

# YURA Newsletter



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

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*presented by Vivienne Monty*

YURA Executive

York University Retirees' Association

## Message from the YURA Co-Presidents

The Summer season, the time when our Canadian climate seems most hospitable, has flown by incredibly quickly. We hope that you have enjoyed the pleasant warm days, have found relief from the steamy hot ones, and have managed to strike an optimal balance between on the one hand, relaxation with family and friends and, on the other hand, adventure in the form of travel and new experiences. Soon enough, we will be turning on our furnaces and rummaging in our closets to find sweaters and jackets and umbrellas!

For those of us who have spent so many years in a university setting, the Fall typically brings a sense of re-launch. We are delighted to be working with Steve Glassman and Richard Weisman, our new team in charge of producing the YURA Newsletter with four annual issues. They are continuing the superb work of Anne-Marie Ambert whose last issue was the Summer 2024 one. Steve and Richard are keenly interested in hearing from YURA members so please do consider sending them your reflections about your time at York, and about retirement and its joys and challenges. They can be reached at [glassman@yorku.ca](mailto:glassman@yorku.ca) and [rweisman@yorku.ca](mailto:rweisman@yorku.ca). This issue of the Newsletter celebrates their commitment and their creative energy; we thank them for taking on this very important role.

We at YURA have greatly enjoyed **not** needing to move our offices this past Spring/Summer, as was the case in 2023! We remain happily settled in the Lorna Marsden Honour Court and look forward to welcoming members to our space on October 1<sup>st</sup> (for our annual Charity Walk on campus—more details below) or as office volunteers. The membership renewal process is now underway, and we encourage all YURA members to send in their renewal forms and to request a parking code to enable visits to campus. We also encourage all members to consider volunteering in the YURA office. Our office is open Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Ideally, we would like to have enough office volunteers so that the commitment for each individual would be one shift of 4 hours every two weeks. We prefer to have 2 volunteers per shift--- that makes each shift much more enjoyable because of the socializing opportunity! We are seeking volunteers for all days but Thursday in particular. Duties in the office include answering the YURA email and phone calls, greeting visitors, processing registrations for YURA activities, and assisting with the management of records/documents. We will, of course, provide training and checklists. For full instructions about membership renewal, please visit: <https://www.yorku.ca/yura/membership/membership-renewal/> .

A delightful summer activity took place on Tuesday, August 13th, when a group of YURA members met at Sunnybrook Park and completed a 2.5 km hike along the bank of the west branch of the Don River to arrive at the lower level of the Glendon College campus. After a short tour of the Glendon Athletic Club, the group ascended the Escot Reid Walk to gather at the Bruce Bryden



Rose Garden where professor emerita Rosanna Furgiuele (former Associate Principal of Glendon) conducted a detailed historical tour of the campus, its buildings and very intriguing public artwork.

The tour concluded at the office of President Emerita Lorna Marsden in Glendon Hall where Prof. Audrey Pyée, Associate Principal (Academic) of Glendon spoke briefly about her students' research

on the history of the Wood Family and the Wood Estate (on which Glendon stands). Dr. Pyée then led a tour through the various rooms of the Manor, using photographs from the past.



Participants returned to the presidential office for refreshments and a light lunch, hosted by Dr. Marsden. We are deeply grateful to Dr. Lorna Marsden, Dr. Rosanna Furgieuele and Dr. Audrey Pyée for their significant contributions to this event, which was enjoyed by all. More photos of the outing , provided by Alex Neumann, Grace Chui and Steve Dranitsaris, can be viewed at: <https://www.yorku.ca/yura/yura-hike-in-west-don-river-valley-and-tour-of-the-glendon-campus/>

The month of September signals the resumption of some regular YURA activities. On September 10<sup>th</sup>, the YURA Café, hosted by Dr. Fran Wilkinson, resumed. This monthly Zoom session takes place the second Tuesday of the month at 10 a.m. We invite all members to join us – the Zoom link is sent via the YURA listserv several days in advance. Also on September 10<sup>th</sup>, our hard-working Executive Committee held its first meeting after the summer hiatus.



On September 13<sup>th</sup>, twelve YURA members participated in a tour of the Queen's Park Legislative Building, followed by a traditional English-style "high tea". The guided tour focused

on the history, art and architecture of the historic building, including commentary about the original design and construction, its opening in 1892 and the fire of 1909 that destroyed the West wing. That wing was rebuilt using marble and intricate mosaics, which offer a very striking contrast to the beautiful wood used in the rest of the building. Much admired were the elaborate wood carvings in the Legislative Chamber and the portraits of premiers and speakers. Participants were treated to several historical vignettes and a short theatrical performance while they enjoyed the delicious ‘high tea’ offerings of sandwiches, scones and sweets. Thanks to Diane Woody for



organizing this outing. More photos, courtesy of Grace Chui, Donna Smith and Steve Dranitsaris can be found at <https://www.yorku.ca/yura/yura-tour-of-queens-park-afternoon-tea/>

Tuesday October 1<sup>st</sup> marks an important day for YURA; it is the day of our annual Charity Challenge Walk at 1:00 p.m. (rain date Thursday October 3<sup>rd</sup>). Once again, we will hold our walk on the Keele campus; this allows us to invite YURA members to view our office space (the Lorna Marsden Honour Court), to increase YURA’s visibility as part of the York University community, and most importantly, to draw attention to the cause for which we are fund-raising. As was the case last year, we are raising funds to alleviate student food insecurity on campus. We can all understand that the challenges of high rents and food insecurity make it hard for students to succeed academically. We hope that you will support us, by making a donation and/or by joining us on the walk. Last year’s walk on a warm Fall day brought YURA members together in a

sustained moment of fun and fellowship. Full details including the starting time, walking route and rain date are now posted on our website. At the time of writing this message, we note that more than \$11,000 has been raised by our small but mighty fundraising team. To make a donation, please go to: <https://raceroster.com/events/2024/79618/2024-tcs-toronto-waterfront-marathon/pledge/team/654279> .

One month later, Friday November 1<sup>st</sup>, is another date to mark on your calendars. That day, YURA will hold its Annual General Meeting, with guest speaker Dr. Glen Jones, professor of Higher Education and former Dean of the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education. We are very pleased to have Dr. Jones as our guest and we look forward to his talk on the current state and future directions and challenges of Higher Education. For those who are able to attend in person, YURA will offer morning coffee at 10:30 a.m. with our guest speaker at 11:00 a.m. A light lunch will be provided at 12:15 p.m., followed by YURA's annual business meeting. As in past years, our AGM will provide a wonderful opportunity to hear about the work and activities of the Association and to catch up with former York colleagues and co-workers. To enable those YURA members who cannot attend for reasons of distance or health concerns, we will broadcast our guest speaker's talk and business meeting online via Zoom. Full details on registering for the event, either in-person or online, will be circulated closer to the date of the event. Photos of last year's AGM and a biography of our guest speaker, Dr. Glen Jones, can be found on our website at <https://www.yorku.ca/yura/annual-general-meeting/> .

In closing, we urge all members to regularly consult the YURA website at <https://www.yorku.ca/yura/> where they will find photos and summaries of past events, and details of upcoming events of interest to retirees. We look forward to "seeing" you online at this Fall's sessions of the YURA Café and to being with you in person at the Charity Challenge Walk and again at the AGM.

photos in this article courtesy of Alex Neumann and Steve Dranitsaris

Diane Beelen Woody and Steve Dranitsaris  
YURA Co-Presidents

## Thank you from a YURA Award recipient

Below is one of three letters that we received from a recipient of YURA sponsored student awards last fall (for awards given in 2022-2023). The other letters were published in the Winter and Spring issues of the Newsletter.

Dear YURA,

*Receiving the YURA Graduate Student Award meant so much to me. It has inspired me to keep active in my community and take on additional volunteer opportunities to stay engaged, like joining the Autism Mentorship Program at York and the York University Psychology Clinic Student Advisory Committee. It is fantastic that the York Retirees Association values these kinds of activities that graduate students are involved in. It helps make our graduate studies well-rounded and even more fulfilling.*

*I am so grateful to the Retirees Association for their generous support. The financial value of the award also helped relieve some of the stress of being a graduate student in an expensive city. Again, I sincerely thank the Retirees Association for choosing me as an award recipient. This award had a tremendous positive impact on me and motivated me to continue pursuing volunteerism. I truly appreciate having been selected for this award.*

Sincerely,

Danika Wagner,

now a PhD student in Psychology,  
Faculty of Health

## Cece was in Trouble

### Then and now

Tanzanian student Cece was in trouble. It was the 1970's and he had taken a government summer job in Dar es Salaam. He was looking forward to his post-secondary education. A Canadian aid delegation passed through and before he knew it, he was in Canada, sent to study accounting.

He arrived in Hamilton, only to discover that the study program was grossly inadequate. He dropped out of the program and was soon broke and without a valid visa. Cece figured out that he could take degree-credit extension courses at McMaster University, and that nobody would check his residential status.

Part way through those studies I met Cece. While he was making significant progress towards his degree, he was going to have to take more courses on campus to complete all the requirements. Meanwhile, he was surviving at odd jobs such as washing barrels at a pickle factory or working at a pumpkin pie factory. One summer he got a Student Works project job (still no papers) teaching

basketball. I asked him what he, a Tanzanian, knew about basketball. His reply: "I am the right color!".

Cece graduated from McMaster and wanted to pursue an MBA. He got accepted at the University of Buffalo and intended to go there. I warned him that his acceptance was not enough to secure entry into the U.S. He would have to show proof of financial support which he did not have. Cece went by bus to Fort Erie and walked across the Peace Bridge to U.S. immigration. They refused him entry. He walked back to the Canadian side and, without papers, they also refused him entry. He spent the day on the Peace Bridge before the Canadians let him back in. Today they would have detained him, fearing that he might jump from the bridge to his death.

Back in Hamilton I was almost at a loss for strategies to help. But I had a stroke of luck. I knew people at McGill University and persuaded them to admit him to their MBA program. I also got the (then) McGill Institute for Developing Area Studies to hire him so that he had tuition and money to live on. During those studies he was able to regularize his status as well as meet and marry the woman with whom he had a son who later did graduate work here in Alberta.

All of that happened 50 years ago. Cece and I never met over all those years. I met his son when he completed his master's studies. Cece had instructed him to see me before returning to Tanzania, telling him: "You would not exist if it were not for Professor Lanfranco. I would never have gone to McGill and never met your mother".

After 50 years, I just spent a week with Cece and with his son and his son's family, in Dar es Salaam. Today all of Cece's children are professionals. Some are in Tanzania, some are in England, and some are here in Canada.

Cece (80), me (85), and his son spent the week in Dar es Salaam, Bagamoyo and Zanzibar, mainly exploring the history of the Arab slave trade, about which our York University colleague Paul Lovejoy is a recognized scholar.

Cece pivoted from business to farming in mid-life. While I was there, he was negotiating to sell his current farm and buy new land from the Tanzanian government for cattle raising. The new farm consists of 250,000 acres. That is the size of Prince Edward County, the Ontario "island" where my tiny (100 acre) farm is located.

In Dar es Salaam Cece and I just sat there some of the time, thinking back to those days 50 years ago and reflecting on how we had no idea how life would unfold as we went forward. I take some humble pleasure in knowing that what little I did fifty years ago contributed to the future of a whole family halfway around the globe. Cece and I have some joint plans for projects going forward, one dealing with Tanzania's surplus of tomatoes and onions.

Part of the shape of tomorrow depends on what we do today.

Sam Lanfranco



# From Hippie beginnings

## autobiography

Born and raised in the San Francisco Bay Area, my father was a welfare administrator for Contra Costa County and my mother taught elementary school. When I was born in 1950, my mother was diagnosed with Hodgkin's Disease and given six months to live. She hung on, at times going into remission, until she died when I was eight. After that, I relied on my two older sisters to lead the way.

When I was sixteen, I moved from Walnut Creek to the Haight-Ashbury to live with my older sisters. Quickly drawn into hippie life and culture, my adventures during these years are the focus of my upcoming book *Out of Sight! Memoir of a San Francisco Hippie*. The last couple of chapters detail my flight from hippie lethargy to Reed College in Portland, Oregon and, ultimately, to Toronto.

In the spring of 1972, I was a psychology student at Reed College. Behaviourism was the rage, but I had little interest in training pigeons after my rat, Stewart Little, bit me during Psych 101.

I enrolled in a behaviour modification course, and because my boyfriend Josh didn't like my smoking, decided my term project for the course would be to quit. Only one other guy in the class was trying to quit. Most people were trying to improve their study habits, lose weight, or become more outgoing.

I'd started smoking at thirteen when a pack of cigarettes cost twenty cents at the counter and twenty-five cents from a vending machine. I could only go to the counter in places where they didn't know me. By twenty-one, I was smoking two packs of cigarettes a day and the price had doubled. My smoking had also doubled after being busted and spending thirty days in the Marin County Jail for possession of marijuana. As it happened, I met Angela Davis in jail, too.

Back at Reed, our psychology professor—Allen Neuringer—took me and the other smoker, Ned, aside at the beginning of the class. He said that quitting smoking was so important that he would take us and our partners out to dinner at the fanciest French restaurant in Portland—*L'auberge*—if we quit for the whole term. That was a nice incentive to add to the challenge ahead. Ned and I agreed that this would be our last day of smoking.

That evening after dinner, I prepared for my last cigarette. Josh and I went to a friend's house and sat in the living room as I held the cigarette, not wanting to light it. I looked at the filthy ashtray on the coffee table and decided it was time. I lit up, inhaled, and exhaled. The best part of smoking was exhaling. I blew smoke rings to show off my skill and, at last, butted out for what I hoped would be the last time.

It wasn't easy to quit. The cravings were horrible at first. Sometimes I'd get weepy or angry for no apparent reason. I carried a pen with me everywhere, partly to doodle with and partly to chew on. Anything to keep my hands busy. After a couple of weeks, I went longer and longer without even thinking about smoking.

About halfway through the term, Josh and I went to see Hitchcock's *Vertigo* in the Reed Chapel where I noticed Ned sitting with his girlfriend and smoking! He saw me scowling at him during intermission and came over to taunt me with the aroma, "You know you want to... Here. I'll give you one." I demurred.

When the term was over and I'd successfully managed to go without so much as a puff on a cigarette, a reservation for four was made at the very fancy *L'auberge* Restaurant.

Josh and I dressed up in our finest clothes. He wore a sports jacket, button-down shirt and tie, slacks, wire-rimmed glasses, a full beard, and a copious mop of curly brown hair down to his shoulders. I wore a mini dress along with beads, knee-high boots, a shawl, long straight blonde hair almost to my waist, and not a spot of makeup. We arrived early and nervously stood on the sidewalk thinking we didn't look like we belonged here.

Allen and his wife arrived and were, thankfully, not much better dressed than we were. He also had a full beard but was balding rather than long haired, and wore sports coat, tie, slacks, and glasses. His wife had on a bright, peasant-style dress, necklace, and long, wavy brown hair.

After being introduced, Josh and Allen talked non-stop. The dinner was a prix fixe menu and the only choices to be made were what to drink. Allen ordered French wine for the table and the various dishes for each of the six courses appeared and disappeared as the men talked. Another bottle was ordered, as the men enjoyed their comradery.

At the end of the evening meal, I was imagining how nice it would be to have a cigarette. But just as I was daydreaming about lighting up, the men made another bet. Allen said that if I didn't smoke for another year, he'd invite us to his home in the country for dinner. Josh readily agreed as I sat in stunned silence.

*How can they decide what I'm going to do without even including me in the discussion? Why is this a done deal when I haven't uttered a word? Why don't I **say** something?*

Within a split second I knew I couldn't spoil their evening, because the evening had, indeed, been theirs. I raised my wine glass and said, "I guess, we'll see you at your place next year!"

That summer, Josh and I moved out of the dorm and into a house we shared with other Reed students. The number of residents in the five-bedroom house varied week to week as people moved in or out.

And it was rent free! For a reason. The house sat on almost a quarter-acre, corner lot amid a disastrously unkempt yard. Half a dozen overgrown bushes hid the house from the street. The rest was thigh-high grass and weeds. Near the bushes on the north side of the house was a compost heap the size of a small car.

Walking up the wooden stairs, across the wooden porch, and into the house was safe enough, but once inside you had to be careful. The hall leading to the living room had a gaping hole smack in the middle. Though the floor joists had stayed in place, the worn-out floorboards had fallen into the dirt of the crawl space below the house. To get to the living room, you had to creep along the wall. At least until a couple of the guys got a piece of plywood secured over the hole.

Most memorable was the time I decided to make granola. I got all the ingredients together in a bowl, greased a baking sheet, then went to light the gas oven. I lit the match, turned on the gas, and opened the door. "Aaaaaaaaaa!" I screamed, jumping back.

Staring at me from the middle rack was a little grey mouse. I slammed the oven door shut with my foot and turned off the gas, as one of my housemates rushed in from upstairs to see what I was so upset about. When I told him, he just laughed and said, "What do you expect living in the middle of a meadow?" He finished baking the granola as I avoided the kitchen for a few days.

I got a job that summer pumping gas at a station just a few blocks from our house, but I lasted only a week. Drivers seemed to think I was a novelty worth commenting on, joking about, or teasing. After being continually harassed by male customers, and by one female customer, I quit. It took another week to get the stain and stink of gasoline off my hands.

My next job was as a nanny for a seven-year-old girl whose divorced mom worked outside the home. The mom insisted that the curtains in the house always remain closed, so that no one could see inside. Also, I was to phone her at work any time we were going outside. It was summer, so I had to call her every day, unless it was raining, even if we were just eating lunch in the backyard. Most days we rode our bikes to Reed's outdoor pool where we both joined friends swimming and sunbathing. And luckily, we both liked to read, a lot.

By the fall, Josh and I had saved enough to move into a beautiful three-bedroom house with just two other students. The rent was cheap, and the only flaw I could find was a crack in the back door. Even that wasn't noticeable until it got cold, and a bit of snow drifted into the kitchen. Our housemates were Reed students, as usual, but when one graduated and moved away, she was replaced by a guy, making me the only woman in the house.

None of the guys knew how to cook, at first either, so I taught them. Josh became quite adept at using recipes and experimenting with new dishes, as did one of the other guys. But the last guy, Gordon, had only one dish he made, over and over: chicken and asparagus casserole. It wasn't bad, apart from the time it came out as soup by mistake, but it grew tiresome.

Periodically, Gordon also filled the entire house with smoke because he could be easily distracted. Not only would he forget things in the oven, but we had an old-fashioned manual toaster with two sides that flipped down and didn't automatically shut off. More than once, Gordon left bread in the toaster to burn while he went upstairs to do who knows what.

In the spring of 1973, after classes had finished, Allen invited Josh and me to his house in the country, as promised. This time I felt like a successful non-smoker as I could no longer imagine smoking. The only things I remember about that visit were the dark wooden slats of the house, the chickens running about in the yard, and Allen showing us the multi-coloured eggs the hens laid in the chicken coop.

Barbara Rahder

# Cameroon: Land of Women

## film review

In the summer of 2024, the French television network TV5, ran a series of documentaries focusing on various types of environmental degradation in several countries. The first two episodes focused on Cameroon and Senegal. I will highlight the Cameroon situation.

Cameroon is a former French colony located to the west of Africa, just to the right of Nigeria, with a relatively small Atlantic coastline. The documentary is entitled "Land of Women" because it is mainly women who work the land as agriculturists, although there are exceptions. Educated women, particularly one of them who is highlighted in this documentary, are now activists for the environment and they have a huge challenge ahead of them.

There are two main issues which are intertwined and contribute to the degradation of the environment of this African country. The first is the shrinking coastline which endangers villages located by the sea, their housing, roads and lycees or high schools, and fisheries. In other words, erosion from storms and high tides shrinks the coastline and reduces the space available for the African villagers. In this respect, women activists were trying to sensitize the male population living by the sea because they were cutting the mangroves in order to secure wood for fire. The women were explaining how the mangroves prevent the erosion of the coastline in addition to providing a breeding ground and safe haven for fish, all of which is in the interest of the fishers.

The other issue which also shrinks the agrarian and forestry space available to the Africans is a remnant of colonization. It consists in what they call "concessions," or plantations, whereby lands are now still being taken away from the Africans themselves and are given to French or American corporations to grow palm-trees for oil.

The villages which are close to these plantations consequently have a much reduced space for their own planting and for access to the forests which are diminishing considerably. These villagers called themselves "Forest People." The forests have always provided them with food, medicine, wood, wildlife, as well as being a cultural site. Forests also act as a buffer against climate deregulation which brings extreme heat and drought as well as inundations. This destruction of the regular rain cycle in turn prevents the pursuit of a sustainable agriculture.

Some of the results of the deforestation which is needed to grow palm oil trees--a monoculture --also consist in the disappearance of wildlife because it has no place to feed. The villagers complained that they no longer have birds and, especially, their meager gardens are plundered by elephants at night because the pachyderms (have been pushed out of the forest and have nowhere to feed themselves.

During the deforestation process, developers cut the valuable trees and sell them for exportation. Then they bulldoze the rest and leave some land which is useless because it is rocky and has trees which are not useful. So basically, large tracks of land then poorly absorb rains, are low in nutrients and become unproductive--no longer serving the native population.

The last problem to be mentioned is that the developers spray the monoculture with pesticides which the villagers suspect to be poisoning the streams that run through the villages. These streams are used to cook food and wash the dishes and clothes and bathing. As the documentary was ending, villagers had recourse to educated Cameroonians who had come to test the water. These educated

activists were also writing to the United Nations because they had tried for years to get results and responses from local, provincial, and federal governments. They were totally ignored because palm oil constitutes one of the most important exportation resources in the GNP of the country.

The villagers were in part sadly resigned, but also somewhat angry. However, with the help of the activists, they were beginning to be more hopeful. They were open about their problems and articulated them well. They were very heartwarming persons.

The documentary gave us a bit of suspense because as we follow the activists showing us the damage caused by the deforestation, there was always the risk that that they would be caught by the guards of the "concessions" and problems would ensue for them.

I did mention at the outset that the second documentary in the series focused on Senegal, also a former French colony. In this case, because Senegal is a lowland by the sea, one crucial problem is that of the rapid disappearance of large villages and the forced relocation inland of the former villagers with few resources such as water. A second problem arises from the fact that Senegal's groundwater table is very low resulting in the salinization of agricultural lands.

One can see in these two documentaries that many African countries are particularly affected by climate deregulation, if one considers desertification, salinization and degradation of agricultural lands, disappearance of forests, to which one can add the damages caused by various Civil Wars. It means that many of these countries can no longer sustain themselves in terms of food and have to have recourse to expensive imports and often out migration to the north.

Anne-Marie Ambert

## **The Internet of Animals**

a book review

The above-named book was written by Martin Wikelski, 2024, Greystone Books. Its subtitle is "discovering the collective intelligence of life on earth." This is a book that will appeal to readers who want to learn about recent breakthroughs in the study of wildlife behavior including the technological innovations that are changing our understanding of intraspecies communication.

Professor Wikelski is the director of the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior in Germany and he has taught courses in Animal Ecology at several universities including the University of Illinois and Princeton.

The idea that animals including birds and insects have their own forms of communication analogous to our internet offers a striking new way of thinking about animal behavior. The main thrust of this work is not just to reveal this previously hidden world but to track the technology that has enabled scientists such as Wikelski and his colleagues to gain access to it. Among the many innovations described in this work are the tiny transmitters that can be attached to different species of insects and birds. The signals that are transmitted can then be picked up by a satellite and converted into data that can then be analyzed by the researchers.

Readers unfamiliar with this research will find many of their assumptions about animal behavior challenged. For example, contrary to the widely held belief that animal migrations are controlled by genetics alone, the researchers demonstrate that these patterns result from a combination of genetics and communications such as the signals that birds give to their congeners concerning weather patterns, places to avoid, and flying altitudes as well as the location of rest stations.

The book also describes the impact of political differences on the research. The satellite used by the researchers was mounted on the international space station, Icarus, run jointly by Germany and Russia. The war in Ukraine brought an end to this cooperation. Currently, there are plans to launch a new satellite in the near future that will not require Russian cooperation.

Anne-Marie Ambert

## But not for everyone

a book review

The ride on the Toronto Montreal CN train was nostalgic. Every detail of the furnishing of the coach looked familiar. Standing at the rear, in the last car, there was a view that can only be seen when travelling on the rails. It's that rear view perspective as the countryside folds into the background that is a delight. Our conductor told us that we were in a 70s era- can I say 70s vintage car- which was the explanation for why the air conditioning wasn't working.

My companion for the trip was Albert Koehls' book Wheeling Through Toronto, A History of the Bicycle and its Riders, that was just released in June (AEVO /UTP, 2024). With 420 pages including 103 pages of footnotes, it is a surprisingly quick read, which I finished on the return train trip.

Albert is an environmental lawyer and was adjunct Professor at Osgoode for a decade. I sat down with him recently. He describes himself not as a retired lawyer but as a full-time advocate for social justice. He is well-known for his work advocating for the rights of cyclists, as he has led some of the long fights for bike lanes in Toronto. To place *social justice*, a central value of our university, and *cycling* in the same phrase requires some explanation. Concisely put, in the author's bio, "... his work is inspired and sustained by a commitment to social justice and the belief that how we get around should be based on fairness and respect for each other and our community, instead of power and wealth."

The book was written, if for no other reason, "for the record"- to create an authoritative history of bicycling in Toronto. But the history the book delivers is not just about the bicycle but the story of city politics and how cities develop as they grow. The early chapters, the early years of the city, predate the automobile that has dominated our public spaces during our lifetimes. It's hard to imagine a time before cars everywhere in the city, but that was the case with the opening chapter "1896- The Bicycle Craze". My favorite sections are the early days: take 1910 in Koehl's timeline- "Bicycles remain common for everyday travel, far outnumbering the city's motorcars. Motorists are generally detested". Or 1944: "Police estimate 50,000 bikes on city streets every day, including cyclists from surrounding communities". Of course, by the 1930's bicycles are hardly a part of the picture. As the city grew, transportation issues were dealt with, and the public roads were the designed or rebuilt for the car. A

flurry of interest for cycling, including by notable local politicians, occurs in the 1970s with the advent of the ten-speed bicycle. And Koehl traces the designation of bike lanes starting in 1979 and the struggles that continue to make roads safe for bikes and all users.

The book is detailed, as Koehl spent five years meticulously researching this history, but the book also reveals Koehl to be an empathetic reporter. We may be numb to the all too frequent news about cyclist deaths, but the story of cycling in Toronto is the story of 'road violence' over many generations. Today, cyclist and pedestrian fatalities occur at highway on and off-ramps. The Daily Star on April 10, 1953 reported:

When a boy was hit last night riding his bicycle along the wide grass median of a recently completed stretch of Highway 401, the case quickly became a sensational story in this afternoon's papers, not because yet another child has died on the roads but because the victim was initially misidentified by family members.... The smooth pavement of the new highway, a direct route home late at night, and the new highways' sparse motor traffic must have been a temptation the boy found hard to resist."

Beyond the unusual occurrence of a mistaken identity which made this incident newsworthy, it seems unreal to vision the 401 as an open route, inviting for a cyclist. This incident hits close to home, as it occurred near Keele Street in North York, but at a time when our main campus was still an active farm. To Koehl, this is an example of the road being planned for the automobile, as he headlined the article "Public roads- but not for everyone".

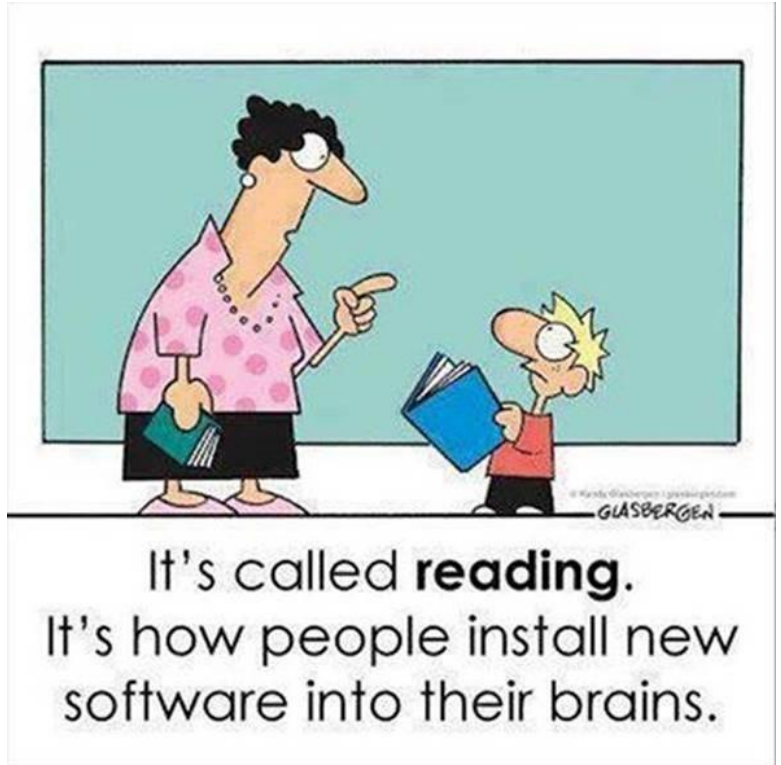
The last fifty years have left cycling, and even transit, as secondary to the interests of automobile infrastructure planning. Recently, we see other cities, like Paris and Montreal, giving more space and priority for safe bike lanes. With pressures building because of concerns about climate change, road congestion, downtown condo development and population growth, and road safety for pedestrians and cyclists, it seems that vocal advocates including Koehl should be hopeful about the next chapters in Toronto's relationship with the bicycle. Perhaps it's time for another 1970s love-in with the bicycle.

While this history provides us with a rear-view perspective, throughout my reading of *Wheeling*, I thought not just of the past to understand why our public space is so dominated by the speeding car but of the future. I am hopeful that the current and future needs of both bicyclists and drivers of automobiles will be considered in reshaping our city.

Steve Glassman

# And now the funnies

presented by Vivienne Monty





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## YURA Office Hours

Tuesday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Wednesday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Thursday 11:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

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