Many of us cannot find a family doctor and face long waits to consult specialists and get access to emergency services, medical imaging and needed surgery. By these measures and in several other ways, we do very poorly in comparison with other developed countries offering universal, free health care to their citizens.
- Immigrants require housing, health care, education and public recreation facilities, all of which are in short supply. In the 1980s immigrants numbered about 100,000 a year. Their number has since increased steadily and will be 400,000 in 2023.
- Freedom of speech is essential to the functioning of liberal democracies but in recent years has become more and more restricted. Codes of political correctness dominate conversations in universities and on the pages of popular media. Violators of these codes are “cancelled” by self-appointed guardians, usually without the opportunity for self-defence.
- In the past, the main role of governments has been to create equal opportunities for success in life but now, increasingly, it is to equalize outcomes. In trying to do so, governments impose taxes and regulations that severely distort incentives to work, save, invest, take risks, and own property. Such policies not only decrease economic growth but are considered by many to be unfair.
- Another important aspect of this redistribution policy that many Canadians regard as unfair involves regulations requiring employers to give various forms of hiring preference to women and people from visible minorities even if other Canadians have the same qualifications, skills and work habits.
- In the past, the public could hold politicians accountable for the environmental and social policies they create. Now, under the new ESG system such policies will be made by businesses without the traditional accountability to the public.
- Canada’s federal government has promised to design policies consistent with “Great Reset” and “Build Back Better” paradigms for organizing the economy and society, creating worry that democratic, free-market capitalism increasingly will give way to government planning and massive redistribution of income.

Space does not permit the listing here of more of the many government policies that make many Canadians unhappy. But every year scholars construct the Economic Freedom Index, which measures a wide range of policies that affect happiness. They do so under the headings of: countries’ size of government; characteristics of the legal system and security of property rights; sound money; freedom to trade internationally; and regulation.

As it turns out, level of economic freedom is highly correlated with the level and growth of their per capita income, life expectancy and other important indicators of economic and social well-being, which in turn seem likely to determine happiness. By this measure, Canadians have not done well recently. The country’s ranking has fallen from seventh in the world in 2012 to 14th place in 2021.

A study by the OECD indicates what lies ahead. It forecasts that the growth in Canada’s per capita income in the year 2030 will be the lowest among all members of the OECD. Happiness is almost certain to follow the same trajectory unless we see a wholesale reversal of the damaging government policies of the recent past.

Ten Reasons Canadians Are Unhappier

By Herbert Grubel / SFU emeritus professor of economics

I was surprised but not shocked when the latest international survey of happiness found that Canadians have become considerably less happy. In 2012, when the survey was first published, we were the fourth-happiest country in the world. This year we are 15th.

The index of happiness used to create this ranking is based on survey respondents’ subjective assessment of where on a scale of zero (least happy) to 10 (most happy) they find themselves. As in all surveys that rely on the use of subjective criteria, the results should be treated skeptically. But since the same reasons for skepticism exist for all countries in the survey now and ten years ago, the causes for this drop in our ranking deserve consideration.

The happiness of every individual is influenced by many things that are highly personal but it is possible to identify some factors that are almost certainly shared by most Canadians. For example:

- **Inflation** has caused real incomes to fall, recently at 8.1 per cent annually, with more price increases expected in the coming months. Policies to stop inflation are likely to cause significant economic problems.
- The cost of housing relative to income (affordability) is the most important component of inflation. It has risen sharply and has made Canada’s largest cities among the least affordable in the world.
- Canada’s federal debt has reached its highest peace-time level. When interest rates rise, as they are widely expected to do, the cost of servicing it and the consequent fiscal burden on taxpayers will increase as well.
- Health and health care have serious effects on Canadians’ happiness. Many of us cannot find a family doctor and face long waits to consult specialists and get access to emergency services, medical imaging and needed surgery. By these measures and in several other ways, we do very poorly in comparison with other developed countries offering universal, free health care to their citizens.
- Immigrants require housing, health care, education and public recreation facilities, all of which are in short supply. In the 1980s immigrants numbered about 100,000 a year. Their number has since increased steadily and will be 400,000 in 2023.
- Freedom of speech is essential to the functioning of liberal democracies but in recent years has become more and more restricted. Codes of political correctness dominate conversations in universities and on the pages of popular media. Violators of these codes are “cancelled” by self-appointed guardians, usually without the opportunity for self-defence.
- In the past, the main role of governments has been to create equal opportunities for success in life but now, increasingly, it is to equalize outcomes. In trying to do so, governments impose taxes and regulations that severely distort incentives to work, save, invest, take risks, and own property. Such policies not only decrease economic growth but are considered by many to be unfair.
- Another important aspect of this redistribution policy that many Canadians regard as unfair involves regulations requiring employers to give various forms of hiring preference to women and people from visible minorities even if other Canadians have the same qualifications, skills and work habits.
- In the past, the public could hold politicians accountable for the environmental and social policies they create. Now, under the new ESG system such policies will be made by businesses without the traditional accountability to the public.
- Canada’s federal government has promised to design policies consistent with “Great Reset” and “Build Back Better” paradigms for organizing the economy and society, creating worry that democratic, free-market capitalism increasingly will give way to government planning and massive redistribution of income.

Space does not permit the listing here of more of the many government policies that make many Canadians unhappy. But every year scholars construct the Economic Freedom Index, which measures a wide range of policies that affect happiness. They do so under the headings of: countries’ size of government; characteristics of the legal system and security of property rights; sound money; freedom to trade internationally; and regulation.

As it turns out, level of economic freedom is highly correlated with the level and growth of their per capita income, life expectancy and other important indicators of economic and social well-being, which in turn seem likely to determine happiness. By this measure, Canadians have not done well recently. The country’s ranking has fallen from seventh in the world in 2012 to 14th place in 2021.

A study by the OECD indicates what lies ahead. It forecasts that the growth in Canada’s per capita income in the year 2030 will be the lowest among all members of the OECD. Happiness is almost certain to follow the same trajectory unless we see a wholesale reversal of the damaging government policies of the recent past.
What Future Does Victimology Have As A Social Science?*

By Ezzat A. Fattah

Do civilization and humanization inevitably lead to more victimization?

The answer to this perplexing question is definitely YES!

The more advanced a society is on the civilization and humanization scales, the higher its recorded victimization will be and the more pressing will be its need to address the problem and to do something about it.

As paradoxical as this statement may seem, it is quite understandable. The steady progression towards a more civilized and more humane society continuously requires a broadening of the definition of victimization, its types, categories and forms. This inevitably leads to the identification and addition of previously acceptable or tolerated behaviours to existing lists of victimizing acts. Not only this, but as society moves forward on the path of humanity, the awareness of hidden and not too hidden types of victimization is enhanced and the recognition of subtle kinds and forms of victimizing behaviors is sharpened. Growing humanitarianism also leads to a heightened awareness of the pervasiveness, the extent and seriousness of various types of victimization. Humanitarianism further generates an enhanced sensitivity to the pain and suffering of various types of victims whose plight was previously unacknowledged, belittled or ignored. This is bound to result in commendable intensive efforts to identify, help and protect hidden, predisposed and vulnerable victims. It also leads to a much deeper understanding of the close link between victimization and offending and the interchangeable roles of victim and victimizer. And as Victimology has amply shown, in advanced societies the major part of violence is not predatory but retaliatory in nature.

Growing humanitarianism
also leads to a heightened awareness of the pervasiveness, the extent and seriousness of various types of victimization.

Future societies will have even greater need for Victimology than present ones as they will be conflict stricken, strife ridden and rife with victimization.

Let me make a pessimistic, though realistic, forecast about the society of tomorrow. There are compelling reasons to predict that it will be torn by conflict and rife with victimization.

If what people witness now, if what we watch daily in the news, is any indication of what societies in the future will be like, there is unfortunately little reason for optimism. Genocide, which we thought was a phenomenon of an uncivilized world, is still perpetrated. The condemned practice of child labour is rampant in developing countries. Persistent global attempts to prevent the despicable practice of human trafficking have not been successful. Oppression, suppression, extra-judicial killings, mass disappearances, liquidation of political foes, rivals and opponents are regular features of many world regimes. Police killings of, and police brutality against, members of minority groups, against dissidents and protestors, have become first page news following publicized incidents in different parts of the world. Mass shootings in the most advanced society in the world are a daily occurrence. Hate crimes are commonplace. Racism, misogyny, antisemitism, islamophobia, homophobia, and so on are deeply rooted in many cultures and have proven to be resistant to eradication even to change. The victimization of minorities be they ethnic, religious, cultural or sexual minorities, continues unabated, even in some of the most democratic and most prosperous societies. Advanced technologies have resulted in new forms of victimization and many more new types will inevitably come into being and claim as victims millions of daily users. The aging of some societies, Canada among them, has created a group of citizens who are particularly vulnerable to victimizations of various kinds. The Corona pandemic, of which they became the primary victims, revealed to an unsuspecting world the victimizing and dehumanizing conditions in which they were living, even in the richest countries on earth.

Sadly, The Utopian Dream of a Peaceful, Harmonious, Egalitarian, and Just Society has not Materialized
The overly optimistic and positive predictions suggesting that humans have matured, that civilization has reached its zenith and that the 21st century will be a century of peace, justice and love, have not materialized. In fact they were proven to be no more than wishful thinking. So the ideal of a non-violent, harmonious, egalitarian and just society sadly remains an elusive utopian dream. The rather optimistic expectation that once a certain degree of civilization is reached, humanity will triumph and love will replace hate, compassion will supersede cruelty and friendliness will prevail over animosity, evaporated like morning dew under the rising sun. To the surprise of many, the world seems more troubled and in greater turmoil now than it has been in the past several decades.

So what does the future hold? History tells us that the more competitive a society, the more conflicts are generated among its members and the more disputes are likely to occur within that society. Today’s society is a highly competitive one and tomorrow’s society is likely to be even more so. The ever growing scarcity of natural resources creates a social and economic environment where only the most fit can survive. Divisive issues such as climate change, the use of fossil fuels, immigration, inequality, to mention but a few, will continue to cause major rifts, discords and frictions. Religious schisms will likely escalate. Mounting antagonism and animosity are bound to lead to hostility, strife and clashes between opposing factions. We all saw what happened on January 6, 2021 at the Capitol in Washington, D.C. Friction, enmity and acrimony will create a fertile terrain for victimization of all kinds. Political polarization will intensify conflicts and the risk of civil strife, even civil wars becomes ever greater.

All this is bound to generate a pressing and strongly felt need for the social science of Victimology.

In Tomorrow’s Society Victimology Will Have a Major Role To Play and May Eventually Become the Social Science of The Time

Despite major and frequent setbacks in various parts of the world, despite failures and disappointments, the quest for justice and the struggle for freedom and equality continue unabated. The intensity and speed of the march towards those ideals vary from one country to the next. Once a society has reached a high degree of egalitarianism and humanitarianism and once it has achieved a reasonable level of progress and prosperity, victimization is likely to become the primary social concern. All forces and resources will be geared towards the prevention of various types of victimization, including: racial, ethnic, violent, sexual, economic, and cyber. In democratic societies the quest for justice and equality will flourish and intensify. In autocratic and authoritarian societies the struggle and mobilization will be geared to fight victimization by the state and to have democracy established or restored. It is fair to predict that in tomorrow’s society, preventing victimization, reducing its incidence, alleviating its traumatic consequences and helping victims recover and become whole again will be the primary mission and central focus of those who hold the strings of power and who are responsible for the well-being, safety, security and peaceful co-existence of the citizens.

This will create a pressing need, an urgent demand for objective, unbiased and independent scholarly research that studies and analyzes the victimization phenomenon, its extent, its manifestations, its contexts, its protagonists, as well as the ways and means of preventing it, reducing its incidence and alleviating its impact. Victimology becomes the social science par excellence. More than any other discipline, it has the potential of providing empirical factual data on, and credible measurements of, victimization and to offer evidence-based solutions. In the conflict ridden society of tomorrow, Victimology will be called upon to play a primary role similar to the one medicine was asked to perform when the Corona pandemic struck. All indicators suggest that the need for Victimology will become more evident and more pressing than it is right now. Victimology, I believe, will gain in importance and stature and will be constantly appealed to and called upon to provide not only valuable and much needed information but also answers, explanations and potential solutions.
In the multi racial, multicultural, multi religion, multi class society in which we live, conflicts and frictions are common and hard to avoid. Peace and harmony are not easy to achieve. At the risk of stating the obvious, let me conclude this brief futuristic essay by saying this: it is as impossible to legislate love as it is to outlaw hate. The most we could do as responsible citizens is to condemn strongly, monitor and try by democratic means to prevent violence of all types, regardless of what the motivation is: predatory, retaliatory, political, racial, religious, sexual, economic or hate-motivated. Although the means to achieve such prevention has differed, this has always been the primary goal of social reformers. For millennia societies’ policy to prevent victimizing behaviors was to inflict harsh punitive sanctions which achieved little or no success. Restorative justice has shown that a more effective means of changing people’s behavior is to appeal to their human instincts and to sensitize them to the pain and suffering their behavior causes to fellow humans. This is precisely the humanitarian message that Victimology teaches and preaches. Compassion is not inborn, it is learned, and needs perpetual nurture and reinforcement. In an attempt to inculcate a better understanding and sharper sensitivity in the minds of the young, it is not inconceivable that Victimology courses may, in the not too distant future, be made a compulsory subject, not just at the college or university levels but in school curricula as well.

This will signal the arrival of the golden age of Victimology! It will show what a long and bumpy way it has traveled since I introduced it to the academic world in the 1960s!

* Criticisms of all kinds as well as contradictory views are welcome*

References:


Haiku Challenge:
A Morning at the Ophthalmology Clinic

/ Jared Curtis

Yellow tape on wrist
announces I am pre-screened
for COVID-19.

“Please wear your mask at
all times unless you are asked
to remove it. Thanks.”

A scale on the floor
invites me to weigh myself—
I refuse to bite.

“Ayes have it” is said
when a motion succeeds—
Eyes fail over time.

From Parkcrest to 10 Downing Street

Betty Chung sent this in: Here’s the picture from my daughter’s photo album. It’s much clearer than what is in social media! Liz Truss is in pink, second row standing, second child from left.

Another of her classmates, Brenda Tarling (now Montagano), who is now an elementary school teacher at Parkcrest herself, was shown on Global TV saying that their teacher for that year, Mr. Bill Chambers, probably had a lot to do with why Liz said that her one year in Canada changed her outlook on life. Brenda said he “..made every student feel important and special, and helped them figure out what their passions and interests were and helped them grow in those areas...” I totally agree with her. Kudos to all the amazing teachers out there!
In May, Leora says “Let’s join our friends for a bike week in Riccione, Italy.” I reply “OK, but three days prior in Bologna would also be great. You know, we could include Switzerland.” (where Leora has been supervising a number of colleagues).

Our conversation blossomed:
“Sure, but you’ve always wanted to see Prague, and there’s a Road Scholar trip that would fit.” “Nice but maybe we could also find time to go to Portugal.” (for Leora to conduct some workshops in Lisbon). So what was planned for ten days became five weeks.

Now here I sit, contemplating the trip so far, on the balcony of our hotel in Lisbon overlooking the boat traffic on the Tagus river, and the Tower of Belém from which sailed the galleons of the Portuguese explorers and exploiters. The departure from Vancouver was surprisingly easy, not needing the four hours we had set aside to check in. No customs/immigration check in Milan; only a flash of our passport as we transferred to a Prague flight. No customs/immigration there, either. I could have brought the CBD oil after all! And buses and trams are free in Prague for seniors, so, no cost or hassle to get to our hotel. Prague is lovely…the old city and Jewish quarter are very walkable.

For those not familiar with Road Scholar, it is the reincarnation of the old Elder Hostel program. This was our second trip with them and we highly recommend their programs. Sixty of us, mostly retired academics, accompanied by three guides spent three days in Prague, then by bus to Passau in Bavaria, then by boat down the Danube to Budapest. In addition to the usual tours of palaces and cathedrals we, on our own, went to the Black Light Theatre of Prague, the Museum of Illusions in Vienna, and the new, wonderful Museum of Music in Budapest.

Thence by train to Zurich to stay with our friends in Morschach. Rain and cool, but the highlight of our time in Switzerland was a visit to the Einsiedeln Abbey where I could feel the spirit of friar William of Baskerville and the novice Adso of Melk as we were taken through the stables and workshops of the stonemasons and ironmongers, and finally to hear the monks in full voice praising the putti.

Rain and cool in Switzerland, but as soon as our train to Milan passed through the Gotthard Tunnel it was warm and sunny in Italy. I can now understand the enthusiasm of the northern artists who discovered the light of the Mediterranean countries. Contrast van Gogh with Rembrandt. From there to Lisbon, and a three-day stay with friends in the Alentejo countryside near the Spanish border, in an old railway station repurposed as a B & B. My great treat, as I lived in railway stations in my early years. This is the poorest area of Portugal where the communists were strongest and smuggling was the chief source of income. The border station closed when Portugal joined the EU and passport/customs controls were no longer required and smugglers went out of business.

As an aside, for climate change skeptics, our host in Budapest said Hungary is experiencing its driest period in 100 years, and the well of our hosts in Alentejo has no water this year for the first time in living memory. Perhaps the polar bears are thriving but the European farmers are not.

Now in Lisbon, biking in Italy is yet to come. Fellow retirees, cabin fever is bad for your health. Covid is relatively conquered and the Canadian dollar is high against both the Euro and the Pound, if you could contemplate living under Liz Truss and Charles the Third. So, gather ye rosebuds while ye may, Old Time is still a-flying.
Time Is

/ Jared Curtis

In each agenda for the committee that deals with building matters, mention is always made of installing a clock in Dolce Vita Bistro.

Meeting monthly, the committee never fails to discuss this need under new or old business for a clock on the wall for patrons to consult.

Whether time is of interest or not to patrons or staff, the clock is conspicuous by its timeless absence, elusive to wandering eyes among diners or drinkers of tea.

One often hears it said there, “Have you got the time?” “I must go now,” or “It’s getting late,” and once more the clock is earnestly requested of the committee chair, reappears in the agenda, is brought up, chewed over, recorded by the secretary in committee minutes, and duly moved to “Old Business” on the next agenda.

Madame Chair: Please add to the agenda for your meeting a proposal to establish a rota of willing members to appear each hour and on the half-hour between eight and five at the front door of the Bistro and call out the time, “Time is now nine am,” …or “It is noon,” …or “Two-thirty pm” until closing hour, then, more loudly, “Hurry up, please, it’s time.”

Jared Curtis
A few necessary words on Ukraine:

Many analysts say it began in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea and sent troops to the Russia-loyal areas of Donetsk and Luhansk; when the US-funded “Maidan” protest erupted, replacing pro-Russian President Yanukovich with the nationalistic, Europe-oriented Poroshenko, who sent troops into the Donbas; he would be defeated by Zelinsky in 2019. My theory is that it goes back a century earlier, maybe not to 1914 but definitely to 1917, when Russia became the Soviet Union. American capital has always wanted in to Russia, and why not? So rich in resources, so undeveloped! In the 1890s, the famous Trans-Siberian Railway was built with help from American financiers and industrialists. When the Bolshevists made Russia less exploitable, many countries, including Canada, sent armies to overthrow the new government, supporting counter-revolutionary Whites in the civil war against the Red Army of workers and peasants, founded and commanded by Leon Trotsky. The US didn’t recognize the SU until 1933. When in 1991-2 the SU became Russia once again, no longer a planned socialist economy but capitalist, and suffering a deep economic crisis, American economists urged the US government to help out; they were ignored in the interest of “unipolarity” and world dominance. In short, we have a proxy war: behind Ukraine: NATO and the US, behind Russia: China (politically, not militarily). A very profitable war, too: With the US economy declining and China’s ascendant, anti-Russian sanctions benefit North American energy producers and armaments manufacture. The US will fight to the last Ukrainian!

The invasion of Ukraine, while evidently a bad move for all parties, was not—as proclaimed by western propaganda—unprovoked. It was provoked by NATO encirclement of Russia, and aggressive expansion far beyond its original defensive and geographical mandate, in violation of treaties promising to avoid eastward expansion. NATO’s will to recruit went so far as to fund several impoverished countries for the weaponry needed to meet NATO’s requirements! Remember the Cuban missile crisis, when a few Soviet missiles in Cuba—“only 90 miles from our shores!”-- caused national panic in the US, with threats of invading Cuba and pre-emptive nuclear strike. The crisis was resolved by a secret deal: the Soviet missiles were removed from Cuba, and the US removed its missiles from Turkey on the USSR border. Given the history of US aggression internationally, Russia is right to be worried.

Some think that because Zelensky comes from a (non-observant) Jewish family, there can be no neo-Nazism in Ukraine. In fact, there are numerous ultra-nationalist, white-supremacist, anti-Semitic neo-Nazi organizations in Ukraine both in and out of government, some military, some not. Neo-Nazi groups led the 2014 “Maidan” protest. Members of the infamous and overtly pro-Nazi Azov organization attended the January 6 attack on the US capitol.

Zelensky is no angel, contrary to the relentless portrayal of him in western media. It is surreal to watch actor Zelensky as Ukrainian president Goloborodko—a skirt-chasing, self-righteous “homme moyen sensuel”—in his TV show, “Servant of the People”, produced by the company Zelensky owns, and then to watch real Zelensky as Ukrainian president and leader of the “Servant of the People” party that he founded, demanding more weaponry to prolong the war that is devastating his country and his population. Some in Ukraine uncharitably suggest that the show was started with a view to Zelensky’s run for president: an ongoing political ad before and during his tenure. The show is a gold-mine: a feature film happening, sales to Netflix and other international platforms. Zelensky maintains relations with many oligarchs satirized in the show; like politicians before him, also satirized in the show, he brought business cronies along to help him govern. Besides being a media mogul (by Ukrainian standards), he has various appurtenances of office: an Italian villa, real-estate holdings, etc. His wife’s controversial covers and photo spreads for Vogue (twice) aren’t necessarily offensive, but maybe symptomatic.

As to governance, Zelensky has badly mishandled the issue of a binational state. Despite promises to allow a referendum on autonomy in the Donbas regions, this did not happen and he now opposes the idea. He promised and was mandated...
As everyone - and by that I do mean everyone - knows by now, Queen Elizabeth II, aged 96, died at Balmoral Castle, Scotland on Thursday September 8th 2022. She was the longest-lived monarch ever to rule the United Kingdom and its various previous iterations, and during her reign, was part of and witness to numerous changes in what was once the British Empire, including Canada creating its own flag in 1965 and repatriating its Constitution in 1982. The next logical step in the glacially slow process of growing up as a fully realized democratic nation is for Canada’s parliament and provincial legislatures to abolish the monarchy.

Litres and litres of ink have been spilled over the past week as news outlets from everywhere - and by that I do mean everywhere - have piled into London, Edinburgh and the village near Balmoral, hiring royal ‘experts’ to provide colour commentary on everything from the fate of the corgis, to the provenance of the jewelry (there’s so much of it that the overview will be interminable) to speculation about how King Charles III will do and if, even at home, republican feeling might be stirred by his ascension; he is, most agree, a less sympathetic figure than was his mother. As for the former colonies, most of them are already republics, notably India, Pakistan and the Republic of South Africa, and most of those remain in the Commonwealth. While Australian republicans lost a plebiscite 20 years ago, the sentiment has not retreated. Barbados became a republic earlier this year, and a visit to the Caribbean by the now Prince and Princess of Wales apparently backfired, fuelling republican impulses throughout the region. Clearly, the people of former colonies who paid the price of over three hundred years of human suffering have cleared the path. They have replaced the constitutional monarch of a foreign nation with heads of state of their own choosing.

As I write (early September), a Washington Post interview with Zelensky reveals that although warned by several intelligence agencies, including his own, of the looming Russian invasion, he hid the news from his population, concerned— he says—that if they knew, they would panic, flee the country, empty their bank accounts and ruin the economy. Thus, when the invasion occurred, Ukrainians were surprised, shocked—and unprepared. Ukrainian press is, of course, horrified and it remains to be seen what becomes of our hero.

For a list of my resources for this article, please contact me privately at sdelany@sfu.ca ✤

The Queen Is Dead. Long Live A Republic.

By Marcia Toms

As everyone - and by that I do mean everyone - knows by now, Queen Elizabeth II, aged 96, died at Balmoral Castle, Scotland on Thursday September 8th 2022. She was the longest-lived monarch ever to rule the United Kingdom and its various previous iterations, and during her reign, was part of and witness to numerous changes in what was once the British Empire, including Canada creating its own flag in 1965 and repatriating its Constitution in 1982. The next logical step in the glacially slow process of growing up as a fully realized democratic nation is for Canada’s parliament and provincial legislatures to abolish the monarchy.

Litres and litres of ink have been spilled over the past week as news outlets from everywhere -and by that I do mean everywhere - have piled into London, Edinburgh and the village near Balmoral, hiring royal ‘experts’ to provide colour commentary on everything from the fate of the corgis, to the provenance of the jewelry (there’s so much of it that the overview will be interminable) to speculation about how King Charles III will do and if, even at home, republican feeling might be stirred by his ascension; he is, most agree, a less sympathetic figure than was his mother. As for the former colonies, most of them are already republics, notably India, Pakistan and the Republic of South Africa, and most of those remain in the Commonwealth. While Australian republicans lost a plebiscite 20 years ago, the sentiment has not retreated. Barbados became a republic earlier this year, and a visit to the Caribbean by the now Prince and Princess of Wales apparently backfired, fuelling republican impulses throughout the region. Clearly, the people of former colonies who paid the price of over three hundred years of human suffering have cleared the path. They have replaced the constitutional monarch of a foreign nation with heads of state of their own choosing.

It might seem that running the UK without a monarch, even a constitutional one, is a novel idea, one that rarely pops up and is scotched immediately. That is not so; attempts to do so are threaded throughout British history. Revolts, wars and civil unrest dogged monarchs for hundreds and hundreds of years. And even when the monarch was not specifically in the crosshairs, attempts to reform society to make it more equitable, share the land and its wealth, undermine the aristocracy, and advance the franchise have their roots firmly planted in the Islands’ soil. Canadians can learn much from that history.

In 1215, the English barons forced King John I to sign the Magna Carta. He was a haughty and incompetent character,
aided by the Snidely Whiplash-like Sheriff of Nottingham if 1950s television and Richard Green playing Robin Hood are to be believed. And that’s how it started, at least officially. More than a century later, in 1381, worn out by disease, as those were the first Plague Years, and taxes they could not pay, the peasants revolted. Led by priest John Ball and the legendary Walter (Wat) Tyler, they demanded higher wages, social equality and an end to the poll tax, the revenue from which would be wasted on a long war with France. King Richard II, a fractious teenager, was especially annoyed by that last demand. The rebellion was short lived and, as was the custom, the rebel leaders were tried, convicted, hanged, drawn and quartered. Even so, anti-poll tax riots persisted as did attempts to curb the monarchy’s power. In the mid 16th century, Norfolk peasants rose up in the Ket Rebellion and in 1605, 2 years after the end of Elizabeth I’s reign (an orgy of highly profitable colonial successes), the Gunpowder Plot rattled the status quo. By 1642 the first Charles, determined to rule by Divine Right and collect even more taxes, annoyed parliament so much that he set in motion three consecutive civil wars. It’s a convoluted tale, but by 1649 parliament gained the upper hand, arrested Charles for treason, and relieved him of his head. It would have been a more difficult task had he been wearing his wig.

The civil wars left a legacy of religious dissenters, nascent utopian socialists, agrarian reformers and those determined to stem aristocratic power. Among them were Diggers (also known as True Levellers), Levellers and Agitators. And even though the monarchy was restored in 1660, after 11 years of two Lord Protectors ruling The Commonwealth, the impetus to have parliament, not the monarch, be the kingdom’s supreme authority gained ground, resulting in The Glorious Revolution of 1688. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries movements to ‘turn the world upside down’ grew with significant impact in the realm of ideas, and incremental reforms in political life. Still the monarchy prevailed, even during Queen Victoria’s long tenure when barbed criticism appeared regularly in the press, pundits often calling for an end to a system that bestowed unearned wealth on unwanted rulers.

Yet after all of that, and a few sharp bullets in the 20th century, from the abdication of King Edward the Dim, to Queen Elizabeth’s horrible year, to botching the first days of mourning for Diana the former Princess of Wales, it seems that The Crown is secure in the UK. At least for the moment. Quite frankly, I don’t get it. So, let’s learn from those who wanted to “stand up for glory” and turn the world upside down for the common good. Before complacency sets in, Canadians should seize this opportunity to examine the archaic, infantile and undemocratic tradition of tolerating a foreign monarch as our Head of State, and thus symbolizing Canadian identity and sovereignty. The irony of the latter should be lost on no one. Ours is an identity that, consistent with the ever-evolving reality of governance, is malleable. The fiction of ‘two founding nations’ has been dispelled and we are better for it. We gained the right to make our own foreign policy in 1932, and after 90 years ought to get on with creating our own way of signalling our identity as a democratic state. We don’t need a monarch of any kind to help us do it.

NB. For the record, every one of my great grandparents was born in the UK: two in Dorset, four in London and two in Ayrshire, southwest Scotland. Three of my grandparents also started their lives there, and both grandmothers were reluctant sojourners in Canada, neither thinking they were going to stay very long. My Scottish granny was a Presbyterian Jacobite. I was almost a teenager before I realized that Bonnie Prince Charlie had died over 100 years before Granny was born. As an adult, I was not impressed.

Memories
By Hillary Jones

I was 10 years old, in the last year of primary school in England, and all exams were behind me. The last few months of school were spent listening to our teacher read some of the classics of English literature to us, while we, the pupils, were allowed to knit, or sew, or draw, or paint. This embroidery sampler was made available by the “Girl” comic paper, and my best friend and I each sat and embroidered while listening to the stories. My mother had the sampler framed and I still have it today.
IT’S ALL ABOUT YOU

Evelyn Palmer

Fish Tales, Books Sales, and More

Congratulations and Happy Birthdays to the newest members of Club 85, Charles Crawford, Len Evenden, Bob Horsfall, Jock Munro, Michael Roberts and Vish Viswanathan.

We are honouring those SFURA members who are 85 or will be 85 in the next membership year, September 2022-September 2023. If you qualify, please let me know if you have not already done so. We have about 68 members in club 85, which I think is pretty remarkable. We were Depression Babies, maybe that toughened us up for life.

Congratulations to Jill Mandrake who has recently had a poetry chapbook published. A chapbook is a small paperback booklet, typically containing poems or fiction. The title is Goodbye Star Cinema Time, and the link to its trailer on Vimeo is: https://vimeo.com/742454426. The chapbook is sold at The People’s Co-op Bookstore, 1391 Commercial Drive in Vancouver.

Sheila Delany writes: --My 1994 book with U of California Press, The Naked Text. Chaucer’s Legend of Good Women, has been reissued in paperback and hardcover in their Voices Revived series, which the press describes as designed “to seek out and cultivate the brightest minds and give them voice, reach and impact.”

--This past May I did an interview, “Being a Marxist medievalist” with the Marxist Studies group at York University, available online at https://marxiststudies.blog.yorku.ca/york-left-consortium-theory-and-practice/ , and in print (forthcoming) in Class, Race, and Corporate Power.

And our most prolific author, Selma Wassermann, has done it again! Her most recent book is Conversations and the Human Experience: A Self-Instructional Program to Improve How We Talk to Each Other. The Kindle edition was published in July and the hard cover and paperback books will be released on November 12, 2022, available from Amazon.ca. We now have 12 titles of Selma’s, plus dozens more from our author retirees on the SFURA website at: http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/Books_By_Retirees.html

We know that Marilyn Bowman paints, writes, travels and can open the toughest jars, and now we can believe her fish stories. She caught a 7 pound coho salmon in Alaska in early September after a good fight with it. Due to customs regulations she could not bring it back to BC, so she gave it to Captain Dave and his helper.
A Story Of Summer 2022

By Len Berggren

At the beginning of June it looked as if my wife Tasoula and I had the summer pretty well planned. In mid-August we would fly to the annual meeting of the North American Sundial Society, this year in Nashville where I was giving a talk, and from Nashville we would fly to Cyprus on August 15. There, we would spend two months enjoying family, friends, beautiful beaches, and classical ruins. We purchased our air tickets, notified our family and all was ready.

But, as Robbie Burns wrote, “...the best laid plans of mice and men...” Early in July we received word from the Cyprus High Commission in Ottawa that the government of Tasoula’s native country, Cyprus, wanted to honour her with a gold medal and certificate for “Lifetime Achievement.” The award was to be presented by the President in the Presidential Palace in Nicosia, but on July 28!

After many calls, we rebooked Tasoula’s tickets to fly directly to Cyprus from Vancouver in time for her to receive the award while I stayed in Vancouver and followed the original plan, flying to Cyprus via Nashville.

Although I was sorry to have missed a fine ceremony in Cyprus, my time in Nashville allowed me to visit the full-size, fully restored, replica of the Parthenon in Nashville’s Centennial Park. It was restored by a team of experts and houses a 44 foot statue of Athena robed in garments of gold and holding in the palm of her hand a 6 foot high statue of Nike.

Although the Scottish bard correctly wrote that best laid plans “Gang aft agley,” in this case the plans that went awry also led to some wonderful memories.

Elevator Greetings in Covid Times

/Jared Curtis

How are you, someone says, with stress on ARE, expecting a reply like, Oh, you know, or, Hanging in, or, blandly, Fine, or just OK, with falling accent landing on the K,

as if to say, I’d tell you more but more is too depressing. I say, I am GREAT, because I am, I’m happy, full of love, and more than tickled to be loved right back.

Eyes widened, eyebrows raised, they smile at the absurdity of such a claim. Oh, right, I say, Am I supposed to lay my hand upon my brow, and pause,

then mutter, do you really want to know?... Arrived, we exit laughing at the show
In Memoriam

We ask any of you who have further information about any deceased SFU retirees to submit obituaries to the SFURA Webmaster on the link provided on our website at: https://www.sfu.ca/retirees/in-memoriam/a_g.html. We post names of all deceased SFU retirees whom we are aware, not only those who were SFURA members. We welcome tributes to your former colleagues. We will place them with their obituaries on the website.

Diane Kirchner passed away on July 8, 2022 at 85 years of age predeceased by her husband Glenn Kirchner whom she met while both were teaching at SFU. She was an environmentalist and enjoyed cooking and gardening. She especially loved her dogs and a lovely photo of her and her dogs is shown with her obituary at: https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/retirees/memoriam/2022/DianeKirchner.pdf

Economist Jack Knetsch passed away at age 89 on August 5, 2022. Jack was a Professor in SFU’s Economics Department and the School of Resource and Environmental Management from 1974 to 1998 when he retired. He was especially known for his contributions in experimental economics research. Read his obituary and many tributes from his friends and colleagues at: https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/retirees/memoriam/2022/Knetsch_OBIT.pdf

John Lowman was hired as an Assistant Professor of Criminology at SFU in 1983. He died on June 23, 2022 at age 72. He retired from SFU in 2015. He was committed to the role of “public academic”, the idea that professors have the obligation to share the results of their research with the broader community. He was a photographer of birds and marine mammals and his book about the ecological recovery of the Salish Sea will be published posthumously by Rocky Mountain Books in 2023. See his obituary at: https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/retirees/memoriam/2022/Lowman_Obit.pdf

Archie MacKinnon came to SFU in 1965 as the first Dean of the Faculty of Education. His plan was to build a new teacher education program that was upside down from anything in existence elsewhere; putting students out into schools in their first semester. John Ellis actually implemented these ideas and Jack Paterson persuaded reluctant school superintendents to accept our students. [Notes from Selma Wassermann]

A few years later Archie moved to Ottawa to work with the Canadian International Development Agency (Ottawa) and later to the University of Guelph. He was prominent in education internationally with UNESCO, CIDA, and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC). He was a Founding Member of the International Education Reporting Service (Geneva). He died June 23, 2022 at age 95. See his obituary on the SFURA In Memoriam website at: https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/retirees/memoriam/2022/MacKinnon_obit22.pdf

Joe Segal, a prominent Vancouver businessman, was on SFU’s Board of Governors for six years and served as Chancellor for another six years. He was instrumental in establishing the nine sites of SFU’s Downtown campuses, including the Segal Graduate School of Business and the Morris J. Wosk Centre for Dialogue – both Vancouver heritage buildings. He fought in World War II with the Calgary Highlanders, then came to Vancouver to live. He died in June at the age of 97. Read about his life and his generosity on our website in articles by Vancouver Sun Reporter John Mackie and SFU President Emeritus Jack Blaney at: https://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/retirees/memoriam/2022/JoeSegal_OBIT.pdf
Ouch-less Brain Stimulation

Most of our understanding of the human brain initially came from studying brain injuries and diseases. In the 1950s, Wilder Penfield and colleagues at the Montreal Neurological Institute mapped the human brain during surgery by electrically stimulating different areas of the exposed surface of the brain with small currents. Though important, this technique of stimulating the brain was insufficient to study a normal functioning brain in healthy humans. Radical new technologies were needed for the purpose of understanding an intact functioning brain. In addition to the need to understand the human brain, a number of human ailments such as chronic pain, epilepsy, headaches, memory loss and depression also required development of medicines and electrical stimulation technologies to treat these conditions. Research has led to machines to record brain activity, image the brain while it is awake and functioning, and stimulate the brain in normal unanesthetized humans. Only the techniques of brain stimulation will be discussed below.

Historically, electrical stimulation in humans has been carried on for millennia, even before we knew anything about electricity itself. Torpedo fish and electric catfish have electrical organs, similar to batteries, which can generate electric shocks of up to 400 Volts; these shocks are used to numb the prey. Around 3000 BCE, the Egyptians used electrical shocks from torpedo fish to treat arthritic pain and head afflictions, and later in the 1st century CE Romans used torpedo fish to treat headaches. In the 11th century CE, Ibn-Sidah used shocks from electric fish to treat epilepsy. Other than these few anecdotes, however, there are no systematic studies until we come to the nineteenth century and read about the much feared Electro-Convulsive Therapy (ECT). The very mention of brain stimulation evokes horrible images of ECT shown in the movie One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest.

ECT is used in cases of severe depression, which for a variety of reasons, can no longer be treated with medications. The main aim of ECT is to induce a seizure in the brain. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, clinicians didn’t care about optimal positioning of the electrodes; the dosage of the electric shock applied to the electrodes placed on the scalp was considered irrelevant, just as long as it caused a seizure. Unfortunately, side-effects from the electric shock included painful muscle contractions, nausea, brain fog, and confusion. The good news is that the properties of the shocks used have improved since the 1980s, as has patient management. Application of ECT now includes the use of muscle relaxants and anesthetic, and monitoring of a patient’s vital signs before, during and after induction of the seizure.

In spite of all these improvements, receiving ECT continues to be a highly unpleasant experience overall, and long term application has been proven to cause damage to memory and other brain systems. Furthermore, the technique is useful to treat only a few disorders of the brain; it is not helpful in any way to understand normal functions of the brain.

Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS): In early 1980s, scientists at the University of Sheffield, UK, came up with a relatively painless stimulation device that relied upon Faraday’s principle of electromagnetic induction. Faraday (1831) showed that if you pass a time varying current (AC) in a coil it induces current in a nearby coil, without any physical contact between the coils. The first coil is called the primary coil, while the nearby coil in which new current is induced is called the secondary coil. How does current in the primary coil produce current in the secondary coil without the two touching each other? Well, the fast-varying current in the primary coil produces a fast varying magnetic field around the primary coil. If the secondary coil is placed within this magnetic field, the time-varying magnetic field produces (induces) current in the secondary coil. The faster the change in current in the primary coil, the larger is the current in the secondary coil.
Now imagine a primary coil carrying a rapidly varying current placed near the scalp. In this case the secondary coil is not a metal coil but the brain itself. It turns out that brain tissue is a good conductor of electricity, and hence acts as a good secondary coil. Current in the primary coil (controlled by the experimenter) produces a magnetic field which passes through the skull without producing any sensation. The spread of the magnetic field through the skull is efficient and painless! This time varying magnetic field induces current in the brain tissue, thus exciting neurons in the targeted area of the brain. A normal AC current at 60 Hertz in our homes, though time varying, does not produce effective magnetic fields, in part because the current does not vary quickly enough. So the big technological challenge was to produce extremely fast changing electric currents in the primary coil in order to produce effective currents in the brain, which will excite neurons in the target area. Once this goal was achieved, TMS machines were used all over the world to study the human brain under normal healthy conditions with no pain or side effects. This type of testing is not completely benign, as stronger intensities needed to test deeper regions of the brain can cause pretty strong contractions of muscles in the face and neck, effects that some people can find are unpleasant.

The FDA has approved repetitive TMS for the treatment of depression. Treatment occurs for about an hour, for several days in a row, in a doctor’s office or clinic. Compared with ECT, TMS treatment does not require any patient preparation, anesthesia or muscle relaxants. The patient can walk off and go home after the last stimulus is applied. While TMS has been shown to be effective for helping some patients with severe depression, attempts to use TMS for other brain disorders, such as PTSD, obsessive compulsive disorder, or schizophrenia, have been less successful.

**Transcranial Direct Current Stimulation (tDCS):** DC current pulses used in ECT have nasty side effects. A few earlier attempts to use weak DC currents to stimulate the brain didn’t go too far. Finally, in the early 21st century, tDCS re-emerged. Electrodes are placed on the scalp, weak DC currents, which are hardly perceptible to the subject, produce complex changes in the neurons and other supporting cells in the brain that are affected by the applied currents. These weak currents appear to strengthen the connections (synapses) between neurons. Though tDCS has not been approved by the FDA for clinical or brain enhancement applications, a lot of “do-it-yourself” instructions are available on the web for improving your brain using these devices, but clear scientific evidence supporting these claims is sorely lacking. There are muscle stimulators that are very effective in keeping muscles of your arms and legs strong, but similar machines used on the scalp for ‘strengthening’ the brain have – so far at least – not been shown to be effective.

**Transcranial Alternating Current Stimulation (tACS):** A biological neural network (circuit) is a collection of neurons that work together to perform a specific function. Each neural network has its own rhythm or oscillation frequency that could change with the state of the brain, that is, whether the brain is resting, sleeping, awake, anesthetized or having an epileptic seizure. No neural network works on its own; integration of information in the brain depends on how efficiently various neural networks work together. It seems our memory is affected when various networks do not collaborate. In order to enhance network collaboration, one can stimulate a neural network(s) at a particular frequency, with very small imperceptible alternating currents applied to the scalp of a healthy human subject. The use of this technique has claimed to improve short term memory in older adults. A recent study to this effect has been making headlines in the news media: “New 20-minute non-invasive treatment could reverse memory loss…” says CTV news (August 2022).

**Conclusion:** What have these painless transcranial stimulation machines done for us? Mostly, they are safe; but being safe does not necessarily mean they are effective. If we were to listen to the news media, these machines have achieved a eureka moment for enhancing brain performance. One must remember, though, that the media are in the entertainment business, and need your attention. One way to achieve that is to over-sell new findings .... to be a little too enthusiastic. Claims that children can learn math by using tDCS, and that it can improve focus, motor function, and learning are all out there, just a few clicks away. At the moment tACS is being sold by the press as a way to improve memory in older adults with dementia. At this stage we don’t think the data support this conclusion, although they may be pointing us in the right direction.

The various forms of non-invasive brain stimulation described above can be used for pure academic research to understand the brain. They may also be useful for therapeutic purposes, for example to improve recovery after stroke or other brain injuries. What is inarguable is that these stimulation techniques have been successful in producing thousands of academic papers. Combined with brain imaging and brain recordings (EEG), brain stimulation has furthered our understanding of brain function. But we haven’t moved far in clinical and enhancement applications. To date, the FDA has approved TMS for treating depression, but no definitive studies have been put together for the approval of tDCS and tACS techniques. Although these machines are out there and can be purchased online, the data to support manufacturer claims of their effectiveness are shaky, at best, with limited controls over ethics and safety. ✡
The Wildlife Came As A Wonderful Surprise

By Ron Long

When I chose the building lot for our new house in 1985 it simply looked like a location that would be quiet with no close neighbours on three sides. At the back was a ravine filled with 100 year old second growth Douglas Fir and Cedar trees - a spectacular setting for the house.

The lot was too steep for a conventional yard so I landscaped it with native trees and shrubbery. I quickly discovered that I hated yard work and that soon resulted in a seriously over-grown lot.

And, as it turned out, that is perfect for wildlife.

For twenty years we regularly watched deer and coyotes from the windows but never saw bear. As the shrubbery grew I began to wonder why I wasn’t seeing more birds. I didn’t really know much about birds and concluded that the mature forest behind the house simply didn’t support many birds - boy, was that wrong.

One day in February I was amazed to see a hummingbird in the yard. That led to the thought that I should put up a hummingbird feeder to help the little guy through the winter. Very quickly the feeder was in constant use and being able to watch these tiny miracles close-up became a hugely enjoyable pastime. That was years ago and I still stop whatever I’m doing to watch a hummingbird at the feeder.

I began thinking about putting up feeders for other birds and soon I had rigged a metal post and a cross bar with a seed feeder hanging from each end. The supporting post sported a very clever, (so I thought) upside down, dollar-store waste basket which

Photo: Ron Long / Hungry Bear

Photo: Ron Long / Varied Thrush
prevented squirrels from raiding the feeders. The squirrels had no trouble climbing the pole but ended up inside the waste bucket and could get no farther.

I was exceedingly proud of my engineering masterpiece but, as they say, pride cometh before a fall. In this case it was the feeders that fell.

During the first night a bear leaned on the pole and bent it at right angles. This brought the feeders down to the ground where the bear cleaned up every last sunflower seed.

I had anticipated a problem with squirrels but now I had (literally) a much bigger problem. In order to get the feeders out of reach of the bears I mounted a 6x6 post that was 14 feet tall to the back of the house and ran a braided steel wire to a tree 50 feet away.

The birds began to show up - lots of birds and many different kinds. Soon our previously deserted yard was alive with movement. It's hard to describe how life-enhancing, for us, those birds are. At any time we can pause at a window and be entertained by the non stop activity. We have many beautiful local birds like the orange fronted Varied Thrush and the Blue Stellers jay.

Our feathered visitors included all four of the woodpeckers that occur on the coast and among them are the flicker and the magnificent, red crested, Pileated Woodpecker - the largest woodpecker in Canada.

When a hundred foot Douglas Fir died of drought I was required by the city to have it removed. I asked the tree cutters to leave the lower forty feet of the trunk for the woodpeckers. The Pileated Woodpeckers have enthusiastically taken to that tree and in a year and a half have chiseled almost entirely through the eighteen inch trunk.

During the frustrating travel restrictions due to Covid the birds provided an opportunity and an enjoyable challenge - how to achieve natural looking photographs of the birds coming to the feeders without showing the feeders?

Meeting that challenge provided many, many happy hours for me.
Hanging from the wire the feeders were safe from bears - for awhile. I had no problems for a couple of years - but then I bought a new feeder. This one was just two inches longer that the old feeder and that was just enough. A bear, standing on tippy toes, was just able to reach it. The strength of these animals is phenomenal and it broke the metal straps holding the pole and brought the whole thing crashing down - on top of my wife’s greenhouse.

The repair cost me two thousand dollars but I didn’t blame the bear - it was just trying to survive. It was my own stupid mistake that caused the problem.

But having bears in the backyard had great appeal for us. We were treated to unforgettable sights such as the bear sitting on its backside in front of a huckleberry bush raking in the berries with its claws. And the two little cubs splashing together in my small pond. Having the opportunity of seeing these magnificent glossy animals close up was a thrill but as enjoyable as watching them was I never let them linger for long.

As mentioned, for many years we saw no bears but the subdivisions relentlessly crept up the mountain. Natural bear habitat and feeding areas were destroyed and the bears were forced into built-up areas in their search for food. And that was conveniently supplied by literally careless residents who refused to keep garbage inside. Then they complain about bears in their yard.

For years this led to many “problem” bears being killed. However, Bear Aware programs are beginning to help. Municipalities are imposing fines and providing education about keeping garbage secure and removing fallen apples and other fruits. Bears will not hang around if there is no food available.

I don’t see bears very often anymore and that’s a good thing,

But I miss them. ✫
The world is completing its third year of Covid 19, with many people now four times vaccinated and a new, multi-purpose BiValine vaccine available, so the new ‘normal’ for many will be to practice social safety measures in relative comfort. Getting an Autumn ‘flu shot will be part of that for me. Much of what was closed is now open and it seems that, hungry for travel, this past summer has seen a mass upwelling of Canadians getting out of town. Here in BC, for destinations within the province, the rest of Canada and the USA, and, in great droves, Europe, where friends tell tales of packed-out airports, cancelled flights, misdirected luggage and, after missing connections by minutes: getting stuck in Frankfurt. Because of this flurry, and a gorgeous although late-arriving summer, it is especially gratifying that so many of you have chosen to make contributions to ‘Simon Says.’ Thank you.

The past year also brought a monarch’s death, a leadership contest in Canada’s Conservative Party, rising inflation, increasing interest rates and intransigent poverty, as well as high-profile hearings in the United States of America into the January 6th 2021 attack on the Capitol, the invasion of a sovereign European nation by another, and the occupation of Ottawa by an aggrieved minority bellowing “freedom.” Among the articles in this edition of ‘Simon Says’ are those that address aspects of these significant national and international issues. Some readers may find the opinions expressed objectionable or poorly documented or lacking in historical nuance or social sensitivity. So please, let us know what you think: write a letter to the editor or write your own article as either a general rebuttal or your own interpretation of the topic at hand. We welcome and encourage your participation.

My article in this edition suggests that in the wake of Queen Elizabeth II’s death, Canada should take steps to make the transition away from a constitutional monarchy to a republic. Not all, or perhaps even most, Canadians will agree. Many Canadians believe the monarchy to be a stabilizing influence, some are convinced it is a necessary bulwark against being more like the USA while others have found comfort in the existence of an overweening parental figure: many Britons and more than few Canadians have referred to the late monarch as “our Mum.” While I don’t expect an immediate upwelling of republican sentiment, I am convinced the subject ought to be addressed seriously in the near future. Thus, I welcome your comments and your future articles and I am sure other contributors to this edition will also encourage responses. The more contested the point of view, the more the need for precision and accuracy in historical, social scientific and political references. Don’t be afraid to use notes. Citations are always more helpful than not; my background in anthropology and history tattooed my books so that Padraig X. Scanlan’s “Slave Empire,” is not next to Vera Brittain’s “Testament of Youth.” In closing, I feel compelled to take my own advice. Thus, I’m off into the garden to chop up branches and fill the green bin. I hope you enjoy this varied edition of ‘Simon Says’ and want to thank all those who took the time to write, submit poetry and provide us with photos and memories. Start your at-home season here.