



Y O W U

APRIL 2009

Look who's fifty!

Opera singer Vania Chan celebrates York's big birthday

PLUS

Digital guru Nicholas Negroponte speaks out
How the Lions won soccer glory
Curtis? Stedman? Who were those guys?

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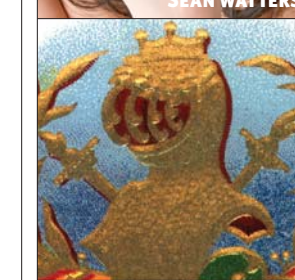


YORK TO THE POWER OF 50

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THE MAGAZINE OF YORK UNIVERSITY



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Stepping down from the fray. BY BERTON WOODWARD

The Undeans

Is there life after deanship? One day you're one of only 11 peers in charge of an entire York Faculty, and the next you're a prof again. What's it like? Two recent ex-deans are involved in this issue, so I decided to find out. Phillip Silver finished a 10-year stint as dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts last June 30 and is currently producing the University's black-tie birthday gala on March 28. In our cover feature, we've taken a look at some of the York people he chose to work with. And writing our Back Talk column this issue is Paul Axelrod, a respected education historian who stepped down at the same time after seven years as dean of the Faculty of Education.

Not surprisingly, the first thing both men talk about is their new-found freedom. "I certainly feel less a slave of my BlackBerry!" observes Silver. Agrees Axelrod: "My e-mail volume is finally manageable." And both seem to be enjoying the opportunity to jump back into intellectual projects while on one-year leave.

Besides producing the gala, Silver has returned to his work as one of Canada's top stage designers, with a long list of production credits in Stratford, Toronto and further afield. "I have two projects in the works," he says. "One is a Toronto production of Tuesdays with Morrie, starring Hal Linden – TV's Barney Miller – opening in May, and the other is working with other theatre professionals within a college context, which gets me into teaching contact with students, something I missed during my years as dean. And it's a good windup to my returning to teach stage design in York's



Department of Theatre in the fall."

Axelrod has two research projects going. "I'm returning to a history of elementary and secondary schooling in Toronto from 1945 to 1975 which I started before I became dean. I've spent a good part of this year buried in the archives of the Toronto District School Board reading mountains of old documents. I'm also working on a new project, with several York colleagues, on the topic, 'Making Policy in Postsecondary Education from 1993 to 2006'. We are looking at the important decisions by the federal government and the government of Ontario. It's an intensive study which should be of interest to the university community." This fall, Axelrod, too, will return to the classroom.

Axelrod outlines an intriguing balance between the two endeavours. "One of the big differences between heavy administrative work and academic work is that the latter allows one time to contemplate," he notes. "Administratively, important decisions have to be made quickly. But another difference is that administrators find out the results of their labours fairly quickly. The rewards arising from research and writing, if they come at all, take much longer." ■

Send letters, submissions, comments and ideas to editor@yorku.ca.

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PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

It's no surprise York faculty win major classroom awards. BY MAMDOUH SHOUKRI

The Value of Teaching

I never teach my pupils. I only attempt to provide the conditions in which they can learn. Albert Einstein

It's no exaggeration to say I've given many dozens of speeches since becoming president of York. Looking back over them, there is one subject I have scarcely addressed at all – the importance of teaching. I have spoken at length about the need to intensify research at York, and I continue to believe this is the way forward for us. Strengthening research is integral to our University Academic Plan and to our success in achieving our goals. I believe that if we get this right, we will emerge even stronger in the new economy and be able to realize our full potential.

But strengthening research does not come at the expense of teaching. Indeed, when I talk about building on York's 50 years of success, a large part of that success is in teaching. I believe that research and teaching form a continuum – one cannot exist

Strengthening research

without the other. Strengthening research means our students learn from people who are world leaders in their field; it means they are exposed to leading-edge knowledge.

Our job is to provide the best conditions in which our students can learn, and we will do this in spite of the challenging economic times we face. Teaching and learning are what we do here; we cannot allow future budget cuts to compromise the future of our academic enterprise.

Within the University, we celebrate excellence in teaching with the University-Wide Teaching Awards. These highlight the innovation and commitment of our faculty, and recognize our outstanding educators for enhancing the student experience.

It's always great – but never surprising – to hear about York faculty being recognized with teaching awards from outside the University. Take, for example, Merv Mosher – chosen as one of Ontario's top 10 lecturers for TVO's 2009 Big Ideas Best Lecturer Competition. Mosher teaches research methods, data analysis and skilled performance & motor learning – three

Mamdouh Shoukri is York's president and vice-chancellor.



required courses – in York's School of Kinesiology & Health Science. These are courses that, by his own admission, not many students would take if they weren't required. Yet his teaching talent has made him a candidate for Ontario's best lecturer (don't forget to vote for him after the show March 29).

does not come at the expense of teaching. One cannot exist without the other.

Hamzeh Roumani is another example of the teaching excellence that is bred in the bone at York. Roumani is a senior lecturer in the Department of Computer Science & Engineering who won a 2009 3M National

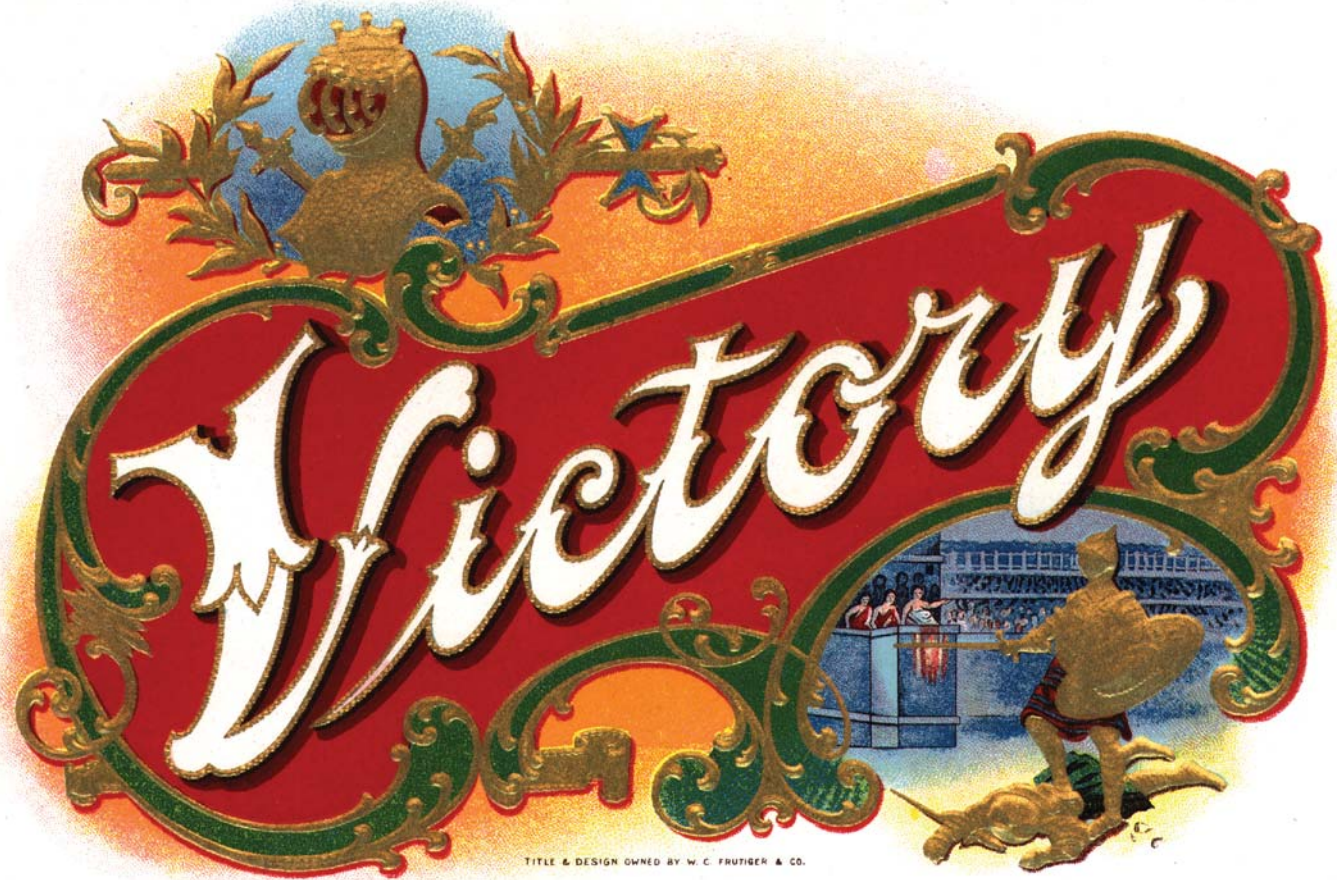
Teaching Fellowship earlier this year. This prestigious fellowship recognizes excellence and leadership in Canadian university teaching. Roumani uses innovative methods for his courses in computer programming.

His teaching, I am told, is based on a commitment to engaging students in "learning by doing", and helping them to develop insights and skills that will serve them for a lifetime.

That's precisely how we need to think about education. It must be about more than teaching a body of knowledge; it must create the right conditions for students to learn, and it must teach students how to think for themselves.

Our best tools for sharing knowledge are our students, and the quality of their education has everything to do with the quality of the teaching we offer. Put another way, the teaching and learning that happen here must translate to teaching and learning in our community and the wider world. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY BEECHEY



Consuming Passion

Designer David Scadding has collected thousands of cigar box labels. Why?



By his own admission, David Scadding is an “ephemerist”. For Scadding, a designer and York fine arts professor, what most of us would throw in the trash – ephemera such as minor printed items from everyday life – speaks volumes about our culture and the desires of the common folk.

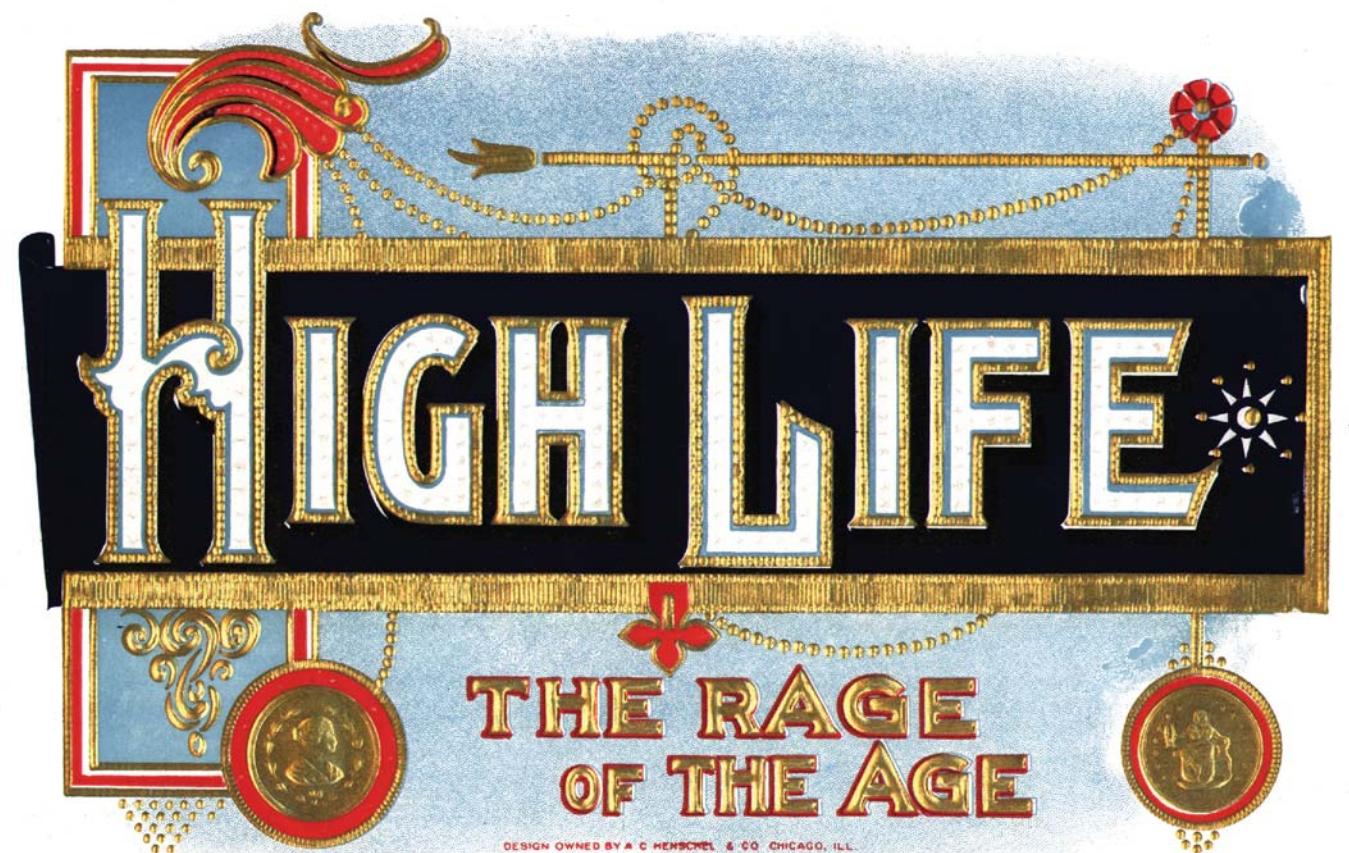
For instance, consider that saved matchbook from the restaurant where you had a great meal. You keep it because it represents (and recalls) wonderful memories. “People value ephemeral objects because they contain a great deal of sociological, anthropological and cultural significance. We value ephemera for personal and emotive reasons,” says Scadding. He recently mounted an exhibit of print and design-related ephemera featuring Victorian valentines, packaging, bill heads, fruit crate labels and a wonderful collection of his favourite ephemeral passion – cigar box labels.

“People think I’m a little crazy collecting cigar box labels. And if they knew just how many I have – thousands, but I won’t say exactly – they would know that I am completely crazy.” Scadding says he started collecting a variety of things printed from 1850 to 1950 mainly as an aid to teaching design and the principles of different printing processes (modern print materials commonly use four colours, while vintage posters, stamps and cigar labels from the turn of the century could use up to 12, hand done).

“Much of this work was produced by master craftspeople without image-making machines. Once used it got thrown away. I really think visual communication would be better if designers today spent an equal amount of time in creating and crafting their images,” says Scadding. “So it’s very useful for students to spend some time pondering the amount of work that went into these creations.”

In the past, he notes, collecting was much more difficult. “Now, with eBay, it’s a lot easier, but more expensive,” says Scadding, who’s never smoked a cigar himself. ■

UNIVERSE



What They're Reading

York people reveal what's on the bedside table

Sheila Colla

PhD candidate, bee researcher

"I find myself completely drawn to novels set in other countries. Observing another culture through literary characters helps to satisfy the travel bug in me. I recently finished *Shantaram* by Gregory David Roberts, a true story about the author's experiences as a slum-dweller in India. The *Poisonwood Bible* by Barbara Kingsolver is one of my all-time favourites for the same reason. It chronicles the hardships and culture shock an American missionary family faces when moving to the Congo. Currently I am reading *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera."

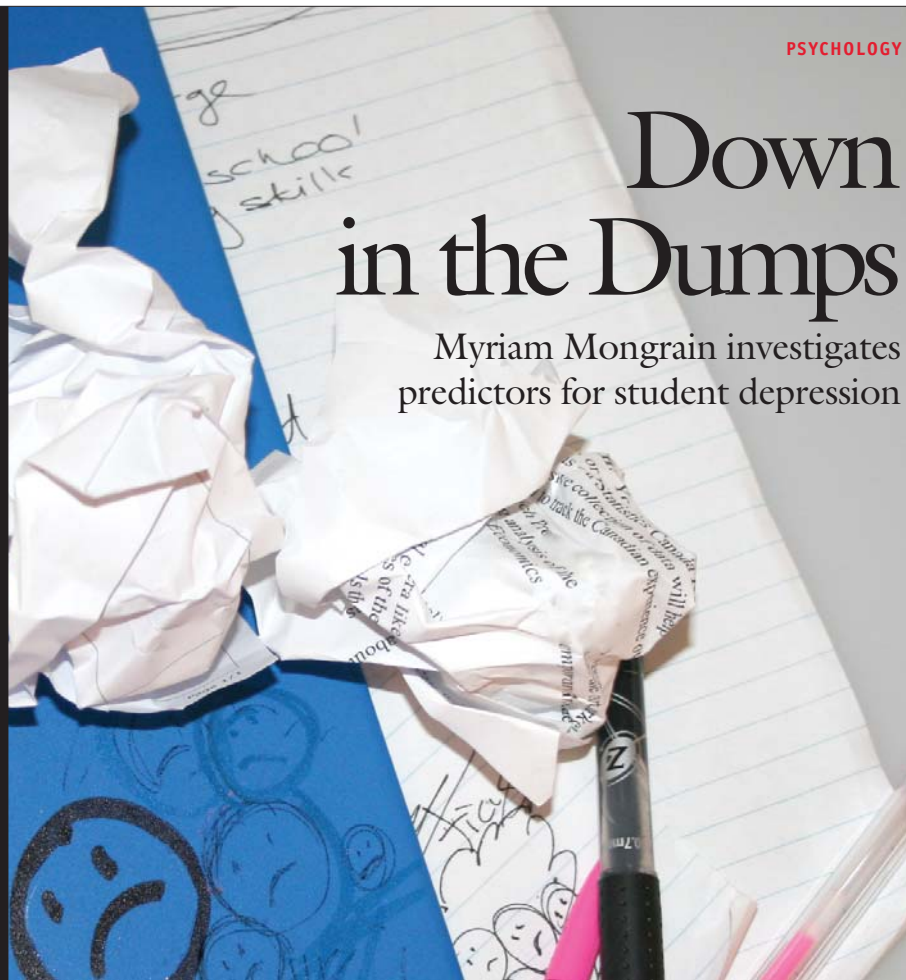
Walter Heinrichs

Psychology professor

"I like to be transported and learn about other times, places, cultures, events and lives. As a result I read good-quality historical novels, but also straight history, biography and travel. In addition, I try to read a few books in German to keep up my understanding of the language. Books read over the last few months include: Marq de Villiers and Sheila Hirtle's *Timbuktu: The Sahara's Fabled City of Gold*, Jack Whyte's *Standard of Honour*, Wibke Bruhns' *My Father's Country: The Story of a German Family (Meines Vaters Land)*, Louise Erdrich's *The Last Report on the Miracles at Little No Horse* and Marcus J. Borg's *Jesus: Uncovering the Life, Teachings and Relevance of a Religious Revolutionary.*"

Down in the Dumps

Myriam Mongrain investigates predictors for student depression



A recent study by York psychology Professor Myriam Mongrain and a US colleague looks at graduate students and the factors that may put them at risk of depressive episodes. Mongrain found evidence that students who perceive themselves as inferior to others (and feel trapped by their circumstances) are at a greater risk for recurring depression.

Why focus on students? "For three reasons," she says. "First, they are a convenient sample. Second, depression is widespread among university students. And third, it is a recurring disorder so it is critical to identify those at risk at an early age. I have found, for example, that grad students have their first onset at about 23."

Interestingly, Mongrain says it isn't the competition for any "scarce resources" (like money or thesis ideas) that triggers recurring depression among grad students. Rather, it's how they perceive their circumstances and how they may not meet their own personal standards. Her study tested for predictions made by evolutionary models of depression. "Evolutionary models tell us that depression exists in various species following defeat, and we see analogues to 'depressed behaviour' – keeping a low profile until the threat passes – in those species. This is called involuntary subordination. It's adaptive, and it's designed to save the organism from further injury."

Mongrain and her colleague, Dr. Eddy Sturman of the State University of New York Plattsburgh, found involuntary behaviour is still with us as predicted in the evolutionary model. "But what's important to note is that while it might have had an evolutionary basis for survival, it may no longer be a good adaptive strategy," says Mongrain. "In other words, while depressed, students may wallow for too long, feeling 'defeated' or 'like failures'. It is important in those times to just get up and find opportunities to talk and cope, to be engaged in the world rather than withdrawn." ■

Patients who are anxious before major surgery are likely to push the painkiller button more often after surgery than patients who were not anxious, a York health researcher has found. Joel Katz, Canada Research Chair in Health Psychology in York's Faculty of Health, surveyed 117 women one week before major gynecological surgery and then measured the demand for self-administered morphine following the operation.

Patient-controlled analgesia (PCA) is now considered the gold standard for relieving post-op acute pain since it involves delivering morphine through a bedside pump the patient can activate by pushing a button. Various studies have shown PCA is associated with a significant decrease in the incidence of moderate and severe pain after surgery, compared with nurse-administered injections, for instance.

"Little research has been done to understand the psychological and emotional factors related to PCA's use and the motivations behind patients' requests for more morphine when they have been 'locked out' for safety reasons," says Katz. (Pumps won't deliver after a certain number of requests, since morphine causes side-effects such as depressed respiration.)

Katz's study wasn't definitive about what specifically might cause some patients to demand more morphine than others after an operation. But his study suggests that those who were less well-adapted to surgery, and who had more intrusive thoughts about it and avoidant behaviour – such as trying not to talk about it – in the week before, made more PCA demands afterward. ■

Pushing the Button

Why some patients need more painkiller after surgery



Ever wonder why that "spare tire" seems to be associated with middle age? Well, a study by Michael Riddell, professor in the School of Kinesiology & Health Science in York's Faculty of Health, might provide one clue. It confirms that children, unlike middle-aged adults, are literally "fat-burning machines" – a talent they apparently lose during puberty when the body turns to using carbohydrates, not fat, to fuel a workout.

The study, published in the *Journal of Applied Physiology*, will enable health professionals to determine the best exercise prescription to help overweight kids lose weight. Riddell found that during exercise, children burn roughly double the amount of fat that adults do, per kilogram of body weight. And, although fat often gets a bad rap in the media, it is particularly necessary for children to have enough body reserves to support their accelerated growth.

"Bodies use two main fuel sources during exercise," says Riddell. "One is fat and one is carbohydrates. We're not sure why but children's bodies tend to save carb stores for growth and development, while using fat to fuel exercise. We speculate kids may have reduced levels of stored carbohydrates and, as a result, the energy supply must come from fat."

If a physician or certified exercise physiologist were to know the exercise intensity that caused the greatest utilization of fat in children, then that intensity could be targeted, notes Riddell. Funding for his lab comes from several sources, including the National Sciences & Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research. ■

Fuel for Thought

A York study will help overweight kids burn more fat

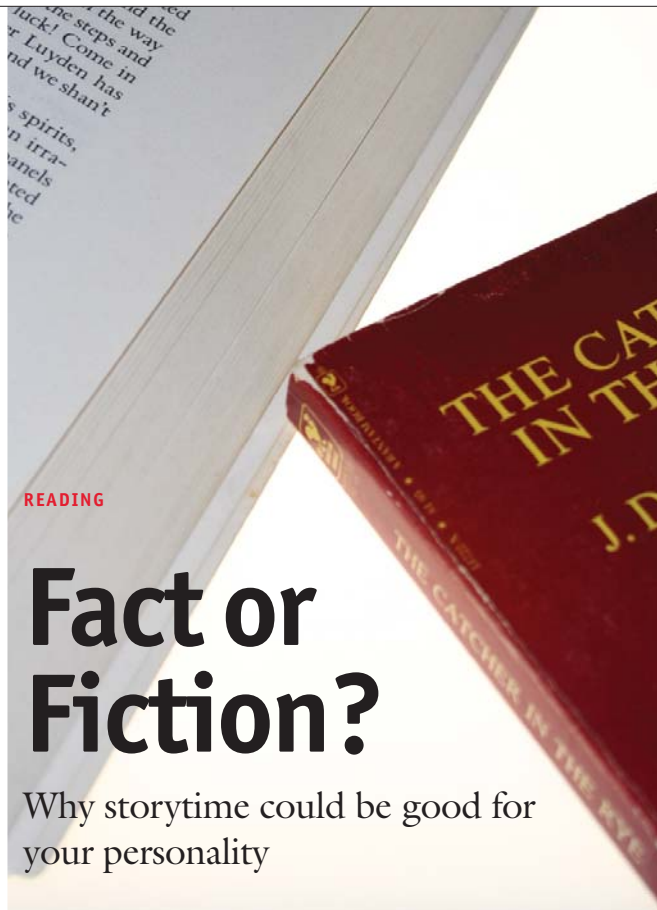


Could reading good fiction make you more sensitive or attuned socially to other people's feelings and needs? Research by York psychology Professor Raymond Mar and his colleagues suggests it could.

Mar is studying how – or if – reading narrative fiction (as opposed to expository non-fiction) makes you more socially adept. “Frequent readers are often stereotyped as socially awkward. But this may only be true of non-fiction readers, not readers of fiction,” says Mar. In one study, he found that people who were assigned a fiction story scored higher on a test of social reasoning skill than readers assigned a non-fiction essay.

Mar's theory is that comprehending characters in narrative fiction appears to parallel the comprehension of peers in the actual world. “Frequent fiction readers may bolster or maintain their social abilities – unlike frequent readers of non-fiction. Our other study found fiction print-exposure positively predicted measures of social ability, while non-fiction print-exposure was a negative predictor.”

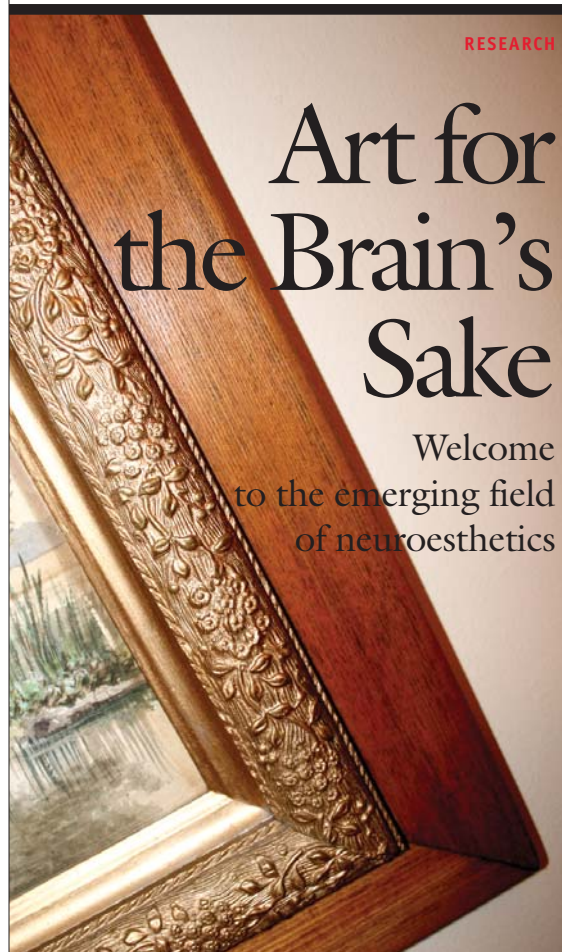
Mar's most recent work has focused on identifying the common neural basis of both story processing and social processing. He says if research can demonstrate that reading fiction directly influences social skills, there would be a strong case for employing narrative in education, and perhaps even in treatment of mental health disorders that involve a lack of empathy. Along with colleagues, Mar maintains a site on the psychology of fiction at www.onfiction.ca. ■



READING

Fact or Fiction?

Why storytime could be good for your personality



RESEARCH

Art for the Brain's Sake

Welcome to the emerging field of neuroesthetics

Call it Sally McKay's brainstorm – to investigate what neuroscience (the study of the brain) can tell us about what goes on in our grey matter when someone looks at a work of art. McKay is part of the brave new world marrying art theory with hard science. The field is called “neuroesthetics”, or NA, and McKay, a PhD student in York's Graduate Program in Visual Arts, is convinced that it has much to offer art criticism.

“The idea is to use neuroscience to see just how useful the study of isolated brain activity in a lab setting can be for describing the experience of art,” she says. “Put simply, NA is the study of art and the human brain. They are very different areas, of course, but they are both deeply concerned with consciousness.”

McKay, who is both an artist and curator, says she studies ways artworks set a stage for consciousness. “I locate my research in the field of neuroesthetics because, like many artists, neuroscientists address consciousness as an embodied, physical phenomenon.”

McKay has been conducting interviews with neuroscientists and teaching herself how to read their technical papers, she says. She's even undergone a two-hour brain scan of her own and is volunteering on a neuroscience research project at Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre in Toronto. But she's not about to become a lab scientist, she says.

“My project is grounded in my experiences in the art world. I'll work with the neuroesthetics literature and technical essays and papers that address colour perception and imitation, as well as volunteer for neuroscientific experiments, in order to experience first-hand the socio-technological apparatus that determine relations between scientists and their objects of study.” ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RSQUARED

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF NEELA MAHARAJ

UNIVERSE

ENGINEERING

Red Rover

York students raise the Mars bar

If you thought a YURT was only a portable structure used by nomadic tribes on the steppes of Central Asia, think again. At York, at least, YURT stands for “York University Rover Team”. York's team recently designed a remote-controlled robotic device that could conceivably explore Mars.

Members of YURT include over 30 grad and undergrad students from Faculty of Science & Engineering programs. Space engineering Professor Regina Lee serves as a mentor. The team made news last summer when its rover finished third in the two-day International University Rover Challenge organized by The Mars Society and held in Hanksville, Utah. York's was the only Canadian entry.

YURT's rover was tested on a course that simulated obstacles it would find on Mars, one where ambient temps would reach 38 C and the robot would need to deal with uneven terrain and dust. The rover prototype competition put the bots through operational tasks such as construction, soil sampling and emergency navigation. Neela Maharaj, director of marketing for YURT, says York's rover was somewhat challenged by the Utah desert's sandy terrain. “Many of the other teams had competed before so they were ready for that.”

The hardest part of the project, says Maharaj, was “applying our theoretical background to building a fully functional rover. We had to design it from the ground up.” It took less than a year from concept to build. Thanks to donations and sponsorships, seven York students were able to attend the competition. ■



O

N MARCH 28, York dresses up in black tie for a gala concert to mark the University's 50th anniversary. Produced by former Faculty of Fine Arts dean Phillip Silver, the two-hour program features a parade of singers, dancers, actors and writers who got their start at York. Soprano Vania Chan flies in from New York City to sing Offenbach's The Doll Song. The enduring student a cappella ensemble

Wibi draws alumni together to finesse favourite tunes. Two dance grads go for laughs in a humorous ballet by choreographer Susan Cash. These are but three of many brief but extraordinary performances that will make this one unforgettable evening.

Gala of Greats

As the 50th-anniversary celebration gets into high gear, York talent will shine at an elegant birthday concert.

BY MARTHA TANCOCK



FOR HER FUNNY, HEART-MELTING 2006 performance as Olympia, the wind-up doll in Offenbach's opera *The Tales of Hoffman*, soprano Vania Chan has won prize after prize. "I love telling a story through music," says Chan (BFA Spec. Hons. '08), who has been singing and playing piano since kindergarten. Singing refreshes this church cantor's spirit and can make her euphoric when she's wrapped "in the moment" on stage. A protege of York Music Department mezzo-soprano Catherine Robbin, the straight-A student is pursuing a master's in classical voice at the Manhattan School of Music. In talent-rich New York City, she auditions and competes every chance she gets, keeping an eye on her goals – starting a performance company and becoming a professor. At the gala, she reprises *The Doll Song* in the "crystal-clear tone" and "lovely, effortless singing" adjudicators swoon over.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SEAN WATTERS

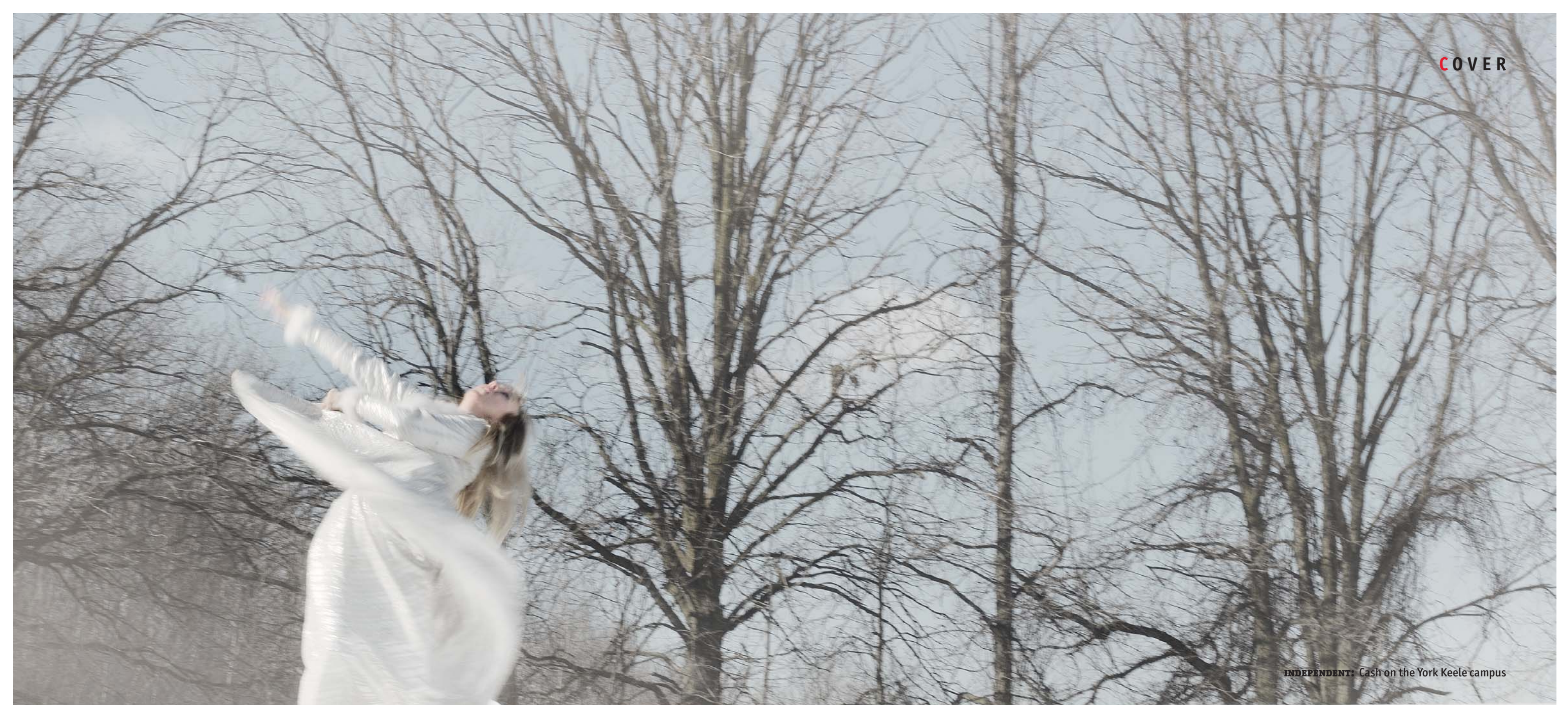
Singing in the Moment

Harmony that Stretches

GARRET TITUS DOESN'T LOOK LIKE A DRUM. But he sounds like one when he's performing with Wibi, York's award-winning a cappella choir. After years of practice, the 30-year-old music student (that's him in glasses at the top of the banister) can sound like cymbals, snare and kick drum – using his lips, mouth and breath. Hip hoppers call it beat boxing. Audiences fall spellbound when they hear a cappella, says Titus, Wibi co-director, because singers don't just do four-part harmony, they do backup – brass, strings, guitars, bells – without touching an instrument. That's what draws Titus to this niche genre – “how far you can stretch the human voice.” Fun and continentally competitive, student-run Wibi attracts undergraduates of all stripes and has spawned Cadence, a popular four-man a cappella group. Under the patronage of Winters College, the choir has thrived for 21 years and many alumni will return to add their voices to rock classic Don't Stop Believing and gospel standard Come Unto Me at the gala.

So who are the rest of the Wibi stair people? In the back row standing are, from left, Jessica Ng, Nikolas Benn, Ryan W.K. Moilliet, Snowzei Chau, Titus, Mark Williamson, Alannah Garrett, Ginny Bodsworth, Brooklyn Doran, Kevin Bresser, Dylan Hillyer and Shaina Silver-Baird. Sitting on the stairs are, back row, Taylor Abrahamse, Stephanie Chen and Myvanwy Mackness, and front row, Jinelle Piereder and Jay Clipperton, also co-director.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK



INDEPENDENT: Cash on the York Keele campus

Elegance on the Move

SUSAN CASH FIRST DANCED The Bach Piece, in which a young person competes with her imaginary friend for attention, 26 years ago. Her droll, sprightly, three-and-a-half minute composition set to Bach's Concerto No. 3 in D Major was an instant hit, and after she set it as a duet called The Bach Dual, the Canadian Children's Dance Theatre toured it around the world. Independent from the start, Cash (BFA Spec. Hons.

'78, MA '07) founded her own company to showcase what many admire as her "refined, elegant and quirky" work. The York dance professor still dances and now choreographs moving-site performances, designed for urban settings. Still, The Bach Dual remains her signature piece, to be reprised at the gala by grads Nicole Rose Bond (BFA Spec. Hons. '05) and Yvonne Ng (BFA Spec. Hons. '87).

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KC ARMSTRONG

What's the Big Idea?

Seth Feldman, convenor of the 50+50 Symposium for York's birthday, knows a lot about deep thinking.

BY MARTHA TANCOCK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

GUESS WHO'S INVITED to York's 50th anniversary party? Global citizens who care about the future of this planet and the quality of life here – Inuit environmentalist Sheila Watt-Cloutier, digital thinker Nicholas Negroponte, global cultures scholar Arjun Appadurai, Supreme Court Justice Rosalie Abella, evolutionary biologist Edward O. Wilson, Canadian statesman Lloyd Axworthy and writer-poet-philosopher Margaret Atwood. On March 27 and 28, they will gather for York's headiest anniversary celebration, the 50+50 Symposium, to answer this question: What has your field learned in the past 50 years and how will it get us through the next 50?

Well, that sounds like “An Interdisciplinary Discussion of Pretty Much Everything” – which just happens to be the event's subtitle. Guess who dreamt it up? Who else but Seth Feldman, pioneering Canadian film studies professor and director of York's Robarts Centre for Canadian Studies. When the University sought ideas for celebrating “things we think are important at York”, Feldman proposed this debate-fest on social justice, environmental sustainability, human progress and the arts. Judging by the 25 shows he's produced for CBC Radio's “Ideas” over the past 30 years, he's drawn to deep conversations on just about everything – from dog ownership and Robin Hood to Victorian dinosaurs and the canoe. “The nice thing about ‘Ideas’ is you don't just do an introductory lecture, you go much deeper. There's nothing like it,” he says. Feldman expects the symposium to go just as deep. “I want it to be a real symposium where these people are there actually thinking about the topic, not just giving their set piece.” He's made sure of it by pairing guests with stellar York researchers from the same fields and bringing all together for freewheeling conversations at the end of day. “It's going to be an amazing event.”

It's not the first time Feldman has corralled big names to talk about big ideas. In 2000-2001, as Robarts Chair in Canadian Studies at York, he coordinated The Triumph of Canadian Cinema, a series of panels and presentations featuring the country's leading filmmakers, including Don McKellar, Deepa Mehta and Norman Jewison. As part of the series, Feldman delivered the Robarts Lecture, “Canadian Film, Eh?”

How did this native New Yorker become a champion of Canadian film and culture? A history major who studied creative writing under experimental novelist John Barth, Feldman fell into teaching film as a graduate student at the State University of New York at Buffalo and ended up completing a PhD on a Russian film director. In 1975, few universities taught film, so

when the University of Western Ontario offered him a chance to teach the subject, he drove his Volkswagen across the Peace Bridge and never looked back.

In short order, Feldman co-edited the first textbook on Canadian film – Canadian Film Reader – and helped found the Film Studies Association of Canada. “I was surprised that the country that gave us the National Film Board and some of the world's best experimental filmmakers was so reluctant to teach its own national cinema,” he says. “So I and a few others set out to develop Canadian cinema as an academic field.”

Invited to join York's faculty in 1983, he got the chance to teach Canada's first graduate students in film and helped propel York's Department of Film into one of Canada's best and biggest. Outside academe, he programmed Canadian film festivals, including a special Allan King retrospective for the 2002 Toronto International Film Festival. He has closely followed the maturing film industry north of the 49th parallel and has never regretted – until Barack Obama – leaving the US. “I remember hearing complaints about American cultural imperialism when I arrived,” says Feldman. “Then I got involved in Canadian film and started complaining about it, too.”

At 60, Feldman continues to enrich Canadian film history. Boomers like him remember the extraordinary multiple-screen documentaries created for Expo '67 in Montreal, but no one's seen them since the pavilions where they could be projected were dismantled. “When we teach film, this period is like a black hole,” he says. That may soon change as Feldman leads a project to resurrect these cinematic wonders and possibly construct “virtual” pavilions using digital technology so people can see them again in their original context.

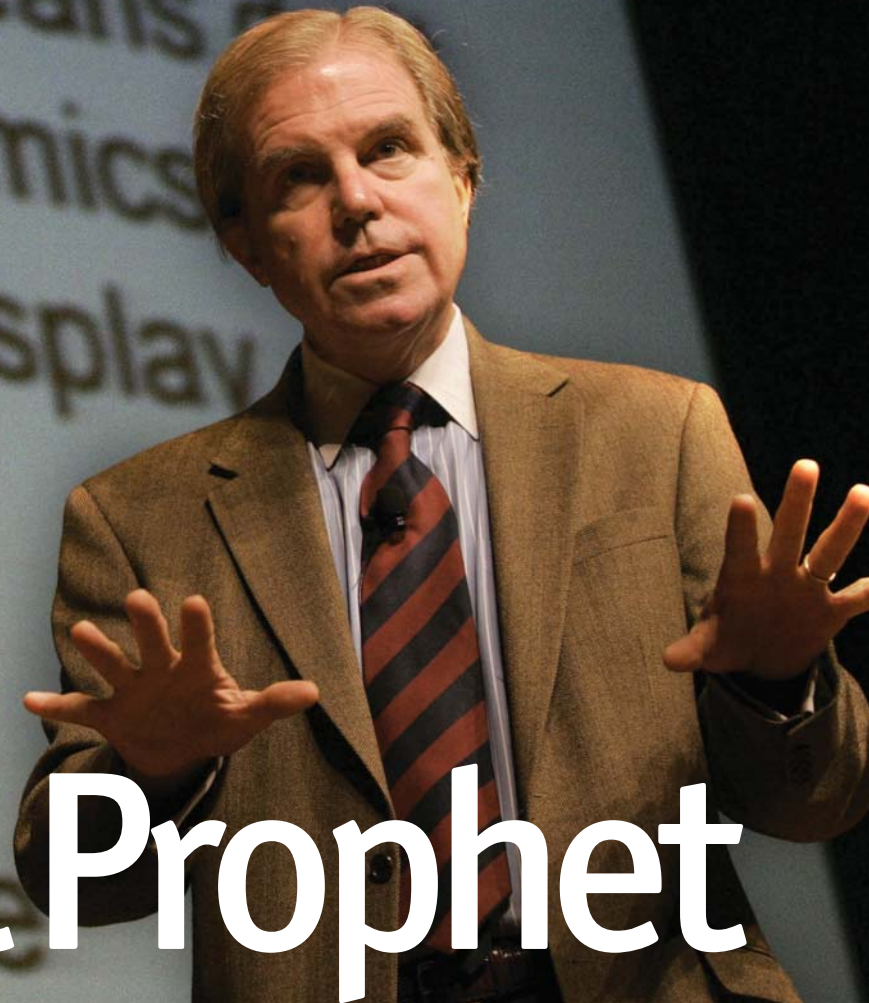
That's not all Feldman has on his plate these days. The former Faculty of Fine Arts dean is trying his hand at making video documentaries as part of a project conceived by York fine arts Professor Renate Wickens, his wife, to record the enduring effect on three towns whose names are associated with Nazi concentration camps. He's also writing a history of documentaries and collaborating on a study of Marconi in Canada. And he's in the thick of producing a three-part “Ideas” documentary on Darwin's life and legacy.

“As usual, I'm overcommitted,” says the closet writer who's published three short stories and plans to publish the rest on his own online salon des refusés. He's written screenplays and started two novels, one about growing up in the 1960s and the other about an academic administrator. “They'll probably be retirement projects,” says Feldman, though he can't imagine the prospect. ■

50+50 participant Nicholas Negroponte talks about laptops, poverty, creativity – and Marshall McLuhan.

BY MICHAEL TODD

Digital Prophet



ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS of York's 50th birthday celebrations is the 50+50 Symposium, subtitled "An Interdisciplinary Discussion of Pretty Much Everything", in which top global thinkers will share their ideas at York on March 27 and 28. Among those speaking will be Nicholas Negroponte, architect, computer scientist and author of the 1995 book *Being Digital*. Negroponte is on leave from his position as director of the MIT Media Lab to promote the global initiative he co-founded, One Laptop per Child (OLPC), which provides low-cost XO computers to the world's poorest children. Fittingly, he was interviewed via the Internet.

You've been described as a "digital optimist". Are you still?

Optimism is tightly coupled with self-confidence and personal security. Add good faith, sometimes blind faith, and it makes for a naturally positive outlook. An advantage is that you thereafter work very hard to see it happen – like self-fulfilling prophecies. So, yes, I believe that the digital world can provide education and alleviate poverty

How would you typify a digital pessimist?

Whatever "digital pessimism" might be, it surely includes a generational component. We often look at a new behaviour, like text messaging, and wonder about old "values" such as

book reading. A great deal of pessimism is the result of differences – different than what we did. Imagine that bank-teller machines at one time were considered onerous and yet we all have a hard time imagining life without them. There are people under 25 who cannot imagine life without Google.

What aspects of digital culture (or culture in general) do you most like to talk about these days at speaking engagements?

My repertoire has narrowed, mostly to do with the developing world, about which you cannot get me to stop talking (if given half a chance). I can tell you anecdote after anecdote that illustrates how children are not merely "learning", but are the agents of change. We all ask our children, nieces, nephews or grandchildren for help with our laptops and cellphones. A run-of-the-mill 10-year-old can be the family CIO. Imagine this in a village where most parents are illiterate.

What ideas around the interaction of computers and culture excite you at the moment? What are you thinking about?

I think about reaching the really remote and rural kids, in the most extreme poverty, in some cases in conflict or post-conflict zones. When I started One Laptop per Child it was dismissed as pure silly and unrealistic. Today I am told that laptop makers "compete" with us. Rubbish. A handful of vendors view children as a market, not a mission, and would no sooner be in Afghanistan than Mars.

On your speaking tours, is there a question you almost always get asked?

I try to do less speaking these days. But one of the most common questions I get is: When did you get the idea of One Laptop per Child? The answer is 1968, influenced by Seymour Papert, with whom I worked for almost 40 years thereafter. His work – and later that of the MIT Media Lab – was about how children learn in the digital age, not by instruction, but construction – or what has come to be called constructionism.

Is there a question you'd like to get asked, but usually aren't?

Where do new ideas come from? The belief is that new ideas are easy to have, whereas the opposite is true.

Did you ever have a chance to meet Marshall McLuhan? If you didn't, what would you like to have talked to him about?

I did not meet him. In the years that he was still alive, I never used the word "medium". In 1980, the year he died,

I started using it to describe the "convergence" (yes, I used that word then) of the broadcast, publishing and computer industries. The founding of the Media Lab was as a place where the invention and creative use of new media would happen. I would have talked to him about that, as well as the automatic movement between media. We were fond of saying in the early days of the MIT Media Lab that the medium is not the message, the message is the message.

I'm sure you read his books. Did he have any influence on your ideas about media or digital culture at the time or subsequently?

His influence was less than it should have been. I say that because I am dyslexic and struggled to read. You will notice that my own writing, such as *Being Digital*, is simple.

You invested early on in *Wired* magazine, which was founded in 1993. Not everyone would have believed it would be successful. What made your hunches good?

When I invested in *Wired* I invested in two people and an idea. I made so many bad investments over 30 years that I would not say my investing strategy was good. But the time for *Wired* had come. The revolution was over. The era was that of a digital culture.

Another prescient idea you had, in 1980, was for the Media Lab at MIT, which opened in 1985. Can you give us some insight into how it came about?

Several things happened at the same time. For example, the then-president of MIT, Jerome B. Wiesner, decided to retire and not become chairman. Instead he wanted to return to research in a lab that did not exist. Another was that MIT had a collection of arts and creative activities that did not fall under the aegis of a film school, an education department or a school of journalism – thereby making it frictionless to bring them together. Lastly, the human-computer interface was recognized as a sophisticated problem, not sissy science. The PC had not been born. AT&T was a monopoly. Computers were not for people.

Even as early as 1967 you established the Architecture Machine Group at MIT. What kinds of things did AMG look at in terms of human-computer interaction?

AMG did some advanced research in display and sensory technologies. One of its largest projects was called "Put-That-There", which used voice, gesture and a wall-sized display to

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHITOSE SUZUKI – AP

IDEAS

alloy full body, natural language interaction, all in combination, the performance of which has not been topped in the 29 years since.

Looking back, has time validated your predictions of 14 years ago in *Being Digital*?

A great deal unfolded in lockstep obedience. By contrast, speech recognition has under-performed (to date), by no means as advanced as I predicted. Social networks were not imagined in the way they have evolved.

What led you to establish One Laptop per Child? Was it in any way a response to technology criticism levelled by people such as Neil Postman, who wrote: "The advantages and disadvantages of new technologies are never distributed evenly among the population. This means that every new technology benefits some and harms others."

The imperative is and was about the elimination of poverty, not an intellectual exercise about media or technology. After handing over the Media Lab to a new regime, I decided to use my connections, experience and unfailing audacity to tackle a humanitarian problem, very much an extension of what I had been doing for years.

What has it meant to you personally to be involved with the development of the XO computer?

The first two years were about travel, 320 days per year, advocating OLPC. The next two were about realization. It is by far the largest project I have ever tackled and for that reason the most gratifying, albeit with considerable frustration. The fact that there are more than 600,000 kids using the XO – soon to be one million – is a big accomplishment, albeit smaller than I expected.

What are your feelings about the success of the program so far? Future plans?

It is at a cusp. Incrementalism is the enemy of creativity. We are at a stage where we must recognize what aspects of OLPC have run their course, and what new ones should be addressed, ones that change the world and would not happen through normal market forces.

Is there a piece of technology you simply can't live without?

Connectivity.

What's your least favourite thing about computers?

Complexity, featuritis, software obesity and small print. ■



WHY WE GIVE TO YORK

Robert Drummond (BA '67), dean, Faculty of Arts; and Vicky Drummond (MA '76), coordinator, Nellie Langford Rowell Library explain their reasons for leaving a bequest to York University.

"We thought it was important for our wills to reflect our life, and a large portion of our life has taken place at York. We are proud alumni who first met in 1974 and became better acquainted in the late 1970s. We married in 1980.

A planned gift allows our names to live on, and it contributes to the value and growth of the University and society as a whole. Above all, we think this gift best exemplifies our deep commitment to education and to York.

We plan to have our bequest fund several student awards and hope our example motivates others to do the same."

York University is in the midst of its 50th anniversary fundraising campaign, *York to the Power of 50*. There has never been a better time to redefine the possible through gift planning. Contact York University Foundation at 416-650-8210 or visit yorku.ca/foundation



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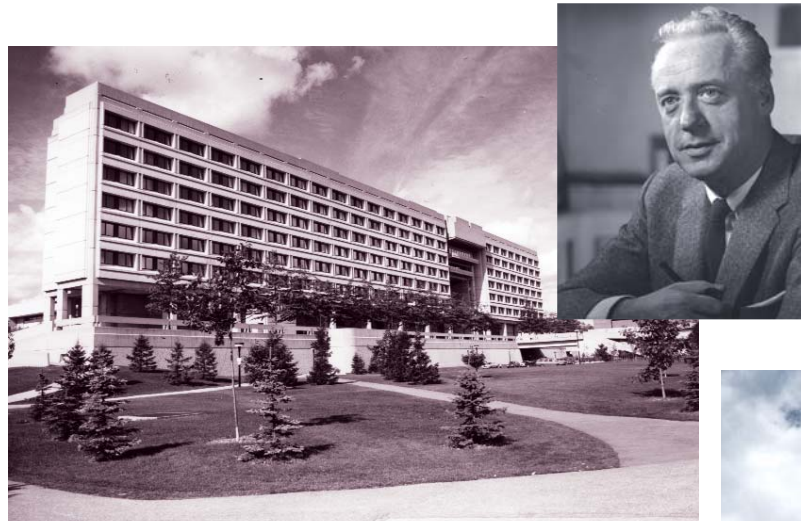
CORNERSTONES

A 50th-birthday look at the names and faces behind York buildings.

BY MICHAEL TODD

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF CLARA THOMAS ARCHIVES & SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

WHAT'S IN A NAME? Well, if you're talking about some of York's major buildings, quite a lot. Many of the University's longtime structures have their own unique history and enshrine in their monikers the memory of York's founders and benefactors.



Ross Humanities & Social Science Building (a.k.a., the "Ross Building") - Keele, 1969

Named for York's first president (1959-1970), Murray Ross. Born in Sydney, NS, Ross led York University through its first decade, and died at 90 in 2000. Before his presidency at York, he was vice-president of the University of Toronto and a social work professor. He was the author of several books, including some about York.



William Small Centre Keele, 2003

Named in memory of founding University administrator William (Bill) Small. He was York's first comptroller and secretary to the Board of Governors.



Farquharson Life Sciences Building Keele, 1965

The first structure on the Keele campus, which opened in 1965, was named for Dr. Ray F. Farquharson (1897-1965), a teacher, physician, researcher and founding governor of York from 1959 to 1965.

Frost Library Glendon, 1963

Named after Leslie Frost, premier of Ontario when York was founded in 1959. A Progressive Conservative who became known as "Old Man Ontario" for his longevity in office, he led the province from 1949 to 1961.



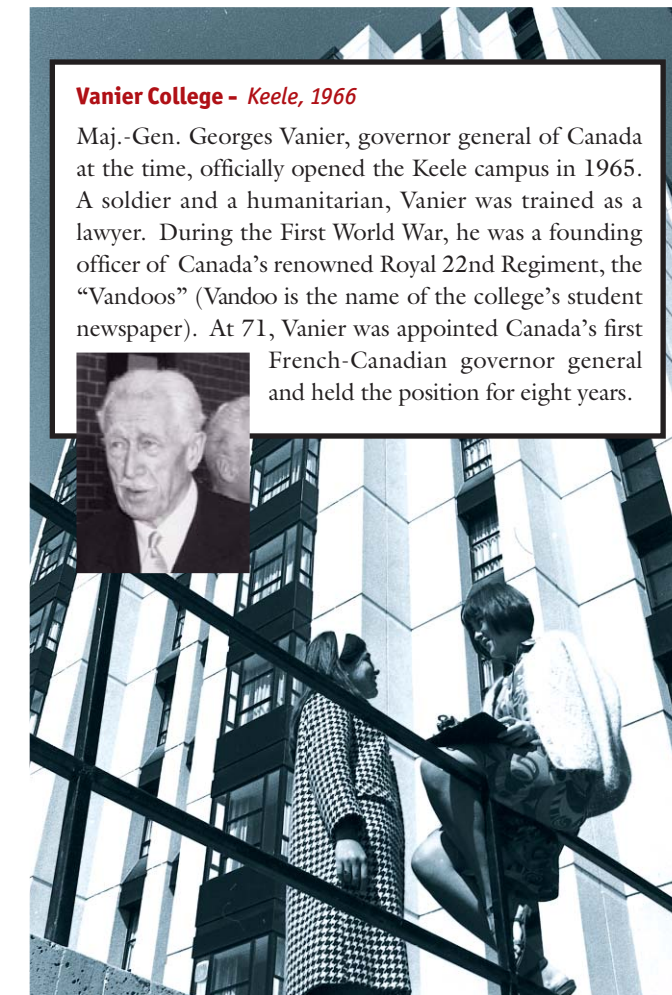
Founders College - Keele, 1965

Founders was the first college established on the Keele campus. It honours the founders of the University, and specifically those who contributed to the Founders Fund Campaign, including individuals, foundations, the provincial government and corporations.



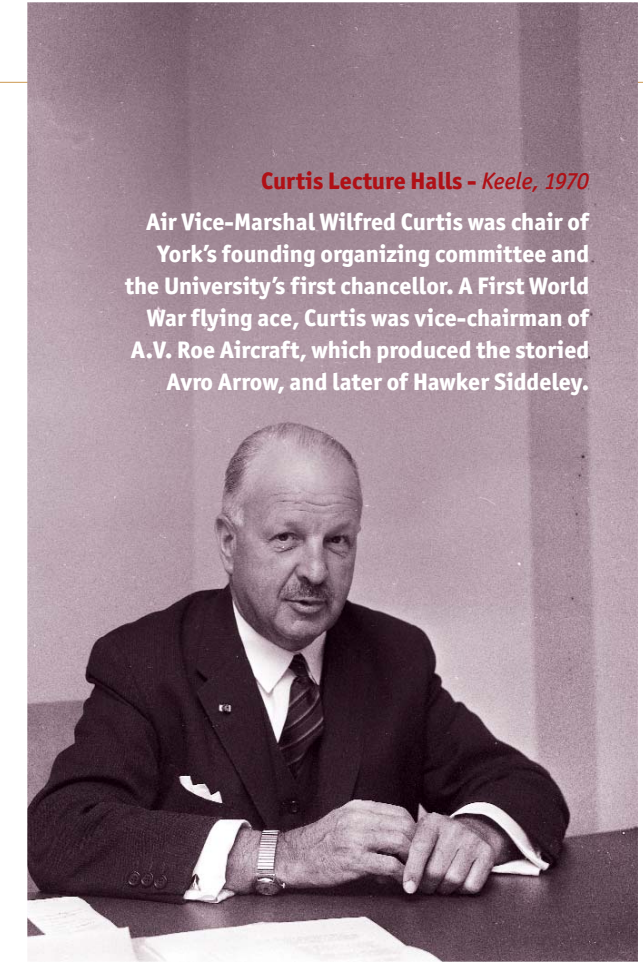
Seymour Schulich Building - Keele, 2003

The Faculty of Administrative Studies was renamed the Schulich School of Business in 1995 to honour benefactor Seymour Schulich, and eight years later moved into its new building named for him. Schulich formerly led Franco-Nevada Mining Corp. and Newmont Capital Ltd. and is a York honorary governor.



Vanier College - Keele, 1966

Maj.-Gen. Georges Vanier, governor general of Canada at the time, officially opened the Keele campus in 1965. A soldier and a humanitarian, Vanier was trained as a lawyer. During the First World War, he was a founding officer of Canada's renowned Royal 22nd Regiment, the "Vandoo" (Vandoo is the name of the college's student newspaper). At 71, Vanier was appointed Canada's first French-Canadian governor general and held the position for eight years.



Curtis Lecture Halls - Keele, 1970

Air Vice-Marshal Wilfred Curtis was chair of York's founding organizing committee and the University's first chancellor. A First World War flying ace, Curtis was vice-chairman of A.V. Roe Aircraft, which produced the storied Avro Arrow, and later of Hawker Siddeley.

Stedman Lecture Halls - Keele, 1966

George H. Stedman, of the Stedman Bros. chain of variety stores which operated across Canada, was a humanitarian and founder of the George H. Stedman Foundation.



Atkinson Building - Keele, 1966

Named after Joseph E. Atkinson, longtime publisher of the Toronto Star who died in 1948. The Atkinson program was established with a 1961 bequest of \$782,000 from The Atkinson Charitable Foundation.



Scott Library - Keele, 1971

Named for Canadian businessman William Pearson Scott, one of the first members of York's Board of Governors. Scott himself never had a chance to attend university but was a keen supporter of higher education.



CAMPUS

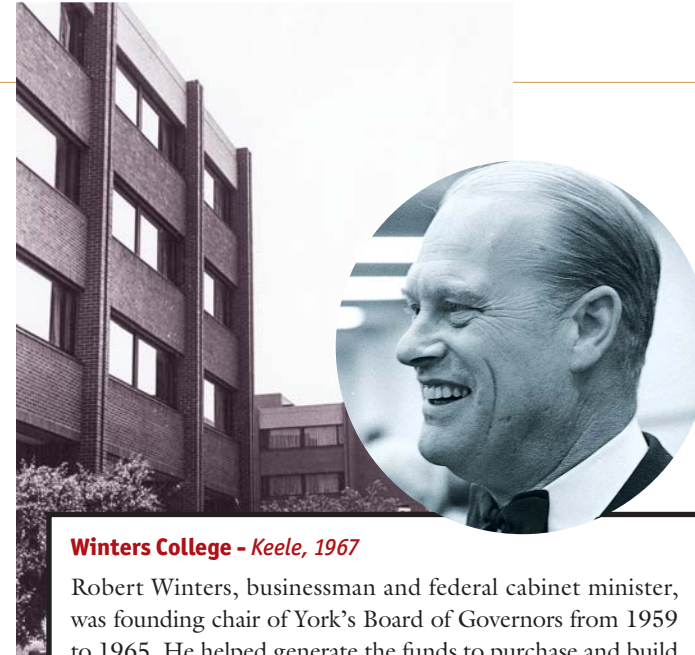
Stong College - Keele, 1971

The Stongs owned and farmed the land on which York is built (1816-1854). Black Creek Pioneer Village is constructed around the original log cabin built by Daniel Stong in 1816. The college was originally founded as "College E" in 1969 and housed temporarily in what is now the East Office Building. It was named Stong College in 1970.



Bethune College - Keele, 1972

Norman Bethune College was established in 1971 and was originally known as "College G". It is named after Gravenhurst, Ont.-born Dr. Henry Norman Bethune, the famed doctor and Communist Party member who made innovations in military medicine during his work in the Spanish Civil War and in wartime China. He died in China in 1939.



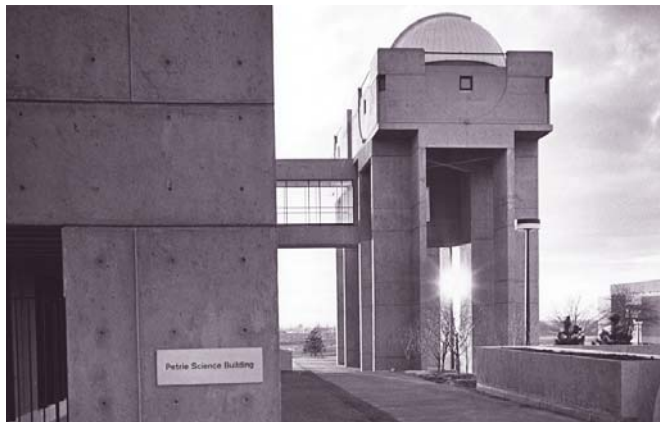
Winters College - Keele, 1967

Robert Winters, businessman and federal cabinet minister, was founding chair of York's Board of Governors from 1959 to 1965. He helped generate the funds to purchase and build both the Glendon and Keele campuses, as well as the York Room on the 9th floor of the Ross Building, and worked to acquire much of the artwork found at the Keele campus.



Vari Hall - Keele, 1991

Named in honour of Helen Vari and her husband George Vari, a construction entrepreneur, who were major benefactors of the project. Helen Vari is a York honorary governor.



Petrie Science & Engineering Building - Keele, 1968

Named in honour of astronomer Robert H. Petrie, who died in 1966 while director of the Dominion Astrophysical Observatory in Victoria, BC.



Bennett Centre for Student Services - Keele, 2004

In 2006, the Student Services Centre was renamed the Bennett Centre for Student Services in honour of Avie Bennett, chancellor of the University from 1998 to 2004. Bennett is chair of publisher McClelland & Stewart and of the Historica Foundation of Canada.

McLaughlin College - Keele, 1968

Col. Robert (Sam) McLaughlin, a Canadian automotive pioneer and philanthropist, sold his company to General Motors in 1918 to create General Motors of Canada, with McLaughlin as president. The McLaughlin Foundation provided part of the funding to build McLaughlin College, and "Colonel Sam" was on hand for the official opening in 1968. A philanthropist and a benefactor of York, McLaughlin died in 1972 at 101.



Tait McKenzie Centre - Keele, 1966

Named for Robert Tait McKenzie, a world-renowned Canadian physical educator, medical doctor and sculptor who died in 1938. He was a pioneer in rehabilitative medicine and gained fame for his original ideas on the treatment of scoliosis (lateral curvature of the spine).



Joan & Martin Goldfarb Centre for Fine Arts - Keele, 1973

In 2001 the Faculty of Fine Arts' home building was renamed in recognition of Joan & Martin Goldfarb's \$3.75-million gift to the Faculty, which comprised an impressive collection of art works and a donation towards capital improvements. Martin Goldfarb served as head of the York University Parents' Association and was for 12 years a member of the Board of Governors.

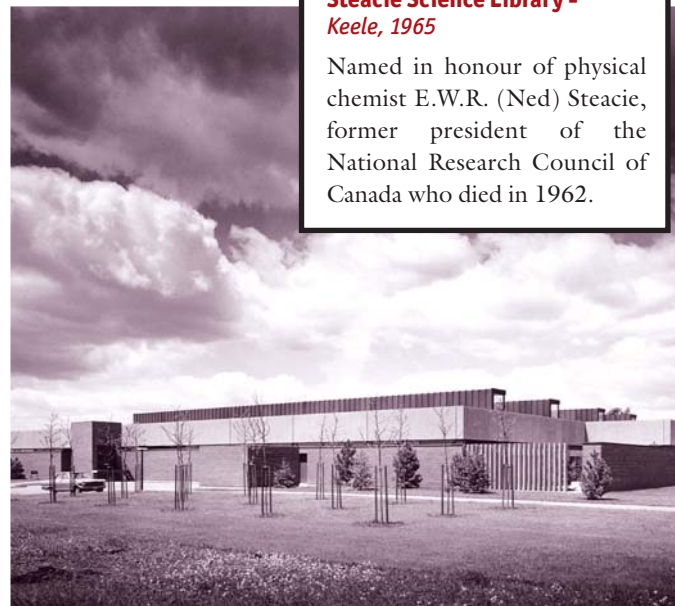


Proctor Field House - Glendon, 1964

Named after John S. Proctor, a businessman, former athlete and founding York governor (1959-1983). He was also York's fifth chancellor, from 1982 to 1983, and was instrumental in bringing the National Tennis Centre to York.

Steacie Science Library - Keele, 1965

Named in honour of physical chemist E.W.R. (Ned) Steacie, former president of the National Research Council of Canada who died in 1962.



Lumbers Building - Keele, 1984

Leonard G. Lumbers was a businessman and an early governor of York (1962-1986). A prominent Canadian industrialist (Noranda Manufacturing Ltd. and Canada Wire and Cable), Lumbers was also a principal owner of the Toronto Argonauts football team.



How the York men's soccer team won the national championship.

BY DAVID FULLER

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDSAY LOZON

IT MAY SOUND ODD, but losing may have been the key to winning for the York men's soccer team. In November the soccer Lions won their first Canadian Interuniversity Sport (CIS) national championship since 1977 after setbacks that would have derailed most teams' best-laid plans. The fact that they survived to win the title by a single goal against Trinity Western University, a team from perennial soccer power British Columbia, is a testament to both the players' maturity and a training program that some say has set a new standard for university soccer programs.

Despite the number of years between titles, the fact that York won the championship was not unexpected – head coach Carmine Isacco, the reigning CIS coach of the year, had made a habit of taking teams to the national finals. In his four years as a coach in the CIS, two with the University of Toronto and now two with York, he has reached the finals every year. And with an undefeated record at the start of the 2008 season, York was the No. 1-ranked team in the country – until disaster struck. It came in the form of an ineligible-player ruling that stripped the team of its first four wins and turned what might have been an easy road to the finals into a stressful drive to survive that didn't end until the final game of the regular season. “That was tough,” says midfielder Frank Bruno, who led the team in scoring and was named CIS player of the year. “But, we gelled more as a team. Everyone knew they had to step up and do a lot more themselves.”

York suffered yet another setback when it ran into a well-prepared opponent in Wilfrid Laurier University and lost the Ontario University Athletics championship 1-0 in overtime. Fortunately, both teams had already earned a berth at the national final. The psychological impact might have killed the team's confidence but for the experience gained in losing the 2007 semifinal against the University of British Columbia, 2-1, in overtime. “That was the best university game ever,” Isacco recalls. “After the 2007 game, we kept our heads up and said, alright, we learn from this. We learned that we need to create our own luck.”

A former professional goalkeeper who coached with the wildly popular pro team Toronto FC, Isacco knew creating luck was a matter of training, attention to detail and recruiting – the key to his hiring by York master coach Paul James. “I've got a good grip on the community,” says Isacco, explaining how he convinced players like Bruno, a former member of Canada's national under-20 team, Adrian Pena and Jarek Whiteman to commit to university soccer without the benefit of scholarships or incentives that US schools could offer. “They obviously have

to believe in what we're trying to do,” he says. It also helps that many of Isacco's charges played for him in the highly competitive minor soccer leagues in the Greater Toronto Area and appreciate his coaching style. “On the field he is tough,” says Bruno, “but players love to play for him.”

For his part, Isacco says the journey to the final was a learning experience for him, too, even after his years on the pro circuit with teams in Toronto, Buffalo, Rochester, Edmonton and Milwaukee, where he won a national title. “I needed some mentorship,” he says of his decision to move to York when James, who has a football industries MBA from the University of Liverpool, made the offer. “Paul is a great mentor and a businessman of the game.” Having the support of a former Canadian national team member who played in the World Cup and was voted into Canada's Soccer Hall of Fame has its advantages, says Isacco. It taught him how to improve an already brilliant player like Bruno, who could carry the team on his back but who came to realize, Isacco says, that “the best thing he does is make people around him better.”

Forward David Nogaro, who, along with championship MVP Gerard Ladiyou, is one of a dozen members of the York team who also play with Isacco for the Canadian Soccer League's Italia Shooters in the off-season, proved his coach's point in the 83rd minute of the championship game when he took a pass from Bruno to score the championship-winning goal. “It was incredible, awesome,” says Bruno. “That's the good thing about our team, most of us are older guys who knew about what it would take.” And so did their coach, who says the team started preparing in January for next season. “We need to have a collective raise in expectation,” he says. “Other teams are preparing for us and we need to get better.” ■

CREATING 'OUR OWN LUCK': Isacco



Kickin' It Up

YORK PEOPLE

Valerie Hathaway-Warner

Education student, award winner

Spreading Music

"TEACHING FOUND ME," says Valerie Hathaway-Warner, a teacher candidate in York's Faculty of Education who was named winner of the prestigious Joseph W. Atkinson Scholarship for Excellence in Teaching from the Ontario College of Teachers Foundation last fall. "No matter what I did, I always wound up teaching it," says the sole-supporting mother of two children. And Hathaway-Warner has done a lot, becoming an instructor of canoeists, campers, lifeguards, skaters, synchronized swimmers and especially young musicians. She has a degree in music performance from York's Faculty of Fine Arts (BFA Spec. Hons. '91) and helped establish a community youth stage-band program serving rural Simcoe County in 2005. Based in Barrie, Ont., she also owns her own business where she develops new therapeutic supplies and does consulting. "I applied for every award and scholarship I could find," says Hathaway-Warner, "and I won the brass ring one. I am still surprised and excited by it."

What will she do after graduation? "I want to improve the accessibility of quality music education in the classroom," she says. "Many classroom teachers didn't learn music when they were in school. Now that they have to teach music, it can be intimidating. I would like to end up in a resource position, teaching teachers." ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD



Craig Kielburger

Free The Children founder, EMBA student

The Business of Charity

NOT MANY STUDY PROGRAMS would suit Craig Kielburger's schedule as the renowned founder (at 12) and chair of Free The Children, the world's largest network of children helping children through education. More than a million youth are involved in its innovative programs in over 45 countries. Between November and January, Kielburger made business trips to the Middle East, rural China, Thailand and Kenya before returning to Toronto. And during that time, the 26-year-old managed to fit in two non-work-related stops, one in Hong Kong and another in Chicago, as part of his coursework for the Kellogg-Schulich Executive MBA Program. It was lucky he was in the neighbourhood, he says of the two foreign internship sessions that are an integral part of the curriculum. But his choice of Kellogg-Schulich – ranked the number one EMBA program in the world by *The Wall Street Journal* – was no matter of chance.

Kielburger – the youngest person ever admitted to the York EMBA program – wanted a globally and ethically oriented business program that could give him the tools he needs to maximize his organization's return on its investment in "social capital." "We've grown massively larger and we are now developing new and interesting social enterprises," he says of the more than 500 schools Free The Children has built in developing countries. When he finishes his degree, Free The Children's executive director, Dalal Al-Waheidi, will take her turn in the program. "There are things the charitable model can teach the business world about social enterprise too," Kielburger says. "The future of charity – and business – is how we can interact with the rest of the world." ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK



GIVING

Filling the Gap

A new psychology clinic at York will bring much-needed help



DONORS ARE HELPING launch a much-needed psychology clinic in April on York's Keele campus. The York University Psychology Clinic (YUPC), located on the first floor of the Behavioural Sciences Building, has been attracting interest and investment since its inception. The Alva Foundation gave \$100,000 toward the clinic's activities in autism research and treatment. The funds, used to purchase state-of-the-art equipment for diagnosis, observation and other tasks, were also a recognition of the clinic's role in training badly needed psychologists specializing in autism.

Another \$225,000 has been pledged by The Counselling Foundation of Canada, a longtime and generous supporter of York University. This gift will fund a mentoring program, to be managed by the clinic, which matches psychology students with students with Asperger syndrome – a form of autism that affects people's ability to understand basic social cues. Not only does the program help students with Aspergers navigate their way through university, it provides invaluable experience to the mentors who are training to become mental health professionals.

Work experience such as this is partic-

ularly critical for graduate students in psychology who must accumulate 1,200 hours of clinical training. "In the past, we've been able to find practicum placements for these students out in the community," says Louise Hartley, YUPC's director. "However, cutbacks in recent years to psychological services at community clinics and hospitals make these placements harder to come by."

While the clinic provides meaningful student placements, it will also help address the gap in psychological services created by the cutbacks. This gap is of particular concern amid signs that the demand for psychological assessment and counselling is growing. "Many families' need for a double income and the resulting time crunch could be placing them under considerable stress," says Hartley, indicating one possible cause. She cites current statistics indicating that one in eight Canadians will experience a major depressive episode in their lifetime and one in four will experience an anxiety disorder. But only one in five children with mental health problems will receive the treatment needed to prevent difficulties later in adulthood. With 13 interview rooms, the clinic can treat as many as 65 clients a day, ranging from children to the elderly.

Further support from York's generous donors will help ensure that the new clinic thrives while its programs are established. "Eventually, it is expected that the counselling and assessment services will allow the clinic to pay for itself while providing a full slate of necessary services," says Hartley.

Donors wishing to contribute can contact Kim Wymes of the York University Foundation at 416-650-8210 or wymesk@yorkfoundation.yorku.ca. Donations can also be made online at yorku.ca/foundation. All gifts contribute toward York to the Power of 50, York's 50th-anniversary fundraising campaign with a goal of \$200 million. ■

CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Latest data on York to the Power of 50, York University's 50th anniversary fundraising campaign:

TARGET: \$200 million

CURRENT LEVEL: Over \$180 million

TIME SINCE LAUNCH: 29 months

PRIORITIES FOR SUPPORT: Pioneering research and programs; student awards and scholarships; Chairs and professorships; infrastructure.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MARKUS LEIMINGER



INNOVATION FOR TOMORROW

York University celebrates 50 years of research excellence

York brings together researchers from across disciplines to tackle real-world issues. They've explored space and the solar system, helped Canada understand its unique history, and developed internationally-recognized excellence in business and law.

York continues to seek innovative solutions to scientific and societal challenges. Our researchers are finding water on Mars and creating programs to stop children's bullying. They're developing models to predict the spread of infectious diseases, decoding the brain's mysteries, and discovering treatments to prevent strokes, heart disease, and autism. They're helping us to better understand citizenship and environmental sustainability in a global society.

Here's to 50 more years of knowledge that makes a difference.



To learn more about York's innovative approach to research, visit www.research.yorku.ca

YORK **U50**
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Did I abandon my '60s ideals as I moved up the ranks? BY PAUL AXELROD

The Radical as Dean

AT WHAT POINT did I actually sell out? I began York as an undergraduate in 1968, already steeped in the politics of the student movement, and I was appointed dean of the Faculty of Education in 2001 – a journey from noble student radical to suspect senior administrator. I had become in middle age what I had denounced in my youth. What explains this peculiar life-course transition? Bear with me as I try to sort it out.

Those were heady days, the late 1960s. We grew up, arguably, in the most prosperous era in the history of the universe, and yet we could find so little to praise about the state of the world. We witnessed poverty amid plenty, racial segregation

I had become in middle age

in the “free world”, and an incomprehensible war in Southeast Asia. Schools purported to train us for democratic living, but they sent us home if we wore jeans, grew beards or otherwise challenged authority. Universities offered minimal curricular choice, resisted student involvement in governance, and sometimes censored campus newspapers for publishing offensive articles, and we fought back.

We weren't always so serious. In light of the sensational new music, the chemical stimulants and the invention of the birth control pill, we found ways to amuse ourselves and, simultaneously, antagonize our parents' generation. Popular culture, too, was political.

I was engaged and stimulated by the times, and some core values I forged then have remained with me. I think that education at all levels should foster a student's individuality and creativity. I believe that our institutions should promote equality and social justice. And I am convinced that ideas matter, so much so that I have remained in university exploring them ever since.

Being a professor was particularly absorbing because the university didn't stand still during the post-'60s period. It began to offer an enormous array of academic choices, and its population, particularly at York, became so culturally diverse. The forces of feminism and other campaigns for equality rights took root and helped shape campus life. Students were elected

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or recruited to serve on virtually all important University committees. It was as if many of the political goals of the '60s were gradually being realized in the decades that followed.

There were jobs to do to keep the institution thriving. Universities don't run on automatic pilot. They need real people to enrol students, appoint faculty, approve new courses and build bridges with the community. I was asked to participate full time in such administrative activities, first as chair of the Division of Social Science (1989-1993), and later as dean of the Faculty of Education (2001-2008).

While I was surprised to find myself assigned these large tasks, undertaking them never seemed professionally or politically compromising. Rather, they allowed me to partake at a different level in the life of the University. It has all been endlessly fascinating and enriching. Last year, for example, I travelled to Kenya and to China in order to establish new educational partnerships with York. Our students are now working as interns in these countries and in many other places across the globe.

University administration has its downside: the relentless e-mail, the countless meetings and the challenge of allocating resources in lean economic times which invariably disappoints some. And students (and some faculty) have been known to challenge administrative authority at every turn.

As one of those students years ago, I spoke with certainty about the state of the human condition, something I now rarely do. Ironically, the longer I have spent steeped in the world of ideas, the more complex everything seems. The more we learn, the less we know. But realizing this, too, is part of the privilege of university membership. It offers students and faculty the opportunity to challenge (or defend) tradition, to engage intellectually with others on and off campus, to probe the meaning of life, and even to discover themselves. You never really stop being a student, even as an administrator.

So I can't actually pinpoint the moment at which I “sold out” because, well, I don't think I ever have. But there's still time.... ■



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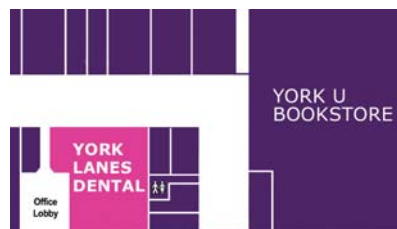


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