



YORK U

OCTOBER 2008

# *Trashy Movie*

Andrew Nisker's film about garbage has lessons for householders, activists – and marketers

**PLUS**

Inside the New AGO  
Who Was Jesus?  
A Slave's Saga

INSIDE

# YORKU

THE MAGAZINE OF YORK UNIVERSITY



COVER PHOTOGRAPHY: KC ARMSTRONG



COVER

BIRTHDAYS

MEMOIR

RELIGION

ART

RESEARCH

HISTORY



- 4 Editor@YorkU** A gold-winning magazine. BY BERTON WOODWARD
- 7 Leading Edge** York's drive for sustainability. BY MAMDOUH SHOUKRI
- 8 Universe** It's Not Just a Canoe...What They're Reading...The Martian Winds...Spotless Minds...Growth Spurt...A Big Zero...Brew U...Doubling Up
- 14 Trashy Movie**  
Andrew Nisker is already the Michael Moore of garbage. But he's just getting started – as a filmmaker, activist and alternative marketer. BY DAVID FULLER
- 18 Look Who's 50**  
Get ready for York's joyous celebration of its first half-century in 2009. BY MARTHA TANCOCK
- 20 The Green Gene**  
A York experience shows an alumna and the daughter she gave up how much they have in common. BY DEBORAH SWORD AND BETH LAWRENCE
- 22 Who Was Jesus?**  
York's Barrie Wilson says Christianity was "hijacked" early on. BY MICHAEL TODD
- 24 Inside the New AGO**  
Georgiana Uhlyarik will help shape our view of Canadian art at the soon-to-be transformed Art Gallery of Ontario. *YorkU* readers get a sneak peek. BY MICHAEL TODD
- 28 Home Truths**  
Stephen Gaetz helps explode myths about the homeless. BY MARTHA TANCOCK
- 30 Slave Saga**  
How Karolyn Smardz Frost unearthed the dramatic story of two escaped US slaves in 19th-century Toronto. BY MARTHA TANCOCK
- 32 York People**  
Nobel laureate Roger Pulwarty...Canadian Idol's Mark Lalama
- 35 Giving**  
Undergrads get involved in research.
- 36 Alumni**  
Taking the work out of networking...Class Notes
- 42 Back Talk**  
Getting lost is a big part of teaching overseas. BY THOMAS KLASSEN

# OCTOBER 2008

YorkU is tops in Canada. BY BERTON WOODWARD

# Gold Mag

**W**hen I was a student coming of drinking age in Vancouver, there was one thing every wine lover in the city could readily agree on – BC wine was awful. To call it plonk would have given it a European dignity it didn't deserve. But what a difference a few years, an economic boom and the right kind of grapes can make. Today the desert hills around Kelowna, centre of the Okanagan Valley wine fraternity, are mottled with high-quality vineyards that regularly reap international awards.

So it was somehow fitting to find myself in Kelowna in June, using elegant Okanagan wine to toast some very gratifying awards bestowed upon *YorkU* by the Canadian Council for the Advancement of Education (CCAE) at its annual conference there. I have been guilty before of mentioning that *YorkU* has won a long list of awards in Canada and the US in its five years of existence, building on a tradition of excellence set by York publications. But this year *YorkU* received the gold award for Best Magazine from CCAE, the highest national honour in our university field. It was the first such gold for *YorkU*, though we have received silver for Best Magazine three times before.

There was more in Kelowna. Some may recall that when we exclusively published astronaut and alumnus Steve MacLean's inspiring account of his space walk in the February 2007 issue, I wrote that MacLean seemed to have succeeded in all areas – physical (gymnastics champion), intellectual (BSc '77, PhD '83), artistic (accomplished pianist) and, now, journalistic. CCAE proved it. Steve's space diary



received the silver award in the Best Writing/Article category. He seemed both delighted and bemused when I told him.

And in a kind of hat trick, we also won silver for Best Photograph. This was a moody shot leading the April 2007 Universe section of Chinese pipa player Wendy Zhao, a lecturer in world music in the Faculty of Fine Arts. The picture was taken by freelance photographer KC Armstrong in a shoot directed by *YorkU* art director James Nixon. The story was conceived by managing editor Michael Todd, who oversees the Universe section.

I expect you've heard quite enough of this by now, so I'll only quickly mention that this spring we also received gold for Best Print Internal Audience Periodical from the Washington-based Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) for the two issues a year in *YorkU*'s five-issue cycle that circulate mainly on campus. This was a continent-wide award, covering all universities and colleges in the US and Canada. And I won't mention at all that early in the year we received gold for Visual Design in Print from our CASE region (Ontario and the northeastern US) for our April 2007 cover. You can see all these issues at [yorku.ca/yorku](http://yorku.ca/yorku) and I can shut up and have another glass. ■

Send letters, submissions, comments and ideas to [editor@yorku.ca](mailto:editor@yorku.ca).

# YORKU

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redefine THE POSSIBLE.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

The drive to go green is nothing new on our campuses. BY MAMDOUH SHOUKRI

# Sustaining York

**P**ick up a newspaper or magazine and you won't get far before you come across an article on alternative energy, fuel-efficient cars or the importance of eating locally. Sustainability is an idea whose time has come. But the drive to go green is nothing new at York. For more than 30 years, the Faculty of Environmental Studies has been exploring the relationships between theory and action with research that includes tropical forest preservation, healthy communities, animal rights, wetland restoration and community planning.

In 2002, the University made a public commitment to sustainability by signing the global Talloires Declaration – a 10-point plan for incorporating sustainability and environmental literacy in teaching, research, operations and outreach at colleges and universities. Since then, York has worked hard to minimize its ecological footprint, while improving the quality of our campus environment. We're about halfway towards imple-



The code outlines the conditions that must be met when licensed goods bearing York's names and marks are manufactured.

After 18 months in operation, York's Sustainability Council, with broad representation from across campus including students, will now report to me on ways to better address

## York has worked hard to

menting our Energy Management Program at both the Keele and Glendon campuses.

Our goal is to achieve a 25-per-cent reduction in energy costs through initiatives such as energy-efficient lighting; heating, ventilation and air conditioning modifications and upgrades; advanced metering; and optimized use of cogeneration and renewable energy. Once completed, this program will save 16,545 tonnes of greenhouse gases annually. It will mean more efficient buildings with better air quality and more natural light – an improved environment in which to work and study. And it will save the University more than \$5 million in annual energy costs.

But sustainability is not primarily about saving money. It's about securing a future that provides the kind of opportunities we have enjoyed to others less privileged – and to those yet to come. York has adopted a workplace code of conduct for its trademark licensees and has joined the Fair Labor Association and the Worker Rights Consortium, both based in Washington.

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

## minimize its ecological footprint, while improving the environment.

will create 120,000 square feet of academic and research space, and will meet silver certification standards set by Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design, an internationally recognized green-building rating system.

Perhaps most important to York University – and York Region – is the subway expansion. The extended line will replace nearly 1,600 buses that circle the Common every day, and eliminate their emissions and noise pollution. Moreover, it will help build more livable communities by providing a fast, clean, reliable link between York Region and Toronto while taking considerable pressure off the Yonge subway line.

Of course, the best way to build a sustainable community is to involve its members. The Yorkwise initiative can help you do just that. Visit [yorku.ca/yorkwise](http://yorku.ca/yorkwise) to learn how the small changes you make will lead to big changes on our campuses and in our communities. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY GARY BEECHY

ENVIRONMENT

## It's Not Just a Canoe

A York researcher says it carries a lot of symbolic baggage

**I**n 2007, the CBC declared the canoe to be one of the Seven Wonders of Canada (along with prairie skies, Niagara Falls and Pier 21 in Halifax). But is this cultural icon as “pure” as it appears? Not according to Faculty of Environmental Studies PhD candidate Bruce Erickson. He sees it as carrying a lot of baggage, so to speak, from the relationship between early white fur traders and the native canoe-builders they dealt with.

“The canoe remains a marker of our encounter with the past, one that is often mediated through an idealized image of nature and the native,” says Erickson, whose thesis is titled, *Canoe Nation: Wilderness, Race and Masculinity in the Genealogy of a National Icon*. “I have always been interested in the meanings and consequences of our leisure choices and how they become a defining feature of our identity as individuals,” he says. “The canoe, for example, is a way to examine how the economy of outdoor recreation – mediated through the history of colonialism in Canada – is central to individuals’ identifications with the nation.”

Erickson argues the canoe has gone from having a major impact on the nation – economically, territorially and politically – to achieving a symbolic role. “But national symbols are never really innocent,” he says. “They’re more than just symbols. This is about the practices of a nation, including the increasing use of space for recreation. My interest is in how the history of the canoe – as a place to assert a particular vision of white masculinity – is played out in the stories we tell about Canada today. Hopefully my research will present some different versions of those stories.” ■

LEISURE CHOICES: Erickson

PHOTOGRAPHY BY KC ARMSTRONG

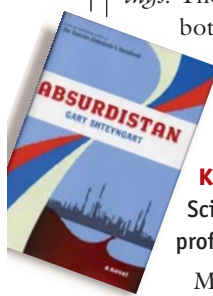
BOOKS

# What They're Reading

York people reveal what's on the bedside table

**Kalina Grewal**  
Reference librarian

I am reading a very funny book which many people, including literary critics, describe as a work of genius. It is John Kennedy Toole's *A Confederacy of Dunces*. Ignatius J. Reilly, the main character, is such an anti-hero! He harangues his mother, organizes misguided protests and generally introduces chaos into his very small, but eclectic, section of New Orleans. To provide a counterpoint to the mayhem of Ignatius's world, I picked up the Dalai Lama's *How to Expand Love* (translated by Jeffrey Hopkins) and Kathleen Jamie's *Findings*. There is calm in these books – both authors write clean, clear prose and invite the reader to think deeply about the world and its inhabitants.



**Kenton Kroker**  
Science & Technology Studies professor

More satire. Gary Shteyngart's *Absurdistan* reads like Gogol writing in Putin's Russia. Will Self's *The Book of Dave* similarly twists sci-fi. A brilliant premise, a brutal critique, plus an homage to John Wyndham and Frank Herbert. My kids are in on the act, as Lemony Snicket's merciless assault on children's lit easily trumps private school children on broomsticks (and *Adverbs* by Daniel Handler, a.k.a. Snicket, is a nice introduction to love, besides). Of course, those silently suffering on the TTC will naturally prefer Evan Jones' poem "Dear -, I Am Leaving Weston" from *Nothing Fell Today But Rain*.



SPACE

## The Martian Winds

Canadian snow could help us understand them

Could studying blowing snow in the Arctic Circle one day help us understand Martian dust storms? Professor Peter Taylor and colleagues in York's Earth & Space Science Program certainly hope so. Taylor heads up the team studying blowing snow as a segment of the Storm Studies of the Arctic program, funded by the Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences and based in Iqaluit, capital of Nunavut.

Precise sensors mounted on a 10-metre tower near the Iqaluit airport measure the size and number of blowing snow particles, along with wind direction and velocity, humidity, temperature and visibility. Other weather stations have been deployed by helicopter in remote locations up to 100 km from Iqaluit. The team is hunting for the precise wind and surface conditions that give rise to blowing snow and reduced visibility. "The data we collect here studying snow should contribute strongly to our basic understanding of how other aeolian [wind] processes work and why Martian dust storms occur," says Taylor.

Taylor is part of the York-led team of Canadian atmospheric scientists working on NASA's Phoenix Mission, which touched down on Mars in late May. The team is responsible for the lander's weather station, which is studying the Martian atmosphere. Phoenix will examine climate at the Red Planet's northern latitudes, as well as the geological history of water and the potential of the soil to support life.

It's a long way from the Arctic, but "studying blowing snow should give us important clues to dust on Mars and how it affects the planet's daily surface temperatures," says Taylor. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF PETER TAYLOR

UNIVERSE

NEUROPSYCHOLOGY

## Spotless Minds

Amnesiacs, it turns out, do not need memory to understand others' feelings

Imagine you live in the eternal present, with no memory of the past. Mississauga resident Kent Cochrane is such a man, and his situation has contributed to groundbreaking research by York neuropsychologist Shayna Rosenbaum.

Rosenbaum, a psychology professor in York's Faculty of Health, recently investigated whether one needs to recall past personal experiences in order to make sense of other people's thoughts and feelings, an ability known as "theory of mind". A commonly accepted theory is that people rely on their "autobiographical memory" to figure out the mental states of others. Hence, would amnesiacs who lack autobiographical memory be able to read the thoughts and emotions of people around them?

Rosenbaum and senior scientists at the Rotman Research Institute at Toronto's Baycrest Centre studied Cochrane and another subject, both near-total amnesiacs due to brain injuries, and compared them with a control group of 14 subjects with no brain damage. A battery of comprehensive tests was administered to the control subjects and the two brain-injury patients to see how well they could reason about the thoughts and feelings of others.

The two amnesiac patients' scores were indistinguishable from those of the controls. "Our findings defy a long-held theory," says Rosenbaum. "But, more importantly, we found that even without the ability to recollect the past, a person can still be in tune with others' feelings and intentions, which can help sustain social relationships." ■



COLLECTIONS

## Growth Spurt

The Clara Thomas Archives tops up much-needed storage capacity

It's like getting a monster addition to your home – no, make that a couple of monster additions. The Clara Thomas Archives & Special Collections, one of Canada's finest archival collections, just added 10,000 square feet to its already extensive storage facilities in the bottom of Central Square on the Keele campus. "We started the process of acquiring and renovating the space way back in 2004," says York University Libraries archivist Michael Moir. "It's been a long process."

The space features advanced environmental controls to handle York's growing archives. The room has improved climate controls for long-term preservation, and materials are kept at a constant temperature with low humidity. Walls are painted white to minimize the need for harsh lighting which can affect stored materials, and there is 24-hour security and a fire-suppression system.

The additional archival space will store many different media within York's traditional collecting areas of Canadian history, fine arts, Can lit and women's studies. For instance, the 1.25 million prints and negatives from the *Toronto Telegram* collection will be housed here, along with the correspondence of Margaret Laurence, audio and video tapes of the long-standing Mariposa Folk Festival and films of the Rhombus Media Group. The current Clara Thomas archival collection uses almost 5,000 linear metres of shelving, of which 800 metres are devoted to York's own institutional records. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RSQUARED

## UNIVERSE



SUSTAINABILITY

### A Big Zero

York course kits turn green

**S**ometimes the best footprint is no footprint. And this fall York has the distinction of being the first Canadian postsecondary institution to make its courses part of a carbon offset program, by creating course kits that are “carbon neutral”.

When classes begin, thousands of students jam the York University Bookstore to pick up class course kits. These are customized to each individual professor’s course and include such things as a course syllabus, original material that the prof has researched and written, course and lab notes, journal articles, book chapters, and sometimes even complete photocopied books if they are out of print and necessary for students to have. Obviously that adds up to a lot of paper. Or a lot of trees, depending on how you look at it.

So how do you get carbon neutral if you’re using a lot of paper? Well, since using recycled paper is expensive, one way to achieve a zero is to produce kits “on demand” at the campus printer to reduce waste, then donate approximately 10 cents per kit for a tree-planting or other local project to “offset” or reduce a comparable amount of carbon emissions used to produce the kit.

That’s what York is doing, in partnership with the Toronto-based green firm Zerofootprint Inc. The program is part of the University’s Yorkwise initiative to reduce York’s eco-footprint and improve life on campus. ■

**S**o what’s brewing at York? The brand new Las Nubes Café, now located in the lobby of the Computer Science & Engineering Building on the Keele campus, that’s what. It’s the only coffee kiosk on campus dedicated to selling York’s own brand of certified Fair Trade coffee. The sustainable brew also comes in recyclable paper cups made from post-consumer waste, in the spirit of Yorkwise environmental friendliness.

Las Nubes coffee and café are named after the University’s rainforest reserve in Costa Rica donated by Dr. M. M. (Woody) Fisher in 1998. One dollar from every pound sold at Timothy’s World Coffee outlets across Canada goes to the Fisher Fund for Neotropical Conservation, which supports research projects and conservation activities in the Las Nubes region. Five cents from every cup sold at York’s Las Nubes kiosk goes to the fund as well.

“Las Nubes isn’t just another coffee outlet,” says Prof. Howard Daugherty, director of the Las Nubes Program and mastermind behind developing both the Las Nubes brand and the kiosk. “It gives students and others a chance to buy into an exciting York project that is on the forefront of conservation by virtue of a private-sector/public-sector/university partnership. As far as I know, it’s a partnership for sustainability that’s unique in Canada.” ■



CAMPUS

### Brew U

York’s Las Nubes brand of coffee gets a new café locale

PHOTOGRAPHY BY RSQUARED

TRANSIT

# Doubling Up

Bigger, taller GO buses serve York commuters

**N**ow you can double your fun when you commute to York. How? By taking the new GO double-deckers. GO, the inter-city public transit system serving the Greater Toronto Area, debuted the new buses this spring. They’re designed to serve high-volume commuter traffic in the Oakville-Mississauga-York University corridor, which a lot of York students and staff travel.

Twelve new “Enviro 500” models, manufactured by Alexander Dennis Limited, a UK-based company (there are no North American double-decker makers), took to the streets this year. The buses can seat 78 people – 46 on the upper deck, 32 on the lower level – thereby offering 37 per cent more seating capacity than conventional GO 57-seaters. Indirectly this also lessens both commuters’ and GO’s “carbon footprint” since both fuel usage and harmful emissions, per passenger, are reduced.

According to GO, the buses offer exceptional views from the upper level (all the better to see upcoming traffic jams perhaps) and even have reclining seats. They also feature individually adjustable air vents, individual reading lights and 12-volt power outlets for en route essay-writing (or computer games).

All the double-deckers are wheelchair accessible and feature a kneeling capability, along with a powered wheelchair ramp, wide aisles and front door, and low floors.

Double-deckers will run on the Highway 403 and 407 corridor between Oakville GO station and York University. Stops include Square One GO Bus Terminal and Bramalea GO station. GO’s BRT – Bus Rapid Transit Service – makes more than 500 trips every day along the 407 route. Sadly, some GTA areas cannot be serviced because the highway overpasses are exactly the same height as the buses themselves – 14 feet. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY COURTESY OF GO TRANSIT



# Trashy

**O**N OCCASION, filmmakers may hear reviewers say their work is garbage. It goes with the territory. But Andrew Nisker (BFA '93) gets it everywhere he goes these days. People who've seen his latest film are constantly sending him e-mails or making pointed remarks in video interviews that he records. The comments range from "shocking" and "disgusting" to "curse you, Andrew Nisker." He proudly puts it all on his Web site for others to see. Revolutionaries, you see, are inured to naysayers and Nisker is determined to start a revolution – several, in fact.

It all started with his growing anger at the state of the environment, which grew stronger after he met activist Bob Hunter of Greenpeace fame while working at Citytv in Toronto early this decade. Nisker, who has asthma, had moved into a Victorian apartment building in an arty neighbourhood in downtown Toronto. After growing up in the air-conditioned comfort of his parents' suburban home, Nisker had to forego that luxury in his bohemian digs and open the windows. That's when the smell of the city first hit him. The smog aggravated his lungs and made breathing a chore. "I would see all these cars whipping by – people in their air-conditioned vehicles – and it just started me thinking, whether we really had to live in our pollution." Then came the Toronto municipal workers' strike in the roasting summer of 2002, causing a massive pile of refuse to grow in the park he walked by every day on his way to work. As the strike entered its third week and temperatures hit 30-plus degrees, the big stink of rotting refuse was one element in what Nisker calls the "perfect

# Movie

Andrew Nisker has already become the Michael Moore of garbage. But he's just getting started – as a filmmaker, activist and alternative marketer.

BY DAVID FULLER  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY KC ARMSTRONG

storm” of inspiration that convinced him to make a documentary film about – you guessed it – trash.

“I started to think about my garbage,” he says, as he lists the factors that led to his decision to produce “a film that mattered” after years of doing comedy and lifestyle projects. “The final thing was the birth of my son and realizing he’s going to inherit all this, and Daddy’s got to do something for him,” says Nisker.

That something was *Garbage! The Revolution Starts at Home*, which was one of the top draws at the 2008 Hot Docs film festival in Toronto. The film charts three months in the life of the McDonald family, who agreed to keep their garbage – soiled diapers and all – as the reality plot for Nisker’s documentary. As the evidence of their disposable lifestyle piles up in the garage – complete with maggots and an ever-present stench – Nisker takes the family on a tour of a landfill site and other stops in the life cycle of trash. The point is to get viewers to come to terms with the garbage they produce in their home. That’s where the environmental revolution has to start, as Bob Hunter was fond of saying.

Nisker’s decision to leave his day job in television for the challenge of being an independent producer with an activist bent didn’t come easily. Since he graduated from the Film & Video Program in York’s Faculty of Fine Arts, he had been writing, editing and producing films for screen and television. His work was well received: he sold two of his student projects to the CBC, both of which made money and won awards. But after a flying start, his career in the film business settled into a more modest pattern of commissioned scripts and staff writing jobs for lifestyle documentary programs. “I wanted to be a director,” he says, “but writing was a means to an end because I figured there was no way I could make a film of anyone else’s work – I had to do my own.”

Nisker has an offbeat sense of humour and it shows in the titles of some of his projects, such as “Loving the In-laws” (2003), a short comedy that won an award in a TV festival in Los Angeles and is available online. His 1996 script for a Jewish black comedy, titled “The Shiva”, has been picked up by Broadway Video of New York, producers of “Saturday Night Live”, and he has several other works in production, including his latest film *Chemical Nation*. One of his favourites is his 1992 mockumentary *The Roccotello Files*, a biographical comedy about mobsters, which he sold to networks in France and Germany. Nisker would like to revisit the main character in a feature film, “because I have fun with the mobster genre.”

In between successes, however, Nisker had his share of rejections for projects that were turned down as either non-commercial or too far ahead of their time. In 2003, he came up with an idea for a reality show where families would compete

against each other to reduce their energy consumption. “I was told ‘your idea is amazing’ by the president of a major network,” he recalls. But the idea was rejected because it was “ecology-based” and “wouldn’t get ratings.” When Hunter died of cancer in the spring of 2005, Nisker made the decision to ignore industry naysayers and produce *Garbage!* “Bob’s death was the final push for me,” says Nisker. “I said, you know, fuck all this rejection, I want to make this film. I can do it myself. I can shoot, I write, I edit and I’m going to do this. We started production in the fall of 2005.”

Nisker produced *Garbage!* using money from a development fund, private investors and his own bank account. Canada’s Super Channel began airing it this year and the US-based Sundance Channel plans to show it next spring. Some commercial distribution of the film is handled by other companies, but Nisker retains rights to sell online, and it’s here, in a part of the business where cultural sovereignty is always an issue, that he hopes to start another revolution: self-distribution. Through his own company, Take Action Films, Nisker offers the movie for varying fees to people and institutions around the world, so they can hold their own garbage parties. Using a just-in-time supplier to

burn the DVDs and ship them out to customers, he is free to promote the film by a technique known as “community building”. His Web site includes detailed instructions and templates for hosting a screening, encouraging neighbourhoods, schools and clubs to discuss their relationship with garbage – and hand out discounted DVDs. Participants must RSVP online at his site. “We’re building our audience for the next film,” he says. With customers as far away as Israel, Australia and the US, Nisker says his fledgling company has sold about 5,000 DVDs so far and booked over 1,000 screenings since the film was released in November 2007. He estimates more than 150,000 people have seen it.

This isn’t Nisker’s first foray into the new frontier of digital marketing. He was recruited by a production company in California to develop interactive games – one based on stock car racing, the other on the wild and wacky world of professional wrestling. He even spent six months in California developing social networking content for a mobile-phone company. Through it all, he developed a strategy of using technology – and an activist’s doggedness – to further his goal of becoming a director and independent producer who makes socially relevant films. “I love documentary because I don’t need anyone’s permission or money,” he says. “The two things that I want to do are, empower people to help them change the environment, and empower artists to help them change their situation. There’s no point in waiting for ‘the man’.” ■

**Nisker offers the movie for varying fees to people and institutions around the world, so they can hold their own garbage parties.**



LOOK WHO'S



2009 will be a banner year for York as it mounts a community-wide celebration of its first half-century – and the next.

BY MARTHA TANCOCK  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

50

**R**AISE THE BANNERS, uncork the wine and light the candles. York celebrates its 50th birthday in 2009 and you're invited.

The fanfare starts soon. Banners will flutter in a blaze of red and white glory at every entrance to both York campuses. The U50 logo will be on every major sign, every anniversary souvenir, every York letterhead. If you want to find out what's going on, just check out the 50th anniversary Web site ([yorku50.ca](http://yorku50.ca)) so you can make a date to join the celebration.

Festivities kick off in January and continue well into the fall. Following the release early in 2009 of Glendon Professor Emeritus Michiel Horn's *York University: The Way Must Be Tried*, an account of York's early days, more than 60 initiatives will unfold to mark this significant anniversary. There will be conferences and symposia, concerts and exhibits, open houses and book launches. Many will be clustered around major events, such as the opening of the new Archives of Ontario building in the spring. Some will be individual projects – anthropologist Penny Van Esterik is writing an ethnography of York – but most are large events designed to spotlight York's academic talent and draw crowds.

Like the 50+50 Symposium starting on Thursday, March 26, five decades to the day after the York University Act received royal assent. Conceived by York film Professor Seth Feldman as "An Interdisciplinary Discussion of Pretty Much Everything", it will be a heady gathering of world thinkers – teamed with bright lights from York – debating the question: What have we learned in the last 50 years and how will that shape the world in the next 50? York's biggest lecture theatres are expected to fill with people keen to hear major figures wrestle with teasers like "What's a nice middle power like you doing in a world like this?" (about Canada's international relations) and other global themes such as

health, sustainability, the acquisition and use of knowledge, technology, the city and culture.

"This symposium will be about things we haven't thought about yet and things we should be thinking about," says Judith Cohen, chair of the 50th-anniversary steering committee overseeing the entire year's celebrations. "It's about the next big idea. Isn't that what a university is all about? It's going to be very exciting."

Wait, there's more happening on campus on that birthday weekend in March. York's Senate will hold a historic meeting on the Thursday. The curtain will rise on a dazzling display of talented Yorkies, staged by Fine Arts Dean Emeritus Phil Silver, for a black-tie event Saturday evening. And on the Sunday, prominent University friends as well as alumni from York's fundraising powerhouse group, 50 to the Power of 50, will speed-mentor some of York's most accomplished students.

Then in May, York throws its doors open even wider and invites the neighbours and friends to its first Community Festival. Visitors of all ages can see displays of York's musical, theatrical and visual art talent and take part in hands-on activities organized by staff and faculty. "The 50th gives York an opportunity to let the world know we're here and we're great," says Cohen. "It is a chance to foster pride among all our grads and to foster awareness in the greater community."

The Community Festival is one of many anniversary initiatives that is expected to become an annual event, enduring well past 2009 as the legacy of a banner year. "We want to create, then build upon, the 50th-anniversary momentum," says President & Vice-Chancellor Mamdouh Shoukri.

Two of the phrases that will appear in U50 media campaigns – Transform50 and Tomorrow50 – capture the spirit and thrust of the 2009 celebration. While York honours its past, it rejoices in its future. "We really want to put York on the map in 2009," says Chief Marketing Officer

Richard Fisher, chair of the U50 operations committee. "Many people have an old-fashioned view of York that no longer fits York's new reality."

Alumni events, like the annual Bryden Alumni Awards and Gratitude, the student-leader appreciation night, will be supersized. On March 26, York and the York University Alumni Association will host a huge rock 'n' roll party and alumni chapters around the world will be encouraged to toast their alma mater. "We've got to make the day feel special," says James Allan, York's director, alumni.

Souvenir collectors will be able to scoop up T-shirts, caps and mugs stamped with the U50 logo, anniversary brands of red and white wine and a special brew of York's Las Nubes coffee.

Planning for the 50th has been bottom up, not top down. In 2006, then-president Lorna Marsden struck three central committees to start planning for 2009. Feelers went out to Faculties and units, student groups, and retiree and alumni organizations and generated almost 100 proposals. "It was truly an embarrassment of riches and an outstanding representation of the intellectual ferment at York," says John McCamus, chair of the campus committee.

Organizing the 50th has been "a labour of love" for about 80 people involved in committees, says Cindy Bettcher, U50 anniversary project director. Eighty is nothing compared to the army of volunteers York will need to carry the whole thing off and dozens of faculty, retirees, staff and students have already offered to help. The engines pulling this 2009 birthday train are York's Marketing & Communications Division and the Office of University Events & Community Relations (UECR), which will manage the signature events and provide support for many others. As UECR executive director Sylvia Zingrone says, "This is an exceptional opportunity to build York's reputation."

So count yourself invited. And, yes, there will be cake. ■



A York experience shows an alumna and the daughter she gave up how much they have in common.

BY DEBORAH SWORD  
AND BETH LAWRENCE  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

# The Green Gene

SO ALIKE: Lawrence (left) and Sword

While researching his forthcoming history, York University: The Way Must Be Tried, due in early 2009 as part of York's 50th anniversary celebrations, University Historian and Glendon Professor Emeritus Michiel Horn put out a call to alumni through YorkU for remembrances of their time as students. Among those responding was Deborah Sword (MES '93), a Calgary conflict management consultant, who had a remarkable tale involving her biological daughter, former York student Beth Lawrence, who now runs a landscape design and organic gardening company in Toronto. YorkU asked the two of them to elaborate.

**D**EBORAH SWORD: In 1971, about two decades before I attended York, I was an unwed pregnant teenager. It was the typical story – I was feeling unloved at home, my boyfriend was kind to me etc. etc. I gave my daughter up for adoption in Edmonton without ever telling anyone I had been pregnant. Yes, no one noticed. I gained seven pounds and she weighed six of them.

Over time, I sent letters to Alberta Social Services and they sent me a non-identifying, ambiguous letter advising that she was fine and placed with a loving family. It was comforting to believe she was happy and loved. Even so, the sense of loss is so profound that I never had other children, and couldn't talk about the one I had.

Fast-forward through that dismal and pain-filled past. I got on with life.

**BETH LAWRENCE:** I grew up in a Toronto family with loving parents and three very physical and rambunctious older brothers who all have a killer sense of humour. We can find a way to laugh at anything.

But my family and I were like night and day. The list of my brothers' food allergies would make you involuntarily reach for an EpiPen. I, on the other hand, don't have a single allergy. My brothers were always nursing a bad back or a hernia, while I could lift heavy objects like they weighed nothing, and loved to climb trees and commune with nature. My first time on a horse I rode bareback. They have a deeply conservative outlook. I usually vote Green.

**DEBORAH SWORD:** In the late 1980s, I crossed paths with a young woman who had been adopted, and she spoke of her longing to meet her birth mother. Her story touched me deeply. Although it would have complicated my personal and professional life greatly for anyone to know that I was a birth mom, I registered as being prepared to meet my birth daughter if she wanted.

The years went by without word, and I stopped waiting for the phone to ring. I still checked the crowds, just in case a young woman who looked like me walked past. Eventually, in

1991, I enrolled at York in the Master of Environmental Studies program. Because my area of study, which involved environmental conflict resolution, was of interest to the new BES students, I was asked to guest lecture at one of their classes, which I happily did. Hit the fast-forward button again, please.

**BETH LAWRENCE:** I thought about searching for my birth family for a long time before I did it. One day, I was watching "Oprah" and the story was about mother-daughter reunions. I filled out the forms and sent them to the Post-Adoption Registry, assuming I'd have to wait years before hearing anything. I got a phone call within days – my birth mother was already registered.

**DEBORAH SWORD:** The registry social worker called me out of the clear blue in May, 1995 – my daughter, now 24, wanted to meet me. Imagine my excitement. And imagine our mutual amazement, as we had coffee together for the first time, to discover that she had been in that York BES class to which I had guest lectured!

Despite our never having met since she was three days old, the genes of environmentalism turned out to be so strong that her green interests are identical to mine, and expressed themselves through the Faculty of Environmental Studies.

**BETH LAWRENCE:** The first question upon being reunited with a birth parent is very physical: who do I look like, you or my father? Who is my father? What can I do that you can do too? This stage, while still fascinating, is nowhere near as interesting as discovering you have the same values as someone you have never met before.

After engaging in much dialogue and discovery, I have firmly and comfortably landed in the belief that I am a 50-50 split in the debate about nature vs. nurture. Love of travel, the outdoors and camping, reflective contemplation, horses, and a deep caring for the environment all came from my birth mother. So much alike are we that we chose to make helping the planet our life's work. We both, in the same year yet at different times in our lives, entered the Faculty of Environmental Studies at York. When we did finally meet, although we hadn't known one another while at York, we knew many of the same people.

**DEBORAH SWORD:** Since Beth is the daughter of a terrific adoptive mother, I introduce Beth as my DNA, and she reciprocates by calling me Biomom.

**BETH LAWRENCE:** Over the last 13 years, in my journey of growing up, I have had the privilege of getting to know not just one mother but two. I have felt so fortunate for their vastly different perspectives of the world, and I have been able to glean the very best from both of these extraordinary women. ■

*Memoirs of York are still welcome. Send to editor@yorku.ca.*

**W**ILL YORK PROFESSOR Barrie Wilson's new book, *How Jesus Became Christian*, change the world or the face of Christianity or what people believe? Probably not, but that's OK, because Wilson would be happy if it simply opened a few minds. "There's lots in the book for people to get riled up about," says Wilson. "But at the same time I don't see it as a negative book."

In Wilson's view, Jesus, who was a devout Jew, a prophet and a powerful storyteller, had his brand of Christianity hijacked, changed and later peddled by another religious genius named Paul, with help from his excellent writer/PR man Luke the evangelist.

Wilson outlines his take on how Christianity developed in a book that he says "isn't designed for an academic audience, but for the general reader." He tackles a central question of religious history, one that's so simple it's often overlooked: How did a young, well-respected rabbi become the head of a cult that bears his name, espouses a philosophy that he wouldn't have wholly understood, and possesses a clear streak of anti-Semitism against the generations of Jews who followed him?

Wilson, a professor emeritus of humanities and religious studies whose academic specialty is early Christian and Second Temple Judaism, writes: "Jesus was thoroughly Jewish. Mary, his mother, was Jewish and Judaism was the religion he practised throughout his life. Jesus' teaching focused on the important Jewish issues of the day.... But what happened? How did Jesus the Jew become a gentile Christ?" Wilson attributes some of what happened, and the distortions of that earlier faith, to Paul.

"Paul's movement or brand of Chris-

tianity was, I suggest, not rooted in the real teachings and sayings of the historical Jesus (interestingly, Paul never met him) but solely in Paul's personal mystical vision of Christ," says Wilson. "Paul established the new religion through anti-Semitic propaganda that ultimately crushed the Jesus movement. In essence, one of the world's great religions grew and prospered at the cost of another."

In the book, Wilson investigates the hypothesis that Christianity's origins are rooted in a colossal cover-up and that the original Jesus movement developed into the Ebonites – an early Jewish/Christian sect. Wilson argues that the original Jesus movement, led by Jesus' brother James, was eventually overtaken by Paul and his "Christ movement", which stripped Jesus of his Jewishness and de-emphasized his teachings. Paul catered to the God-fearers of his time, who were gentiles who admired Judaism but were leery of converting. Paul's Jesus as deified Christ, Wilson says, was in stark contrast to the earlier Jesus movement's Jesus, who was seen as a teacher.

"The book grows out of my interest in some of the puzzles of early Christianity," says Wilson. "How did the image of Jesus get changed? How did we go from the nice Jewish rabbi and teacher who was talking about the kingdom of God to something that 100 years later was radically different, in which we suddenly find Jesus being talked about as a divinity, as part of the Godhead? He's changed dramatically from a human teacher into a god who is worshipped. I take the fact that Jesus was Jewish seriously. I don't think a lot of my contemporary scholars do that."

Paul emerges as the ultimate religious innovator who invented a new religion and propelled it into its eventual prominence. In other words, the Jesus we

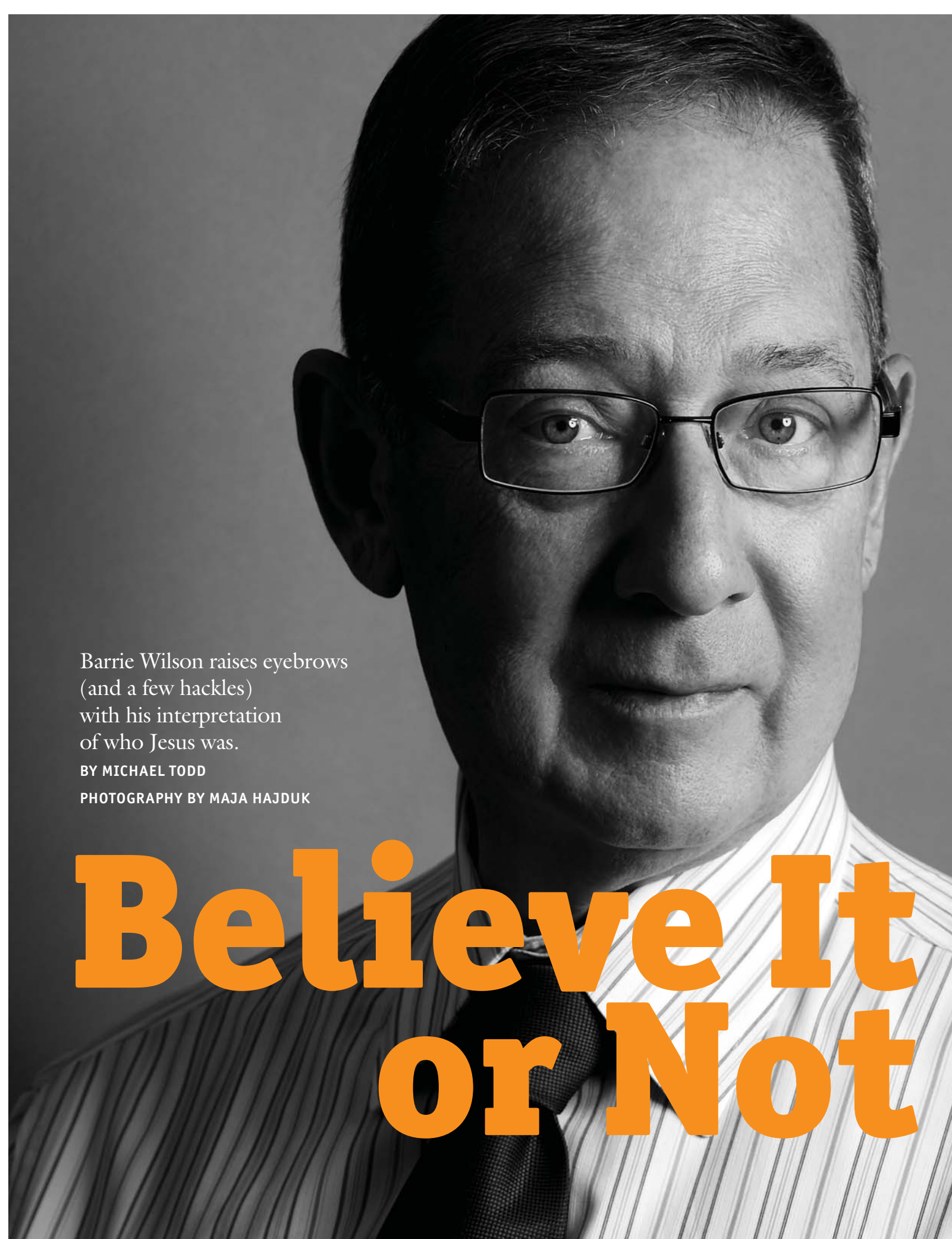
know through the Gospels, Acts of the Apostles and other accounts is not the historical Jesus but a carefully constructed and embellished one.

"The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls 50 years or so ago opened up a whole new insight into a major Jewish group of first century BC and first century, along with some Gnostic writings found around the same time in Egypt," says Wilson. "Those finds gave us a new perspective on a different form of Christianity that we didn't really know much about. It was a form of Christianity that rivalled mainstream Christianity or what became mainstream during the second, third and fourth centuries."

Wilson, who converted to Judaism after he married his Jewish wife Linda 32 years ago, also investigates the tradition of Christian anti-Semitism and links it to the Jesus cover-up. He says he found that in the texts of the second century, early Christian leaders attacked every aspect of Judaism, vilifying the leaders, trying to rob the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible of its value and denying the Jewish concept of God.

"Everything that the Jewish heritage valued was either being spoken of derogatorily or else was appropriated by the new Christian movement. And out of this I made an interesting discovery as I wrote the book. I began to see the roots of early Christian anti-Semitism. The early form of Christianity lived in harmony with its neighbours with one minor exception. But when Paul comes on the scene, havoc is created. Everywhere he goes he stirs up trouble. People want to kill him. This man did something differently than Jesus' early followers said and did. The question is, why?"

For answers to that question readers may have to wait for Wilson's next book. ■



Barrie Wilson raises eyebrows (and a few hackles) with his interpretation of who Jesus was.

BY MICHAEL TODD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MAJA HAJDUK

**Believe It or Not**

# Picture Perfect

At the soon-to-be transformed Art Gallery of Ontario, Georgiana Uhlyarik helps shape our view of Canadian art.

BY MICHAEL TODD

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK

**L**IFE FOR GEORGIANA UHLYARIK (MA '98) has certainly been a journey, in more ways than one. Born in Communist Romania in the city of Bucharest, she emigrated to Israel at age 12 with her parents. A year later, her family decided to come to Canada.

Then another journey – this time both educational and professional – took place from the day Uhlyarik enrolled in York's MA in Art History Program in 1996 to the day she got a curatorial position at the Art Gallery of Ontario in 2004. Now she is helping to shape the new galleries of Canadian art that will soon open at the AGO as part of architect Frank Gehry's grand redesign of the 108-year-old institution.

"Like most immigrant stories, there are a series of coincidences that lead to the present," says Uhlyarik. "We arrived in Montreal from Israel and we knew of two families – one in Montreal and the other in Toronto. When we called them during our first day, the Montreal family was out of town for the weekend and the Toronto family was at home. And this is how we ended up taking the train and living in Toronto ever since!"

It was difficult to be thrown for the second time into a new language and culture. But by the end of high school Uhlyarik felt comfortable in her new world and sought to expand it. Reading what was probably her first copy of *NOW* magazine, she spotted a classified ad for a community radio station looking for volunteers. "It turned out to be CHRY 105.5FM at York and I showed up one afternoon after school to offer my time," she says. She and a recent theatre grad – Beverly Taft (BA Spec. Hons. '90) – were assigned to cover theatre. "This is how I discovered downtown Toronto – we then lived at

Bathurst and Steeles – and how I discovered its thriving cultural scene."

Uhlyarik says her experience at CHRY, and of the York campus, never quite left her, so, after receiving her honours BA in art history at the University of Toronto, she decided to pursue her MA at York. "I made a very conscious choice when I enrolled at York. I was attracted to their program because it combined academics with internship placements, the professors were art museum practitioners as well as scholars, there were guest lecturers from the museum community, there was an option to specialize in Canadian art history, and there were opportunities to teach, do independent research and forge a career in galleries and museums that opened up multiple possibilities and paths," she says. "It was the ideal academic environment for me and I attribute my ability to pursue my interests professionally and my success to date to the professors and program offered in the Graduate Program in Art History at York."

But Uhlyarik's journey didn't end there. As with much of her life story she again made a fortuitous contact at York that would eventually lead to her current position as curatorial assistant, Canadian art. "At the end of my second semester at York, there was an addition to the schedule. During May-June 1997 Matthew Teitelbaum, who was then chief curator at the AGO, taught *Negotiations in the Cultural Landscape: The Politics of Art*," says Uhlyarik. "I enrolled. The course dealt with the practical realities of art history – namely curating through case studies of front-page-headline art controversies: Richard Serra, Mapplethorpe, etc. In addition, the course was taught at the AGO, which meant that we had access to the behind-the-scenes

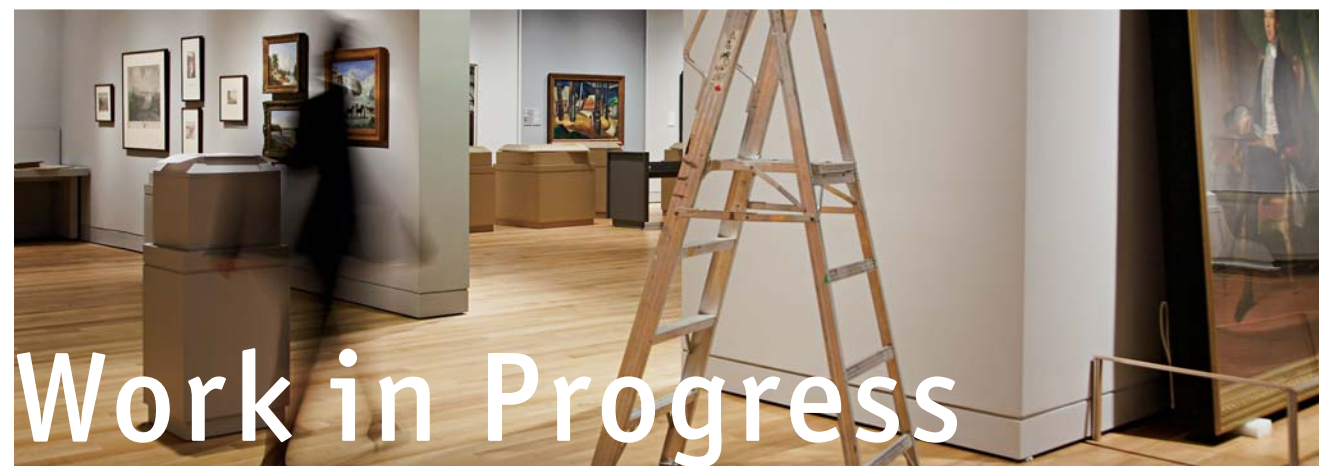
of the gallery, we met the staff, and we toured the vaults. We could see the inner workings.”

Uhlyarik approached Teitelbaum (now AGO director) about an internship that related directly to her MA thesis. “He said yes – in retrospect I don’t think I gave him much of a choice. It was then that I realized that one way or another I must become a curator at the AGO. Matthew ended up being one of my thesis supervisors, along with Prof. Joyce Zemans, my mentor and supporter since my early days at York. The opportunities that York creates for its students, the encouragement from its professors, the rigour and breadth of its programs, I credit for my accomplishments and my contribution to the Canadian team at the AGO.”

Uhlyarik says she’s loved the visual arts for as long as she can

remember. “Not as a maker at all,” she says. “But as an audience member. Being a viewer seemed the most mysterious and most powerful of all. I thought that if I could understand art then everything would make sense.” But Uhlyarik does come by her artistic leanings from a nurture, rather than nature, angle. “Almost everyone in my family drew or painted,” she says.

Though she doesn’t do so herself, she has her own family of budding artists: her two young twin boys. As she says: “One of my boys draws on everything and the other makes up stories about everything. They are part of everything I do and I sometimes think my house is one big ‘installation’! The first artwork they remember seeing was a video installation of a man jumping endlessly, and now anyone named Emily that they meet they think is Emily Carr.” ■



# Work in Progress

## An exclusive peek at the AGO’s new galleries.

BY MICHAEL TODD

**T**HE ART GALLERY OF ONTARIO’S current makeover by world renowned architect Frank Gehry continues apace with the grand opening projected for Nov. 14, 2008. As Gehry’s architectural innovation will shed new light on how gallery-goers experience art, so too will York grad Georgiana Uhlyarik’s ideas for the transformation of the Canadian galleries that house the AGO’s permanent collection of Canadian artists. The curatorial assistant is confident that the reinvented Canadian wing will reframe how we view Canadian artists’ works, both well- and lesser-known.

Uhlyarik points out that the new Canadian galleries (their size has increased 164 per cent in the new design) are thematic rather than chronological. There are three major themes: Myth, Memory and Power. “Key principles that guided us in the installation were the inclusion of women artists and First Nations as well as presenting historical work together with recent work – mostly before 1980,” says Uhlyarik. “We also try to showcase living artists and recent acquisitions and we work very closely with interpretive planners to make sure the visitor experience is paramount.” ■



**MAKEOVER:** This page and opposite, scenes from the Canadian galleries and the exterior of the new AGO



York's Stephen Gaetz  
helps explode myths about the homeless.  
BY MARTHA TANCOCK ■ PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS YOUNG



# Home Truths

**W**ERE IT NOT FOR THE SEX PISTOLS, York education Professor Stephen Gaetz (MA '85, PhD '90) might not be crusading for an end to homelessness today. When the punk band burst upon the music scene in the late 1970s, it opened a tantalizing window on a defiant youth subculture that Gaetz, then a bored suburban Calgary student, found irresistible. His life changed forever when an anthropology prof at the University of Calgary let him write an essay about the band.

Anthropology, the young Gaetz realized, could take him in unusual directions. East to York University, first, where he

expanded that essay into an MA thesis on punk rock, then across the Atlantic to do research for a PhD on marginalized young people in urban Ireland. "I knew from The Pogues and other British punk bands that Ireland had an interesting youth culture," says Gaetz.

On the gritty streets of Cork, Gaetz came face to face with the urban outlaws the Sex Pistols and The Pogues sang about. When he arrived in 1987, Ireland was an economic basket case, not the Celtic Tiger it is now. Cork reeled from the closure of its Ford plant and unemployment was high at 17 per cent – 60 per cent in public housing estates. The joyriding car thieves – and future subjects of his doctoral thesis – he hung out with

hated not being able to work and was bored out of his mind. "That was a big lesson for me: You have to understand where people are at," says Gaetz. "How you think about them affects how you work with them. They can tell when you're being disrespectful."

Seventeen years later, Gaetz returned to Cork and bumped into Seamus. The once surly, rudderless lad was a skilled operator at a chemical plant and coaching a local soccer team. "It was so affirming to know that all the young people we think are pathological losers who belong in jail, if they get a chance to work and feel included, become successful and contribute back to their community. It's all about respect."

Back in Canada, Gaetz finished his PhD at York, then left academe to help street kids. For seven years, he worked as a health promoter for the fledgling Shout Clinic, serving homeless youth in downtown Toronto. He also did some useful and groundbreaking research. Based on his study of oral health, Shout set up Canada's first free dental service for street youth. His research with Bill O'Grady, a University of Guelph sociologist, on the kids' money-making strategies led to the development of an innovative training program. The same study bolstered a campaign protesting then-premier Mike Harris's Safe Streets Act, which banned "aggressive" panhandling and squeegeeing. "Shout was an exciting place to be," remembers Gaetz. "It leapt into a leadership role in Canada."

Cork cured Gaetz of a few biases. One day he interviewed a young tough called Seamus. "Being a middle-class kid from Calgary, I asked him 'Do you want to get a job?'" "No," sneered Seamus, "I want to be on welfare. And when I grow up I'm going to raise my kids on welfare." The truth beneath the sarcasm was that Seamus was profoundly depressed,

and that homeless people are more likely to be victims than perpetrators of crimes.

But, Gaetz wondered, who benefited from this research? Homelessness has worsened in Canada over the past 15 years, yet governments make no plans to end it and community-based agencies respond to it haphazardly. Research is fragmented among many disciplines and hard to find. "There has been no glue sticking it all together," says Gaetz. "This has become my thing. How do we mobilize research that will have an impact on solutions to homelessness?"

In 2005, the man with a mission invited front-line workers, government policy-makers and former homeless people to help him organize the first national conference on homelessness in Canada. It was a major success. "People were clear," says Gaetz. "They said, 'we need better access to research, we need to make research matter and we need to create stronger networks.'" So Gaetz, again collaborating with stakeholders, created and last year launched a comprehensive Web site. The Homeless Hub is the world's first virtual research library, information exchange and networking centre on homelessness in Canada.

Then in May, Gaetz received a whopping \$2.1-million grant from the federal Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council to build a Canadian Homeless Research Network over the next seven years. The knowledge cluster will involve 15 researchers – six from York – at four Canadian universities and 13 partners, including municipalities and service providers from across the country.

Thanks to a 47-year-old punk rock fan, York now leads the charge to make homelessness research matter in Canada. "We've tried to bring people together for a conversation," says Gaetz. "Now, that conversation will happen." ■

How Karolyn Smardz Frost unearthed the dramatic saga of two escaped slaves in 19th-century Toronto.

BY MARTHA TANCOCK

PHOTOGRAPHY BY LINDSAY LOZON

# Freedom Train

**I**F KAROLYN SMARDZ FROST HADN'T persuaded the Toronto District School Board to let her dig up the playground at Sackville Street Public School as an archeological education project in 1985, the world wouldn't be any the wiser about Thornton Blackburn. The "colored" cab owner listed in Toronto's 1856 street directory would have remained as invisible as the foundations of his little house buried beneath the schoolyard. And Frost, who teaches history at York, may never have spent the next 20 years digging up this fugitive slave's past and writing her award-winning *I've Got a Home in Glory Land: A Lost Tale of the Underground Railroad*.

When she started, the young archeologist with a master's degree in classics had only the barest of facts, gleaned from gravestones and an 1888 *Toronto Telegram* interview: Blackburn was born in Maysville, Kentucky, started Toronto's first cab company, died and was buried in Toronto with his wife Lucie and mother Sibby. Frost would soon discover how hard it would be to piece together the arc of this man's life. Illiterate and childless, he left no descendants or letters. "I was searching for a 19-year-old man known mainly by his first name who had been owned by Kentucky slaveholders called Smith and Brown," says Frost.

For years, she clocked tens of thousands of kilometres driving around Ontario and south to Kentucky, Michigan and Virginia, combing through deeds, wills, birth and death registers, newspapers and court records in libraries, municipal offices, churches and cemeteries. She interviewed descendants of slaves in Canada and of slave owners in the United States. She visited places where Thornton lived and worked, funding her forays with donations from private foundations and historical societies. Bit by painstaking bit, she assembled Thornton's life story. Along the way, Frost went back to university. "I earned a PhD in American history just so I could write this book."

From the opening scene, *Glory Land* tells a gripping tale. On July 3, 1831, Thornton and his beautiful wife Lucie, dressed in their Sunday best and carrying forged identity documents, waited for the ferry to take them on the first leg of their escape north to freedom. Caught and jailed in Detroit two years later, they sparked that city's first race riot when friends rallied to rescue them, then rowed them to safety in Upper Canada. Their infuriated owners filed for extradition without success. Not long afterwards, Thornton risked his only return to the US – to steal his mother Sibby out of bondage. For more than 50 years, the Blackburns flourished in Toronto and used their wealth to help refugees like themselves start anew in a free land.

*Glory Land* is the first biography of an escaped slave based on original research, rather than a first-hand account. The title

comes from a verse in the Negro spiritual Do Lord. "Glory land" suggested heaven but came to mean Canada for freedom-seeking slaves before the American Civil War ended slavery in 1865. The Blackburns were among 30,000 American blacks who escaped to Canada, but whose story would surely have been lost without what *The New York Times Book Review* called Frost's "heroic research".

For Canadians, the book is an eye-opener. Canada's legal rationale for receiving refugees was first articulated to protect Thornton and Lucie Blackburn from extradition in 1833. "Every refugee has benefited from that decision," says Frost, former executive director of the Ontario Historical Society. "It's a piece of history every Canadian child should know." And who knew that Toronto was such an important terminus on the Underground Railroad, a lively centre of abolitionist debate where an unschooled Thornton could work with *The Globe* editor George Brown on antislavery committees? Or that blacks, more than whites, formed the network that spirited fugitive slaves to safety? "This book is an attempt to set the record straight about the Underground Railroad," says Frost.

*Glory Land* won the 2007 Governor General's Award for Non-Fiction. Hailed for historical depth, the book also reads with "the breathtaking urgency of a thriller", wrote *The Boston Globe*. At its heart beats a love story. Thornton and Lucie were newlyweds who plotted their escape in haste before Lucie's new owner could sell her down the river at the fancy-girl auctions. "I hope and pray this enthralling – and true – story will go to film," says Frost.

Meanwhile, hooked on resurrecting lost tales, she is hard at work on *Steal Away Home*, a book about a lifelong friendship between a Southern belle and her black maid after the latter escaped to freedom during a trip to Niagara Falls. Still, Frost is not about to say farewell anytime soon to the Blackburns. Though busy teaching African Canadian history in York's Atkinson Faculty of Liberal & Professional Studies and involved with York's Harriet Tubman Institute for Research on the Global Migrations of African Peoples, she accepts all speaking invitations, from scholars in Cape Town, South Africa, to history buffs in Belleville, Ontario. "I put too much effort into this to let it go."

Frost still wonders what Thornton and Lucie looked like. She's just waiting for the day when someone comes up to her after a talk and says, "My family knew the Blackburns. Would you like to see a photo?" That would be hitting pay dirt for the archeologist who dug up a remarkable story that could have remained buried forever beneath the trampled playground of Sackville Street Public School. ■

# YORK PEOPLE

## Roger Pulwarty

Climate scientist

## Nobel Cause

AS A MEMBER OF THE 2007 NOBEL Peace Prize-winning Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change, Roger Pulwarty (BSc Spec. Hons. '86) is York's first alumnus to become a Nobel laureate. It's a recognition he shares with hundreds of others on the panel, where he was a high-ranking lead author, and with former US vice-president and environmental advocate Al Gore, who was named co-winner of the prize. Since the release of the panel's report – which finally pushed world opinion on climate change beyond the denial stage – Pulwarty, a climate scientist for the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and director of the National Integrated Drought Information System in Boulder, Colo., has given testimony before the US Congress and flown all over the world responding to the rapidly growing appetite for cold, hard facts on climate change and its impact.

His latest project is helping to establish a US National Climate Service – an information service to support decision-making in response to climate variability and change – that will publish authoritative information on global and regional trends and on adaptation measures. The data will be used by planners to understand, predict and manage the impact of global warming for groups as diverse as farmers, salmon fishers and ski resort owners, and, most critically, for countries with shared water resources, such as Canada and the US. "It's like a weather service but longer-term," Pulwarty says. "Instead of 'should I take my umbrella today', it's more like 'will there be snow to ski on in 10 years'." ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY DANIEL HIRSH

## Mark Lalama

Musician, producer

## Idol's Piano Man

AS GIGS GO, being the pianist for "Canadian Idol" is a pretty good one. Just ask Mark Lalama (BFA '87), who entered his sixth season with the top-rated CTV reality show this past summer. Performing and working with the young Idol singers keeps the singer/songwriter's creative instincts fresh and provides a break from writing, producing and recording music for other artists, as well as for film and television. "I need the balance of both," he says. "If I do too much of one, I miss the other."

During the show's intense three-month production season, Lalama leaves his home and five-suite recording studio in Fenwick, Ont., just outside his native Welland, to live in Toronto. He and vocal coach Debra Byrd spend an hour with each contestant, helping them "connect" with their chosen song, and Lalama also plays in the Idol house band. In the off-season, he plays with his own world/folk/jazz band Accordion Crimes. He says he enjoyed the "great environment" in the Music Department of York's Faculty of Fine Arts, where he won an Oscar Peterson bursary. He also remembers cutting class on occasion so he could rush downtown for a recording session. With the Idol season just concluded, Lalama will head back to the studio to get rebalanced, writing and recording with some of Canada's top talent. ■

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JEFF KIRK



## An Early Start

Undergrads are getting involved in important research



**BETTER NAVIGATION:** A Canadian Forces search & rescue helicopter in action

**S**urvivors of remote airplane crashes, diabetics and those suffering from degenerative eye conditions are among the many who could benefit from research being done at York University – by undergraduate students. The students work as interns with faculty members, graduate students and other researchers, thanks to innovative scholarships.

“Getting introduced to research early on is a key motivator for young scholars,” says Stan Shapson, vice-president, research & innovation. “These awards help create tomorrow’s research leaders.” Students become full members of their respective teams, conduct independent research, publish papers and attend conferences, all while completing their bachelor degrees.

“I don’t think I would have applied for a master’s before this experience,” says Giulia Ugucioni, a former Dr. James Wu Research Intern. Ugucioni, 23, investigated the importance of the PGC-1alpha protein to our bodies’ health. Study of the protein, which is prevalent throughout the human body, especially in muscle, may lead to a better understanding of the impact of exercise and how diabetes develops. Ugucioni gradu-

ated with a bachelor of science degree in 2007, and is now pursuing her master’s in science, working in the same lab.

Abdullah Merai, 22, has had a similar positive experience. In his fourth year of a computer engineering degree, the Mary and Hubert Lynch Research Intern says his experience has encouraged him to consider graduate studies. He is working on a project to develop an advanced navigation system that will help helicopter search & rescue missions reduce their search time and increase their probability of success.

Many undergraduate researchers were volunteers first. “When I was volunteering in the physics lab it was great; but in the back of my mind I was always worrying about how I was going to pay for tuition,” says Dominik Swierad, 21. “These scholarships take that worry away and let me focus on my work.” The awards are renewable until the student’s graduation.

In 2007, Swierad, a computer engineering student, received a Lynch Internship and began working on virtual reality projects. Using the immersive visual environment at York, easily imagined as a precursor to *Star Trek’s* holodeck, Swierad helps with several

studies on how visual defects can affect everyday tasks such as driving and locating objects in a room. These experiments promise to help with the diagnosis, management and treatment of glaucoma and other visual conditions.

Based on the tremendous success of these initial internships, York University is working to establish additional awards for students of all disciplines. Donors at all giving levels can help. For more information, contact Jennifer Clark, associate director of development and chief development officer, research & innovation, for the York University Foundation, at 416-650-8210 or [clarkj@yorkfoundation.yorku.ca](mailto:clarkj@yorkfoundation.yorku.ca). ■

### CAMPAIGN UPDATE

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

**TARGET: \$200 million**

**CURRENT LEVEL: Over \$160 million**

**TIME SINCE LAUNCH: 23 months**

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

## News:

### Taking the Work Out of Networking

How to turn strangers into connections

**O**NE OF THE most valuable benefits of an alumni association is that it can provide you with a powerful network. But while attending an alumni event may be a great first step to plugging into this network, many people don't know how to turn a room full of strangers into a bunch of friends and contacts.

"We organize alumni events constantly – whether it's York Day at the Rogers Cup tennis tournament or an Alumni Theatre Night to see *Avenue Q*," says James Allan, York's director, alumni. "And alumni tell us that one of the main reasons they come out is to connect with other grads and meet new people. But talking to strangers can be a scary thing – and so people can find these events daunting."

Luckily, networking is like many other social phobias – the main thing to fear is the fear itself. "The first thing I say to our nervous networkers is that they're in good com-

pany," says Allan. "The kind of people who come out to alumni events are typically happy to engage. All someone has to do is make the first move – and staff from the Alumni Office are always on hand to make introductions.

"Secondly, an alumni event may look like a room full of strangers – but it's not. They're all York grads, which means you've already got a lot in common and plenty to talk about – the classes you took, the people you met, your most memorable York experiences."

But is this small talk, or is it networking? Lynne Waymon, CEO of Maryland-based Contacts Count and a networking consultant who advises the York Alumni Office, says networking is just goal-oriented small talk – and it works best when it's friendly and generous.

"Networking is about helping others fulfill their personal and professional goals, and about inviting them to help you fulfill yours," she says. "And while small talk can be a great place to start, we all



**MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL:** York education Professor Jill Bell (centre left) greets a participant at a 2006 alumni event in Hong Kong, as Stephanie Chow (BA '05) looks on.

know that conversation is much more interesting when it's actually about something.

"So when you're at an alumni event, try talking to people about what's going on in your life – it will help them understand who you are and what you're good at. And you can even invite them to help you with your current projects, whether it's finding a great hotel in Paris or looking for a

new job," Waymon suggests.

"Don't forget that networking must be mutually beneficial. So, make sure you really listen to the people you meet. And when someone you're talking to mentions an interest or a challenge, try suggesting a book, a contact or a Web site that could help. You'll make connections – and even better, you'll probably make friends." ■

#### A Lot of Nerves

**60%** of people feel shy and uncomfortable in business and social settings

**74%** don't know what to talk about in "networking" situations

Source: *ContactsCount.com*

## Class Notes:

**1972**

**Koscec, Michael** (MES) had his book *Energizing Organizations* published last year and recently won a Reader's Choice Award. His book provides research on how workplace practices and leadership behaviours impact employee mental health.

**1973**

**Coulter, Laurie** (BA Glendon) recently published *Cowboys and Coffin Makers: One Hundred 19th-Century Jobs You Might Have Feared or Fancied* (Annick Press).

**1977**

**Aubert, Rosemary** (MA) is an internationally published and award-winning author of 11 novels, including six mysteries. She was recently chosen as Canadian Guest of Honour at the 2008 Bloody Words convention, Canada's premier conference for mystery writers and fans.

**Howson, Megan** (BA McLaughlin) moved to England following her graduation to continue her studies at the London School of Economics & Political Science. She currently works as a front-line social worker in Hampshire.

**1980**

**Haig Bartley, Pamela** (BFA Spec. Hons. Bethune) teaches acting in the Drama Department at the University of Saskatchewan. She will

direct *A Skull in Connemara* for Persephone Theatre in the Saskatchewan Playwrights Centre's Spring Festival 2008-2009 season. She has a very tolerant husband and son.

**1983**

**Ross, Suzanne** (MBA) has worked as a full-time professor of marketing in The Business School at Humber College/University of Guelph-Humber for the last eight years. She also advises small business start-ups and hopes to renew ties with the marketing and advertising communities in Toronto.

**1984**

**Nyman, Ian** (BA Winters) is general manager of the North York YMCA Employment & Newcomer Centre. He lives in Richmond Hill with his daughter and twin sons.

**1985**

**Arthur-Leung, Kimberley** (BA Spec. Hons. Glendon) was recently appointed a judge of the Provincial Court of British Columbia. In 2004 she was the first recipient of the BC Achievement Foundation award in recognition of a lifetime of commitment to volunteering. Recently widowed, she is the mother of two daughters, 12 and 16.

**1988**

**Ballantyne, Curtis** (BBA Spec. Hons.



1988: Curtis Ballantyne

'86 Bethune, MBA) co-founded in 1997 the Toronto Chapter of the Urban Financial Services Coalition, an industry group dedicated to promoting diversity in the financial services industry. He currently works as senior vice-president and chief credit officer for the UK-based Butterfield Bank.

**McMillan, Susan J.** (BAS '86 Atkinson, MBA) worked for five years with The Salvation Army in South America with administrative responsibility for Chile, Peru, Bolivia and Ecuador. She is now assigned to The Salvation Army's international headquarters in London, England, with responsibilities concerning the Army's work in all of the Americas.

**1989**

**Alvarez, Francisco H.** (BFA Spec. Hons. '78 Calumet, MBA) was recently appointed managing director of the Institute for Contemporary Culture at the Royal Ontario Museum. As director of communications previously, he led the international PR campaign for the museum's expansion.

**Bradley-St-Cyr, Ruth** (BA Hons. '87 Glendon, MA) is pursuing her PhD in English at the University of Ottawa and hopes to graduate before all three of her children finish high school. In her free time she works as a freelance copy editor.

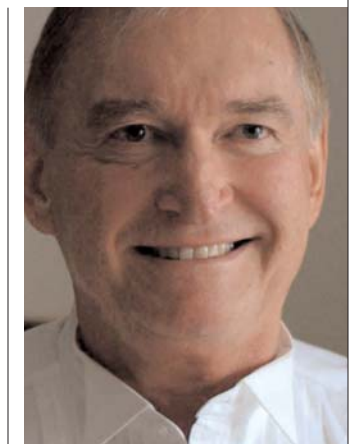
**1990**

**Scott Mackintosh** (BA Calumet) is a founding partner with Glengarry Group Consulting in Toronto, blending military leadership with corporate practice to allow executives to benefit from the best the military has to offer.

**Pearce, Jacqueline Mary** (MES) had her sixth book for children, *Manga Touch*, published last year by Orca Books. She also has a collection of short stories for teens called *Weeds and Other Stories* which was inspired by her time in the York's Faculty of Environmental Studies.

**1992**

**Hurley, Patricia** (BA Hons. Founders) lives in the Washington,



1972: Michael Koscec

DC, area and works for the American Society of Clinical Oncology as a clinical practice guideline writer. In addition to her work and her efforts to help people and families dealing with cancer, she sits on the board of directors for Big Brothers Big Sisters in Fredericksburg, Va.

**1993**

**Clements, Joel** (BFA Spec. Hons. Winters) left his position as art director at Capital C Communications to launch his own design business, Brainstorm Studio. In addition to running his business Joel teaches part-time in the Graphic Design and Media Program at Centennial College in Toronto. Married in 2007, he and his wife live with their pets in Richmond Hill, Ont.

**1997**

**Raza, Asad** (BSc Spec. Hons. Bethune) attended Saba University in the Netherlands Antilles for medical school after graduation. He completed his residency training in family medicine in the United States and currently works as a physician in Iowa.

**Taylor, Kelly** (BA Hons. Vanier) is a freelance writer living in Elora, Ont. She has been a columnist for the past five years, writing about the trials and tribulations of raising two young children in small-town Ontario.

# Class Notes:

1998

**Schembri, Kimberly** (BSc Bethune) attended Ryerson University after York to pursue her bachelor of science in nursing. There she met her future husband, Joseph, now a paramedic with Toronto EMS. Kimberly works in the medical/surgical intensive care unit at Toronto General Hospital. Their first child was born in June.

1999

**Mendoza-Wong, Maria** (BA Hons. Glendon) married Garnet Wong in 2004 and they have two boys. She previously worked for BMO Nesbitt Burns and is currently a freelance makeup artist.

**Niaraki, Eva** (née Teleki-Medjesi) (BA Spec. Hons. '84 McLaughlin, BSW Spec. Hons. Atkinson) works in Toronto with the Ministry of Community and Social Services, IT Branch, as a lead analyst. She lives in Markham with her husband and their two daughters and is working on establishing a restaurant with her husband.

**Ruiz, Jorge** (BA Atkinson) attended Brock University in St. Catharines, Ont., after graduation to pursue his bachelor of education degree. He now works as a part-time teacher with adult students and enjoys painting in his spare time.

**Tabet, Cyril** (BAS Atkinson) recently launched Rise Up, an association that organizes mountaineering

walkathons to support educational programs for destitute children.

2000

**Ball, Stephen John** (BA Hons. Winters) recently had his first novel, *Headline*, published through iUniverse and is currently preparing his second. Stephen also works at TD Canada Trust and lives in London, Ont., with his family.

**Henry, Marsha** (BA Hons. '97 McLaughlin, LLB) graduated from the University of Waterloo's Master's in Corporate Taxation Program in October 2007 and subsequently accepted the position of vice-president, trader and product structurer, in the Structured Arbitrage Group at TD Securities in New York City.

2001

**Ergil, Asli** (BA Hons. Glendon) has worked for Manulife Financial for five years and has taken up a new role in the Investment Product Development department. She was recently married in Istanbul, Turkey. She operates a home-based business with her husband, enabling them to travel frequently.

**Perryman-Mark, Crystal Aisha** (BA Hons. Founders) works as a women's advocate and counsellor for Malton Neighbourhood Services and Interim Place Shelter. She also works as a writer, performs as a poet and is the founder of Malton Moms. She and her husband of nine years, Kevin Mark, have four children. She



2004: Garfinkle (right) and Feigelson

plans to run for Mississauga city council in 2010.

2002

**Kien, Grant** (BA Hons. '99 Founders, MA) is finishing his PhD in communications research at the University of Illinois. Soon after accepting a faculty position with the Department of Communication at California State University East Bay, he was appointed graduate program director. A graduate of the York/Ryerson Joint Graduate Program in Communication & Culture, Grant welcomes contact from York alumni in the San Francisco Bay Area.

2003

**Filmer, Paola** (BEd) lives in the United States and has completed her MEd in curriculum and ESL instruction through the University of Phoenix.

**Gervan, Marguerite** (BA Vanier, BEd) works as a grade three primary teacher with the York Region District School Board.

**Rajendram, Isaac** (BA Atkinson) is pursuing an MBA at Oxford University in the UK. He previously worked as a trader and investment analyst with Credit Union Central of Ontario.

2004

**Appleton, Genevieve S.** (MFA) and her husband both make films and teach in the Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture at Bilkent University in Ankara, Turkey. Their two-year-old son speaks both English

and Turkish and is beginning to speak French.

**Chapman, Richelle** (BDes Spec. Hons. Winters) recently started her own graphic design company, Conception Design Solutions. She says the Bachelor of Design program at York taught her a great deal and was the perfect foundation for entering the design industry.

**Dunsmoor, Kalene** (BFA Spec. Hons. Vanier) recently completed visual effects work for Industrial Light and Magic on *Iron Man* and *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull*. She lives and works in Singapore and teaches art classes after work to her co-workers at Lucasfilm.

**Garfinkle, Michael** (BA Hons. Bethune) is a clinical intern in psychology at Columbia University Medical Center as well as an associate fellow at the New York Academy of Medicine. In addition, he is conducting research in emotion-based decision-making at the Philoctetes Center for the Multi-disciplinary Study of Imagination in New York. In his spare time, he loves to travel with his fiancée, Suzanne Feigelson.

**Ho, Jacqueline** (BA Bethune) received a graduate certificate in legal and corporate administration and a graduate diploma in the Court and Tribunal Agent Accelerated Program at Seneca College. She currently practises under the Law Society of Upper Canada and volunteers for the YWCA, the Lawyers Feed the Hungry program and the Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture.

# Class Notes:



2007: Alvaro Crespo

2005

**Grant, Judith** (PhD) recently wrote her first book, *Charting Women's Journeys: From Addiction to Recovery*, published by Lexington Press. After teaching for six years in the United States, she now teaches in the Faculty of Criminology, Justice & Policy Studies at the University of Ontario Institute of Technology in Oshawa.

2006

**Barnes, Christine** (BA Bethune) lived and worked as an ESL teacher at Japan's top English conversation school, AEON Corp., in Osaka. Currently she teaches first-year College English at Seneca College. She has also attained certification with TESL Canada to be an international as well as local ESL instructor.

**Harji, Rahim** (BA Stong) works in Calgary for Fluor, a global engineering, procurement and construction company. In his spare time, he trains in a variety of mixed martial arts and keeps abreast of business theory and application.

**Kissin, Mathieu** (BA Glendon) completed his MSc in December 2007 at the Université de Montreal. He recently started second year at the Faculty of Law at McGill University in Montreal.

**McFarlane, David Anthony** (BSc Bethune) recently made the transition to property management in the social housing sector after a number of years working in telecommunications.

2007

**Baggia, Waqas** (BSc Spec. Hons. Bethune) works for Re/Max while pursuing his Certified Commercial Investment Member (CCIM) designation. Waqas is involved in both residential and commercial real estate.

**Crespo, Alvaro** (IMBA) currently works in the Global Risk Management area of Scotiabank, on the Mexican portfolio. Alvaro and his wife recently visited their sponsored child Antony in Ecuador.

**Hilliard, Timothy Wayne** (BA Hons. Winters) works for the Ontario Disability Support Program Branch in

the Employer Outreach Secretariat of the Ministry of Community and Social Services as an outreach consultant. He recently started working on an MA in immigration and settlement studies part time at Ryerson University.

**Tunnah, David Leonard** (MBA) lives in Vancouver with his wife Noriko and works in consulting at Deloitte. He is working in his chosen field of corporate responsibility & sustainability. After moving several times, he is sure that he'll stay for a few years in beautiful Vancouver.

2008

**Cecillon, Jack Douglas** (PhD) currently teaches history at Lakehead University's Orillia campus. He is the author of *Emerging Loyalties*, a book in the CBC's "Canada: A People's History" series. He is also working with Radio-Canada and Radio-France on a special television series about the old fur trading communities in the Windsor-Detroit area and their relations with Montreal and France.

In Memoriam

**Ansari, Usamah** (MA '08), described as a brilliant sociology student and an exceptional human being, died at 23 after being struck by a car in Toronto on April 15. He had received the Top Student Award as an undergraduate at Simon Fraser University, which renamed it the Usamah Ansari Top Student Award. York's Department of Sociology has set up a memorial scholarship fund.

**Langford, George Kenneth** (LLB '41), lawyer, military officer and activist, died on May 8 at 90. He

worked with the Canadian Paralegic Association and in 1961 became managing director. In 1967, he helped found the Canadian Wheelchair Sports Association to re-introduce sports and recreation into the lives of people who had sustained spinal cord injuries.

**Moens, Peter**, a York Distinguished Research Professor Emeritus in biology, died of cancer on April 28 at 76. During his career at York, which began in the early 1960s, he became an internationally respected leader in the field of reproductive cell biology. Elected to the Royal Society of Canada in 1978, he continued his teaching and research until 2007.

**Mohr, Johann (Hans)**, professor emeritus in York's Osgoode Hall Law School and a leader in its move toward interdisciplinarity, died April 11 at 80. A social psychologist and psychiatric researcher, he was one of the first social scientists appointed to a full-time position on any Canadian law faculty. Joining Osgoode in 1969, he also served on the Law Reform Commission of Canada and as president of the Vanier Institute of the Family.

**Solitar, Donald**, eminent mathematician, died unexpectedly on April 23 at 75. He came to York in 1968 from New York to head the Mathematics Department and also served as acting chair of the Computer Science Department from 1968 to 1973. An internationally recognized expert on group theory, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada in 1982.

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Teaching overseas seemed like a great idea – until I got there. **BY THOMAS KLASSEN**

# Lost in Translation

**W**HY? WHY? THE QUESTION POUNDED fiercely in my head as the airplane’s engines droned. Why was I on a 13-hour flight from Toronto to Seoul, South Korea, with my wife and two-month-old twins? And why would we not return home to Canada for 14 months?

A year earlier, studying Korean public policy and teaching in Korea had seemed like a wonderful way to learn, meet new people and return to Canada with a fresh perspective.

Touching down in Seoul, with a dozen pieces of luggage, two car seats and a double stroller, reality set in. Our new home was a

## Often we were swarmed

city of 18 million people, who were all strangers and whose language I did not speak.

Still, making my first close friend was easy: the GPS navigation system in our car.

Unable to read street signs in Seoul, only this device allowed me to go shopping to buy the 20 diapers our twins needed per day. Without it I was lost in the city’s convoluted streets, expressways, many bridges, hills and tunnels. However, unable to program the Korean-language system, I could only drive to places which I – or more correctly the car – had previously visited.

Like many friendships, ours was tested early when one day, some distance from our home, the screen flashed a red message. Even without understanding the language, it was obvious that the machine was as lost as I. After prayers to the heavens, or at least the satellite in synchronous orbit 35,000 kilometres above, contact was finally re-established and I reached home. Never had I been so relieved to reach sanctuary. Suffering from shock, I refused to step outside our apartment for a week.

A few times, even the GPS, cell phone and maps failed to take me to my destination. For one lunch appointment, I never found the restaurant where I was to meet colleagues. I know I was close and had followed all the directions, asked (as best I could) for assistance from passers-by, but to this day, its location remains a mystery to me.

Other tasks became adventures as well. Taking our twins for a stroll always meant being stopped by folks on the street and,

Thomas Klassen is a political science professor at York. In 2006-2007, he was a visiting professor at Yonsei University in Seoul.

especially, in malls and stores. Nearly all twins in Asia are identical – for reasons that are not well understood – so Claire and Alexander were especially popular. Often we were swarmed by dozens of people, with cameras, eager to see non-Korean boy-girl twins.



Holidays became complicated. Christmas is a national holiday, as one-third of Koreans are Christians, and Buddha’s birthday in May is also a holiday, as another third of Koreans are Buddhist.

There are also two New Year celebrations: the solar on Jan. 1 and the lunar in mid-February. As a family, we became well versed in doing things twice.

At work at Yonsei University, two-thirds of students

dropped my course after the first class, once they realized that truly – as advertised – the course would be entirely in English. I tried not to take this (too) personally. I quickly grew used to not being able to read e-mails, memos, or just about anything that came my way and quickly deleted or trashed these. This is a transferrable skill that has served me well since.

In Korea, unlike York University, campus parking for students and staff is highly subsidized. As I learned, qualifying for this benefit is no simple matter. Obtaining my university parking permit involved producing, among other documents, my marriage certificate and my wife’s birth certificate. In prime parking areas on campus, students would double park, leaving their cars in neutral with the parking brake off, so they could be pushed around to allow other cars to come or leave.

One of the most common questions colleagues asked was my age. For years I have refused to answer this question, preferring uncertainty to “you don’t look it!” But in Korea, age determines speaking order, the form of address one might use and how deeply one bows. Age also decides who pays for lunch (the eldest). In my case, vanity proved more powerful than social grace – or even a free lunch – and my age remains a secret in Korea.

On the flight home, I reflected on the experience: Had it been worthwhile? Had I learned enough? However, over the drone of the engines, all I could hear was, “Let’s do it again, let’s do it again.” ■