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Epilogue

ARAS Executive

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Jan Murie
780-434-4526

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780-439-7452

Ken Roy
780-434-0067

Richard Young
780-438-6815

Presidential Appointees:

Technical Advisor

Gordon Rostoker
780-434-4277

Epilogue Editor:

Ruth Gruhn
780-434-6586

University Terrace
Suite 6-30
8303 112 Street NW
Edmonton, Alberta
T6G 1K4

Phone:
780-492-2914

emirhse@ualberta.ca

Association of Retired Academic Staff – U Alberta

Editor's note

Just when it was getting warm enough to think of spring, came last week's days of minus 20 C. I've added tulips on the last page in order to restore our faith. At least the grand cosmic cycle continues on its schedule; there are increasing hours of daylight now.

There is one more Lunch With ... event at the University Club, when Jan Selman, former Chair of Drama, speaks of the colourful history of her department. In this issue of *Epilogue*, past Lunch With ... events are summarized; and there are the reports of activities of the Book Club, the Current Events Salon, and the Dining Out Club. Happily, the In Memoriam box is small. The issue ends with an old but humourous article by the late Keith Smillie.

Ruth Gruhn

Notices

Lunch With event ... on 22 March

Our speaker Jan Selman is a powerful force of theatre in the University, in the City, the country, and around the world. Her work on theatre as an agent for social change was rewarded in Canada when she became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, and her inventiveness as theatre director was recognized when she was invited to give advice on community engagement at the new university in Kenya. A graduate of the Department of Drama of the U of A, Jan served as Chair of the same department; so is uniquely qualified to speak of the extraordinary illustrious history of the Department.

Vivien Bosley

Reports

Lunch With ... events in Spring Term

On **25 January** our speaker was Heather McPherson, NDP Member of Parliament for Edmonton-Strathcona. She reviewed some of the issues facing Canada and the world at the present time, including the Ukraine/Russia conflict, the resulting energy crisis in Europe and food crises elsewhere, the China/Taiwan situation, immigration issues, and of course, climate change. Many questions were raised by the audience, to which the speaker responded, leading to the conclusion that at present there is no effective global mechanism to respond to major issues. In her opinion, the UN must be reformed.

On **22 February** there were two speakers from the Catholic Social Services division of Immigration and Settlement Services. Frank Bessai, who has served in the division for many years, described in detail the different classes of immigrants; but focussed on the category of refugees. He detailed the many services provided to government-sponsored refugees for their first year in Canada – basic income, housing, instruction in English and Canadian law and culture. The second speaker, John Lendein, who came to Canada from Liberia in 2003, described the experience of immigrants after arrival here. Most were elated at news of acceptance of immigration to Canada (“the honeymoon stage”) but then suffered culture shock, as initial expectations were not met. Initial adjustments followed, but cultural differences often led to feelings of isolation. After a period of time, though, came acceptance and integration.

Ruth Gruhn

Book Club update, December 2022-February 2023

In December we discussed *The Pull of the Stars*, by Emma Donoghue. The book follows a nurse during three days in a Maternity Ward for women with Spanish flu. Set in Dublin in 1918, the action often reads like a midwifery manual, with graphic detail of both births and deaths. Side stories involve two other women, an untrained young volunteer and a doctor, former member of Sinn Fein and now being sought by the police. All is set in the context of the flu pandemic and World War I. The novel celebrates the different strengths of the three female protagonists. Many of us appreciated the well-written descriptions of the background setting of the story, and the relationships among the women. However, I, at least, didn't care for the extensive medical detail.

The New Year kicked off with somewhat lighter fare—*The Best Laid Plans*, by Terry Fallis. This humorous satire of Ottawa politics, a winner of the Stephen Leacock Award, describes the seemingly impossible task undertaken by a political aide to elect an irascible engineering professor to a seat safely held by the ruling Conservative party. Despite eliciting chuckles throughout, the book makes cogent points about the idiosyncrasies and flaws in Canada's political machinations that the political scientists in our group felt were

apt. It seemed that this book was enjoyed by almost all of us, a level of unanimity not always achieved.

Our February subject was *A Long Petal of the Sea*, by Chilean writer Isabel Allende. This historical novel is based partly on the author's own life, and largely on the life of a man she met while a refugee in Venezuela. Like the couple in the novel, he had fled Spain to Chile after the Spanish civil war, and from Chile to Venezuela after the coup that ousted Salvadore Allende and brought Pinochet to power. The book describes the ups and downs the couple experienced during their periods of exile, with much descriptive detail about their relationships with others, and how they adapted to being refugees. Our discussion was wide-ranging, from the elements of successful historical novels to the motivation of authors. A number of shortcomings were raised, but most considered this an enjoyable read.

Jan Murie

Current Events Salon

In this academic year this Interest Group has been the site of several stimulating discussions on topics that have been of intense interest. The following issues were discussed in Zoom sessions:

October 6: Professor Emeritus Gordon Houlden led a discussion on **China**; and, in particular, relations between the PRC and Canada. While the topic of interest to some members was the PRC's threat to the Republic of China (i.e., Taiwan), there was a wide ranging discussion on China's global aspirations. Professor Houlden mentioned that the Canadian government was becoming very concerned about the apparently increasing assertiveness of the Chinese leadership.

November 3: Not surprisingly, the topic for this session was **the U.S. election**. The discussion took place less than a week before the American electorate was to vote, and predictions were that the hold of the Democrats on the House and the Senate was in peril in both cases. While the Republicans did indeed take control of the House, nobody was predicting that the Democrats would hold the Senate.

December 8: The topic of this session was **homelessness**, both in Edmonton and elsewhere. Gordon Rostoker posited that the solution was not to build more low-cost housing in Edmonton because the principle of attractiveness put forward by Jay Forrester suggested that more low-cost housing would attract more homeless people to come to Edmonton to have a chance at a place to live. Not all attendees were on board for this suggestion, and (much as the authorities have encountered) no viable solutions to the problem were proposed.

January 5: After the surprising election of Danielle Smith as the leader of the United Conservative Party (UCP), this session addressed the issue of **populism**. The discussion was led by Professor Emeritus David Laycock (Simon Fraser University), who has written extensively on this matter. Issues such as the ability of individuals to motivate large numbers of the population to take extreme views of the state of their society were considered. It seems

that a charismatic individual with great communications skills is able to take advantage of people with perceived grievances and motivate them to propel that individual to power, even in a democratic society. It was also suggested that Canadian and Albertan politics over the past couple of decades has been very much influenced by the “Calgary school” of thought.

February 2: The topic of this meeting was **the fate of the University of Alberta**. The University of Alberta had been going through extensive reorganization as a response to a cut of over 200 million dollars in their budget. Professor Gordon Swaters (President of the AASUA) led a discussion of this matter, prefacing the Q &A with an extensive view of what was going on behind the scenes. A critical point in the history of the institution was the AASUA becoming a legal *Union*. What was once the “University” in terms of an entity became the “Employer”. It has become clear that Departments whose Faculty members are able to secure significant external funding will be getting preferential treatment compared to Departments who cannot. This situation works to the disadvantage of the Faculty of Arts.

Gordon Rostoker

Dining Out Group

The Dining Out Group has been active throughout the 2022/2023 academic year, visiting a wide variety of restaurants, some new ones and some old favourites. Our aim is to meet together once a month, usually the last Thursday of the month. Over this year we have been happy to welcome some new participants to the group. Together we have dined at Normand’s, Sorrentino’s, Continental Treat, the University Club, DaDeO, the Sawmill, El Corazon, Sir Winston’s Fish and Chips, and Café Amore. We have had a lot of fun and are looking forward to continuing to do so in 2023. New friends are always welcome.

Peggy Allegretto

In Memoriam

Thelma Dennis	Household Economics
George Goldsand	Infectious Diseases
Jim Hardy	Dentistry
Frank Henderson	Biochemistry
Mary Spencer	Plant Science
John Wilson	History and Classics

Sadly, *Epilogue* must also report the passing of Eunice Barron, wife of the late Ken Barron (Mining Engineering). Both were long-time active members of the Association.

What does a retired mathematician call his house? Aftermath.

Some very good mathematics students become actuaries. An actuary is someone who can't stand the excitement of chartered accountancy.

The generation of random numbers is too important to be left to chance.

An Irishman travelling on the London Tube late one evening saw a notice saying DOGS MUST BE CARRIED ON THE TUBE. "Where am I going to get a dog at this hour of the night?" he moaned.

What sort of computer did Newton use? An Apple.

Two statisticians, one very fat and the other very thin, fell off the top of a high building. Which one hit the ground first? Who cares, so long as they are both statisticians.

Those who consider mathematicians eccentric might like to reflect on the fact that a well-known American physicist is said to have cleaned one of his most expensive optical instruments by pushing his cat through it.

Finally, here are a few howlers that the author maintains have been taken from some of his examination papers:

Parallel lines never meet unless you bend one or both of them.

Parallel lines do not meet although produced to eternity.

A circle is a round line with no kinks in it joined up at the end so as not to show where the beginning is.

A circle is a round straight line with a hole in the middle.

If one angle of a triangle is more than 90 degrees, the triangle is obscene.

