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Fall 2020



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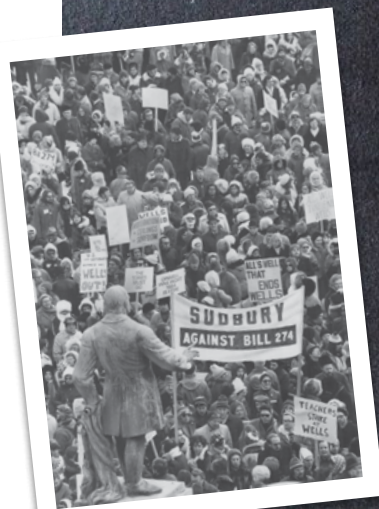
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SCHOOL DAYS



On the cover
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Right photos, Linda Hutsell-Manning

LEFT PHOTO, TORONTO STAR PHOTOGRAPH ARCHIVE; TOP AND RIGHT PHOTOS, LINDA HUTSELL-MANNING

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renaissance

Fall 2020
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Volume 19, Number 3

Publisher RTOERO

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Creative Print 3 Inc.

Creative Direction Hambly & Woolley Inc.

Translation Spectrum Translations

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RTOERO is divided into 51 districts and has over 81,000 members.

Renaissance is published quarterly by the RTOERO organization in Toronto, Ontario, and provides RTOERO members with content on topics of interest to the retired education community across Canada.

ISSN 1709-2736 (Print)
ISSN 2562-9751 (Online)

Views expressed in *Renaissance* are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of RTOERO.

Advertising Marlene Mignardi
Dovetail Communications Inc.
mmignardi@dvetail.com

Publication of an advertisement does not constitute an endorsement by RTOERO of any product or service.

Renaissance est également disponible en français. Si vous désirez recevoir la version française de ce magazine, veuillez communiquer avec le bureau.

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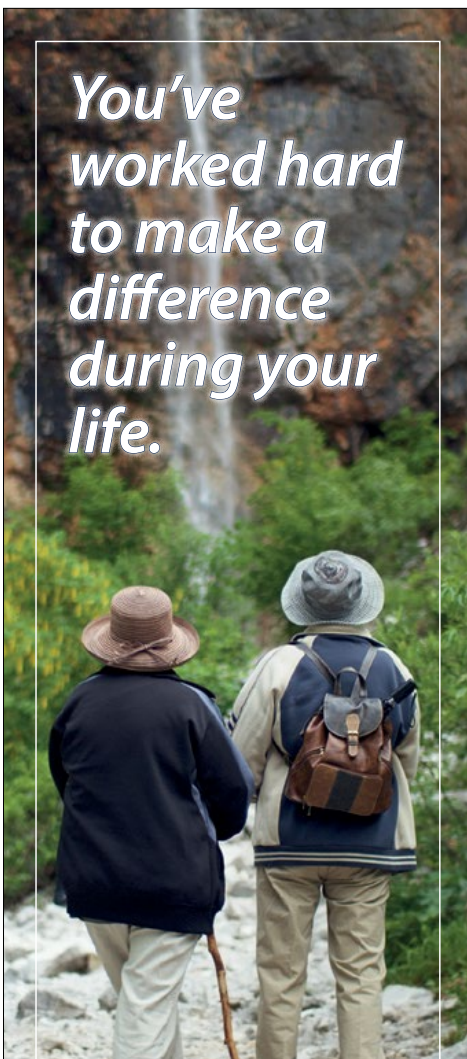
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We asked Joyce Spence,
Howard Moscoe and Karin DesChamp
to share a life lesson.

JOYCE SPENCE

"I am a good listener — and not a storyteller. I had the responsibility of the house and family when my husband, Murray, was teaching. When he came home after a long day, he would listen to my tales about our three sons' activities. We would laugh together, and he would chat with the boys. Unity/harmony was our theme."

—District 23 North York



HOWARD MOSCOE

"In Grade 10, I learned a valuable lesson. I was a pubescent hoodlum. My interest in my friends and social life far exceeded any academic ambitions, so I failed that year. But my parents moved, and I repeated Grade 10 at a new school. I didn't know a soul, so while others fooled around between classes, I read the next chapter in the history book. I discovered if you did some preparation, people actually thought you were smart — even if you weren't. I won the grade history prize that year and vowed never to go into another situation unprepared."

—District 23 North York



KARIN DESCHAMP

"The word *forgiveness* reminds me of a quote from Anne Lamott: 'Not forgiving is like drinking rat poison and then waiting for the rat to die.' My ability to learn how to forgive has released the shackles that bound me to the past and now allows me to live my life wholly, with self-assured serenity."

—District 36 Peterborough

Reader letters

Our summer issue struck a chord!

I just received the summer 2020 issue of *Renaissance* magazine. I am a nature lover, so I enjoyed the articles relating to travel, boating, backpacking and cottage life. I can't participate in most of these activities because I'm not as young as I used to be, but the magazine helped me enjoy memories of my younger years. Thank you so much. I just can't put the magazine on the shelf — it is on my coffee table so I can review the wonderful stories.

—Joyce Spence (District 23 North York)

I have not received my copy of *Renaissance* yet, but I think it was a very wise decision to email the gentle COVID-19 notice about the stories. With so many changes, in so many different areas, it can be difficult to keep track of what we can do, and when and where. This was a great jog to our memories before we even read the summer issue. Thanks, and well done.

—Jeannine Butler (District 18 Haliburton, Kawartha Lakes)

Thank you for the summer issue of *Renaissance*. The features are very interesting and meaningful. Congratulations to those who took the time to write articles of such high quality. This was also the case with the spring issue — I keep it for reference because it was very rich in content. Please accept my appreciation and congratulations.

—Jeannine Lalonde (District 27 Ottawa-Carleton)

Lesley-Anne Scorgie's column "What's your burn rate?" (Summer 2020) was very useful. One suggestion: Under the category "Gifts and other," perhaps you should have added a mention of charitable donations for those of us with poor memories!

—Ralph Gorcey (District 19 Hastings and Prince Edward)

It was gratifying to see a feature on Bermuda in your summer issue.

I lived there for six years and loved it. The people are very friendly. It is truly a beautiful country — small, but with lots to see and do. You cannot rent a car but you can rent a moped (driving on the left, as the article mentioned, is no problem for me, coming from Scotland), ride the pink buses or go by taxi (which is somewhat expensive). However, you should visit a grocery store, because the prices will shock you. The high cost of living was one reason I left.

The best time to visit is from May through early June. That is when the islands are at their floral best, although flowers bloom all year round. The high humidity begins in mid-June and there is no relief, day or night, until mid-October. You can sleep well in an air-conditioned hotel room, however.

—Lawrence Fotheringham (District 33 Chatham-Kent)

I am a 30-plus-year member of RTOERO, living alone in the beautiful town of Almonte, Ont., in Mississippi Mills. I've by and large enjoyed getting *Renaissance*, leafing through it and consigning it to the recycle pile.

However, the summer issue held my attention for several days. I enjoyed reading about dragon boat racing, as I was a war canoe captain for many years at Carleton Place Canoe Club. I'm going to try two of the recipes, and the financial article on burn rate was very useful.

So, here I am wondering what held my attention — I read the issue from back to front.

I wonder if I will get the same enjoyment from the fall issue.

—Cliff Bennett (District 29 Lanark)

COVID-19 REMINDER

As we mentioned in our last issue, *Renaissance* is planned and produced months before the magazine lands in your mailbox.

Some of the stories might not align with current COVID-19 best practices — if we're still not able to travel, add our "Homegrown Holiday" feature (page 34) to your bucket list for the day we can!

Rest assured that RTOERO continues to follow the advice of the Canadian government on all COVID-19 protocols. Stay safe, stay healthy and enjoy this issue.

Take care,
Stefanie Martin
Editor-in-Chief

Exclusively for RTOERO members



As a benefit of RTOERO membership, you receive a paid or digital subscription to our award-winning *Renaissance* magazine. Each quarterly issue brings you the information you want to live a healthy, active life in retirement.

\$5 from your annual membership dues is allocated to your one-year paid subscription to *Renaissance* magazine and is non-refundable.

WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!

We welcome your feedback, so please send your letters to renaissance@rtoero.ca. Letters may be edited for length and clarity at the discretion of the editor.

Back to school

The lasting impact
of lifelong learning

by **Martha Foster**



When you've been involved in education, you have a particular mental image of "back to school." Regardless of where you worked, that first day back after the summer holiday was always a bit chaotic: You were happy to see friends and colleagues, a bit confused ("Where is that class?") and excited ("Who will I be teaching?").

Now that you're retired, going back to school means something different but no less engaging. For example, classes don't have to start the day after Labour Day. Just before I began writing this column, I signed up for an eight-week course, which started in the middle of May — not September. As retired educators, we can sign up for courses offered throughout the year, at times that best suit our lives.

Another difference: You can take a course just because. When you were working, you registered for training you needed to enhance your teaching or add to your qualifications. Now you can register just because you're interested. My career specialty was science, but I later moved into governance. When I first retired, I volunteered at a small museum that focused on local events that happened during the early to mid-19th century. Suddenly, my interests went in a completely new direction. This former science aficionado is now taking courses and signing up for conferences and workshops on the War of 1812, spinning, weaving and historical cooking — and loving it.

Now that you're retired, you also have the opportunity to take advanced studies in your teaching specialty or a whole new area of interest. (When I finish my term at RTOERO, I would love to get my PhD in food history.) You can study online or take in-person classes, depending on which method best suits your learning style. Bonus: Many universities offer seniors free enrolment.

Every class you take will expand your outlook and open up your understanding of the world. Learning helps keep your mind active, stimulates new interests and improves your health and well-being. Honest!

So, as students return to their lessons this fall, explore what going back to school can mean for you. Discover something that captures your imagination and explore where education can take you. You might be surprised. 🍁

Enjoy the learning,
Martha

Lessons learned

Back to school doesn't
always mean going to class

by **Stefanie Martin**



Whether you're attending school as a student or contributing to the education sector as staff, fall has a familiar feeling for just about everyone: It's back-to-school time! I was (and still am) that kid who loved getting ready to return to the classroom. I looked forward to shopping for new notebooks, binders, pens, pencils and highlighters — seriously! And as much as our members love the RTOERO pocket planner, I loved my annual school agendas.

In this issue of *Renaissance*, we're inviting you to get into the back-to-school groove. RTOERO members have shared stories from their first year of teaching (page 17), while others have written about their experiences teaching in non-traditional classrooms (page 23) — including at a psychiatric hospital, a young offenders' unit and a home for pregnant teens.

RTOERO member Howard Moscoe (District 23 North York) takes us back to the 1970s and the events that led to the birth of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario in the 1990s (page 28), while Joyce Spence (District 23 North York) shares her husband's career story, "From pastor to prof" (page 32).

But back to school doesn't have to mean in a classroom — real or virtual. Whether you sign up for a course or embrace a new hobby, or an unexpected experience simply lands at your feet, life regularly takes us back to school; hence the term *lifelong learning*. We have sure learned that lesson during the global pandemic, when we've been forced to find new ways to connect socially and revamp our daily routines. We all have been challenged to adapt (and fast!) to new circumstances.

As we move further into this new normal, we are reminded that we are constantly learning. It is never too late to challenge yourself, whether that means studying a new language, trying out new technology or simply attempting a new recipe. These are all learning experiences that help us grow.

At RTOERO, we are continuously learning from you, our members; we love to hear your feedback. Please share your ideas and thoughts about *Renaissance* with us any time by emailing renaissance@rtoero.ca. ☺

Happy reading,
Stefanie

How shall we greet one another now?

We need a sincere new way to say hello

by **Jim Grieve**



I have been thinking a good deal about the post-pandemic new normal.

We will emerge slowly from this self-isolation, but how will we have been changed by the experience? Nobody I speak with expects that we will simply go back to how we operated before.

For instance, we'll need a new and sincere way to greet one another. In all cultures, family, friends and colleagues do this as a sign of recognition, affection, friendship and/or reverence. Depending on the occasion and the culture, that greeting may take the form of a handshake, a hug, a bow, a nod or cheek kisses. Seems to me, whether in business or familiar settings, we expect these practices to change.

The handshake, even when it morphed into the fist bump, is a serious potential way to exchange the virus, so it cannot remain a standard greeting. Meanwhile, some say hello to others with cheek kisses or big hugs, both of which have the same capacity for viral exchange. These customs, too, will need to disappear in a post-pandemic world if we are to remain safe.

But what can replace these familiar and traditional greetings?

- Do we move to the bow that is so revered in Japanese and other cultures?
- Do we look to *Star Trek* and adopt Spock's Vulcan greeting – the V created by separating the middle and ring fingers – while saying, "Live long and prosper?"
- Do we use American Sign Language for a hug – arms crossed against the chest – which was made famous in the film *Black Panther*?

Maybe. But I have another idea.

The late Dr. Dan Offord, one of my mentors, developed and ran the Offord Centre for Child Studies at McMaster University. He was also the owner and operator of Christie Lake Kids summer camp for very special children in eastern Ontario. He always started his speeches, lectures or training sessions with the greeting, "How are the children?"

Dr. Offord had heard this a lot when he worked in Africa. Adults greeted one another with these words, expressing a beautiful reverence for the potential of all children and for one another. I loved that sentiment and adopted this greeting in my work with early-years professionals.

I also learned a lot from Indigenous leaders, who deeply respect and honour the role of the Elders in their communities, depending on them to convey the wisdom and language so essential to sustaining culture. Perhaps, in response to the tragedy that unfolded in Canada's long-term care homes during the COVID-19 pandemic, we should ask every day, "How are the elders?"

Now, what if we put those two greetings together?

Don't be surprised, when we next see each other, if I use a new greeting that is both a sincere welcome and a reminder of what is so precious in our lives: "How are the elders and the children?" 🍀

Stay safe, healthy and connected,
Jim

All the comforts of home

Cohousing and cohabitation keep seniors socially connected

by **Ylva Van Buuren**

In 2016, the number of Canadians aged 65-plus exceeded that of children under 15 — and that number is expected to grow. The majority of older adults prefer to age in place safely and comfortably for as long as they can. But what if they live alone?

The social isolation we have experienced during the COVID-19

crisis provides a grim lens into the lives of many seniors who live in isolation. Data from the Canadian census shows that almost one-quarter of seniors aged 65 and older live alone. According to Statistics Canada, as many as 1.4 million seniors report feeling lonely.

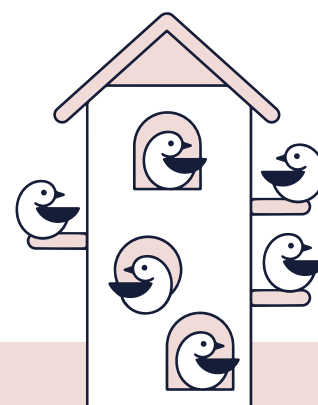
Loneliness and social isolation can have profound health consequences,

including reduced cognitive function and poorer mental health, and increased risk of heart attack, stroke, depression, falls and premature death. People who feel lonely or socially isolated often use health and support services more often.

The solution? Many experts point to cohousing.

This concept — creating shared communities for seniors and others — was born in Denmark in the 1960s and is gaining momentum around the world. And for good reason: It may be the answer to the challenges of affordable housing, access to health services and social isolation many seniors face. Sharing resources offers financial advantages, of course, but the social interaction and sense of community it encourages make the biggest impact on health and well-being.

There are lots of ways to realize cohousing. Here are three of the most common.



Social isolation is the number 1 emerging issue facing Canadian seniors. It is a priority issue for the RTOERO Foundation in its mission to create a better future for older adults. Cohousing and cohabitation are promising strategies to keep seniors socially connected and to avoid the physical and mental issues that can result from living in isolation.



“[Cohousing]
downsizes liabilities
[and] upsizes quality
of life.”

— Charles Durrett,
The Senior Cohousing Handbook

Share your home

Toronto HomeShare (torontohomeshare.com) provides a way for seniors to age in place *and* enjoy some company. “The city-funded program brings together two generations that actually have very similar needs,” says Raza M. Mirza, network manager for National Initiative for the Care of the Elderly. A program social worker matches the homeowner with the student, who commits to helping around the house in exchange for reduced-rate rent. Both parties bring their personal wisdom and insight, and friendships often develop. There is also a Barrie, Ont., HomeShare, and potential programs are in the works with Ontario Tech University and Simon Fraser University. Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is helping develop a tech platform that will take the program national.

Set up house with friends

Living with friends is becoming an increasingly attractive option. One example, reported by the CBC, saw three baby boomer friends downsize and pool their finances and furnishings so they could purchase a home to share. Everyone has their own bedroom, but they share everything else, including bills, cleaning and maintenance, common spaces and sometimes meals and activities. The best part: “There’s always someone around for a walk, a talk or just a simple hello,” said one of the women.

Buy into a cohousing development

A cohousing community combines private dwellings with shared resources and community living. At West Wind Harbour Cohousing in Sooke, B.C., for example, there are 34 self-contained units and 7,000 square feet of shared space, with everything from a communal kitchen, art rooms and guest suites to a rooftop garden and dock. “I wanted my own home and my own space,” says West Wind Harbour member Georgina Patko. “This community appealed to me because I would be an equal, contributing member, and the community would keep me engaged and interested.” ☘



Your friends at the RTOERO Foundation wish to thank every member who supported the *Engage: End Isolation* campaign last year. The passion and generosity of our donors is what allows us to help build a better future for Canadian seniors.

The RTOERO Foundation is grateful to Johnson Inc. for their ongoing commitment to enhancing the quality of life for older Canadians. Johnson's support contributes to research that will help RTOERO members and future generations of seniors live healthier and more connected lives.

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To learn more about social isolation please join the Foundation's Facebook group
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Is your community age-friendly?

Senior-focused neighbourhoods contribute to healthy, active living

by **Alison LaMantia**

did you know?

There are almost 6.6 million Canadians who are 65 or older, and centenarians (who are 100-plus years old) are projected to become the fastest-growing age group. We need to continue the shift in thinking toward elder-friendly environments and protecting the rights of older people. It affects us all.



Shade structures and more places to rest were added to Centennial Park along Barrie's waterfront, creating a welcoming environment for people of all ages.

When we think of health and well-being,

we often focus on nutritious eating, fitness activities and mindfulness practices. But the community we live in matters too.

The World Health Organization (WHO) says our environment plays an important role in determining our physical and mental health status, and how well we adjust to the loss of function and other challenges. In short, senior-friendly communities can help us age well.

"The wonderful thing about working to meet the needs of older adults is we're creating communities that better meet

the needs of everyone," says Cheryl Dillon, accessibility and diversity adviser for the City of Barrie in central Ontario.

In 2018, Barrie was one of 40 Ontario communities recognized by the province for efforts to become more age-friendly. The city's action plan, based on the principles outlined in the WHO's age-friendly cities guide, was driven not by staff ideas but by the needs and opinions of residents.

"The upgrades made in our downtown and along the waterfront to improve the accessibility and age-friendliness of our outdoor public spaces are positive things people appreciate. But the little

details that support age-friendliness are what I hear about most," says Dillon. Those details include additional outdoor seating, shade structures, transit improvements and increased crosswalk times.

While Barrie has achieved about 75 per cent of the city's goals in the current plan, Dillon says implementation doesn't stop. They're starting an evaluation process developed by the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). "We know that as we grow, develop and change as a community, our Age-Friendly Community Plan will grow, develop and change too," she says.



Increased crosswalk time in areas of the city that have larger concentrations of older adults is one of the details of the City of Barrie's Age-Friendly Action Plan that residents appreciate.

What's an age-friendly community?

According to the Government of Canada, "In an age-friendly community, the policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment are designed to help seniors 'age actively.' The community is set up to help seniors live safely, enjoy good health and stay involved."

Why we need age-friendly communities

- They support well-being by addressing the social determinants of health, including housing, food security, social inclusion and access to services.
- They foster respect for everyone, regardless of age, creating a more accepting, supportive and equitable society.
- They support independence by helping us age in place safely – that is, to stay in our homes or communities as long as we wish or are able to.

How a community becomes age-friendly

Municipalities across Canada have age-friendly community initiatives in place. These include implementing changes to policies, services and structures related to the physical and social environment in order to better support and enable older people to age actively.

PHAC has created the Age-Friendly Communities (AFC) model and promotes its adoption throughout Canada. It works with a variety of groups – including

provincial and territorial governments and community partners – to develop resources and share experiences with citizens and organizations that are interested in promoting senior-friendly policies. Its easy-to-navigate *Age-Friendly Communities in Canada: Community Implementation Guide* is packed with practical information to help kick-start initiatives and evaluate results.

The WHO has also published an age-friendly cities guide, which covers:

- Outdoor spaces and buildings
- Transportation
- Housing
- Social participation
- Respect and social inclusion
- Civic participation and employment
- Communication and information
- Community support and health services

Three ways you can help

- Share positive images of aging. Stereotypes in the media perpetuate ageism.
- Learn what your local community is doing to be more age-friendly. Check your municipality's website or speak with your councillor about ways you can push for change.
- Get involved. Lend your voice to advocacy efforts through RTOERO and other groups. Municipalities are well positioned to address many factors that make communities age-friendly, but it goes beyond the local level. Age-friendliness requires action in many sectors and across levels of government. 🌱

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Vaccines aren't just for kids

Older adults also need protection against infectious diseases

by **Pauline Anderson**

A vaccine for the novel coronavirus that causes COVID-19 is likely still a ways off. When it is available, it could be a game changer for seniors, who are at higher risk for this serious respiratory illness — especially those with an underlying condition, such as high blood pressure, heart disease or diabetes.

In the meantime, though, older adults should protect themselves against infections for which there are vaccines, including the flu, pneumonia and shingles.

Some may have missed recommended childhood vaccines, while others, who did get their shots, may find that their protection against certain diseases decreases with age. In both cases, a fresh dose — or a booster — may be in order.

We asked Dr. Orli Shachar, a family physician at Women's College Hospital in Toronto, to help sort out which vaccinations older adults need and when they should get them. These vaccine recommendations are based on Ontario

guidelines, but not all are covered by provincial health-care plans.

Shachar stresses that, although it might be convenient to get a shot for the flu (and possibly shingles) at your local pharmacy, it's important to let your family doctor know so they can update your records. And if you plan to travel to areas such as Africa or Southeast Asia, consider a visit to a travel-medicine clinic, which can offer a specialized assessment of your vaccine needs.



Influenza

Seniors are more likely than younger people to experience serious complications from the flu. That's why you should get an annual flu vaccine, which is updated each season to keep up with changing strains.

Those 65 or older should get the high-dose flu vaccine. Compared to the regular vaccine, this version offers better protection against viral strains that are more common in older people.

Pneumonia

Seniors are also at greater risk for pneumococcal disease, which is caused by *Streptococcus pneumoniae*. This bacterium can produce invasive pneumococcal infections, including pneumonia. Two vaccines protect against these infections: pneumococcal conjugate 13-valent (Pneumovax 13) and pneumococcal polysaccharide 23-valent (Pneumovax 23).

Experts recommend vaccination for everyone over 65, as well as for people 50-plus who have compromised immune systems or are otherwise at higher risk. In the past, healthy older adults were advised to get solely the Pneumovax 23 vaccine, but a newer guideline recommends that, for additional protection, they receive the Pnevmar 13 vaccine first and then the Pneumovax 23 vaccine a minimum of eight weeks later.

Shingles

Shingles is the reactivation of the chickenpox virus, which can lie dormant in nerve endings for years. It can cause a blistering rash and an even more painful complication called postherpetic neuralgia.

There are two shingles vaccines: Zostavax and Shingrix. Shingrix is a newer vaccine and is thought

to be more effective at both reducing the risk of getting shingles in the first place and of developing postherpetic neuralgia after the fact.

The shingles vaccine is recommended for all adults over 50 who have had chickenpox. To extend your immunity, you might consider getting the vaccine even if you've had shingles — but you have to wait a year after your case resolves.

Tetanus, diphtheria and pertussis

It's important for all adults to keep their tetanus and diphtheria immunizations up to date. This means getting a booster every 10 years. If you also need your whooping cough — a.k.a. pertussis — booster, you can get a three-in-one vaccination.

Measles, mumps and rubella

It is generally presumed that most people born before 1970 have acquired natural immunity to these viruses. However, you may need a measles, mumps and rubella booster if you travel to areas with outbreaks or are otherwise at higher risk. A blood test can check for antibodies to determine if you're immune.

Polio

A booster shot typically is not recommended for older adults unless they're heading to an area experiencing an outbreak.

Hepatitis A and B


Although not routine, some doctors may recommend seniors at risk for liver-related conditions get a vaccine against hepatitis A and/or hepatitis B. The shots are available separately or combined, depending on your needs.

However, if you're travelling or in another situation that increases risk, talk to your doctor about additional protection.

Human papillomavirus (HPV)

Grade school students now get a vaccine against this virus, which can cause genital warts and cancer. The vaccine is recommended for adults up to age 45; beyond that, the need for coverage is determined on a case-by-case basis and depends on your sexual history.

Meningococcal disease

Meningococcal disease can include infections of the lining of the brain and spinal cord, as well as bloodstream infections. A vaccination against this disease is not routinely recommended for older adults unless they have specific underlying medical conditions. 

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Are you getting
enough protein?

A healthy diet includes
enough protein to live well

by **Fran Berkoff, registered dietitian**

I expect you're savvy about nutrition, but did you know that as we age we need more protein?

Protein is your body's building block; you need this nutrient to maintain and repair muscles, skin, nails and hair. As we get older, we're at higher risk of developing sarcopenia, or age-related loss of muscle mass, which can negatively affect your quality of life in many ways. For example, you may find it more difficult to get up from a chair, lift your grandbabies or carry bags of groceries — and falls and fractures are more likely.

How much is enough?

The current recommended protein intake for adults (men and women) is 0.8 grams per day for each kilogram of body weight. However, many experts believe this figure is too low and suggest that healthy adults over 65 consume 1.2 grams per kilogram of body weight each day; if you're ill or undernourished, you need even more. This means a 75-kilogram (165-pound) person needs 90 grams of protein a day. Research also suggests that getting your protein over the course of the day is more effective than having it all at one or two meals.

Let's bring this into your kitchen. Here are some delicious options to try.

| FOOD SOURCE | PROTEIN (GRAMS) |
|---|-----------------|
| 4 ounces (125 grams) cooked meat, fish or chicken | 25-35 |
| 1 can (120 grams) tuna, drained | 32 |
| ¾ cup (175 millilitres) plain Greek yogurt | 18 |
| ¾ cup (175 millilitres) plain yogurt | 10 |
| 1 cup (250 millilitres) milk or soy beverage | 8 |
| 1 ounce (30 grams) cheddar cheese | 7 |
| 1 large egg | 6 |
| ½ cup (125 millilitres) cottage cheese | 4 |

What about alternate sources?

With many of us moving to a more plant-based diet, I'm often asked if it's possible to get enough protein without eating meat. The answer? A definite yes. Excellent sources of plant protein include lentils, beans, soybeans, tofu, tempeh, edamame, nuts and seeds. And whole grains, such as quinoa, contain protein too.

So what does that mean for meal planning? Try adding these plant-based protein sources to your meals.

| FOOD SOURCE | PROTEIN (GRAMS) |
|---|-----------------|
| ¾ cup (175 millilitres) shelled edamame | 16 |
| ¾ cup (175 millilitres) cooked lentils, kidney beans or black beans | 13 |
| ¾ cup (175 millilitres) firm tofu | 12 |
| 1 cup (250 millilitres) cooked whole wheat pasta | 9 |
| 1 cup (250 millilitres) cooked quinoa | 8 |
| 2 tbsp (25 millilitres) peanut or almond butter | 8 |
| ¼ cup (50 millilitres) almonds, sunflower seeds or hemp seeds | 7 |

If you're looking to incorporate more plant-based protein dishes in your diet, try these ideas out.

- Open-face "quesadillas" made with mashed black beans instead of chicken, and a whole wheat pita instead of two tortillas
- Greek yogurt smoothie made with a spoonful of peanut or almond butter
- Bean- or lentil-based soup
- Vegetarian chili made with kidney beans, black beans or chickpeas
- Shelled edamame in salads or as snacks
- Pasta fagioli made with just beans and pasta (no sausage)
- Layered bean dip made with black and/or kidney beans, tomatoes, onions, cilantro and guacamole
- If you order in, pad Thai with tofu, plant-based bowls, vegetarian pizza, falafels or vegetarian roti

Adding it up

Eating shouldn't involve too much math, so don't fret about getting an exact number of grams every day. Just plan each meal around a protein source and you'll likely hit your target. Breakfast, however, is often light on protein, so here are a few ideas to give it a boost.

- Greek yogurt parfait with fruit, granola and a sprinkle of nuts
- Bowl of oatmeal made with milk or soy beverage, topped with a handful of seeds or a spoonful of peanut or almond butter
- Tofu scramble or scrambled eggs
- Whole wheat wrap made with hummus and beans

And while you're at it, don't forget exercise. Physical activity, especially resistance training, is important for maintaining muscle mass as we age — and it's never too late to get started. 🧘

rookies: celebrating the first year

Excited? Anxious? Raring to go?
How do you remember your first year?

by **Martin Zibauer**

“

will just have to make the best of it,” thought Linda Hutsell-Manning (District 30 Northumberland) in July 1963, when she saw the classroom. She had taken two years off after teachers’ college and needed her first job to secure a permanent teaching certificate.

The town schools in Cobourg, Ont., where she lived, “treated me like I had leprosy,” she says. “Like there was something morally wrong because I got married and had a child when I should have been teaching.” So she answered an ad for a position in a one-room schoolhouse in a nearby rural township and, to her surprise, got the job.

The school had been built in 1860. “Inside the front door was a little hallway. And on either side of that hallway were two pit toilets, which were just like outhouses, but inside,” she says. She remembers a large classroom with a wood stove and a hardwood floor — and six big windows. “I thought how wonderful that was,” she says, not realizing that, in winter, snow would drift in and collect on the windowsills.

In her first year, Hutsell-Manning had no curriculum to follow, only blank report cards listing the subjects that had been taught before. So she developed curriculum as she saw fit. “I made an extra \$300 a year because I was considered the principal as well as the teacher. I could have discussions with myself,” she says, laughing. “I had to make a huge number of decisions on the spot.”



1963
Linda Hutsell-Manning
in front of the one-
room schoolhouse
where she spent her
first year teaching.

The challenge, she discovered, was keeping the children, who were in grades 1 through 8, occupied and focused. She drew on the two years she had spent as a student in a two-room schoolhouse. “I adored the teacher,” she says. “She was so organized, with all this seatwork laid out on the boards.” Hutsell-Manning followed that lead, spending about three hours every evening writing notes and lessons, which she rewrote on the chalkboards every morning. “I always included a lot of questions,” she says, which gave her time to teach one group of students while the others worked at their desks — or listened in.

In 2019, Hutsell-Manning wrote about being a new teacher in her book *Fearless and Determined: Two Years Teaching in a One-Room School*. (For more information and to order, visit lindahutsellmanning.com.) She left the school when it closed permanently in 1965. Her time there, she says, was “one of the most challenging and great experiences of my life.”



TODAY
Linda
Hutsell-Manning

Front Road
School West,
Hutsell-Manning's
first assignment.



★★★★★

Principals and vice principals face first-year excitement regardless of how long they have been in the school system before they took on their new roles.

Lise Gravelle (District 43 Nipissing) remembers how excited she was as she mingled with staff and students in the school yard that first morning.

Then the bell rang and the excitement moved to the classrooms.

“As I entered my office,” she says, “it hit me how solitary the position is if you let it be that way. I vowed to visit classrooms as often as I could so that I could continue to share in the excitement of learning.”

Interacting with all staff on a daily basis became part of Gravelle’s professional practice.

“In my Principal’s Qualification Program courses nobody mentioned how important it was to develop a family team atmosphere in all aspects of school,” she says. “From then onward I met every bus in the morning to welcome staff and students every day. If you put people first at all cost everything else will fall in place.”

What advice would
a former principal or
vice principal offer a
newbie today?

“It took me a little too long to realize that my custodian and office administrator were my frontline workers!”

Marilyn Malton (District 14 Niagara)

“Ninety percent of parents share a Facebook page. Parents often prefer to use it to vent publicly about their concerns instead of speaking to administration or teachers. Staff are hung out to dry! Damage done! My advice: build relationships early on and quickly, and take the time to invite parents in to discuss issues. They often become allies and great ambassadors within the community.”

Carol Chouinard (District 3 Algoma)



The late '60s were a period of change. Tom Peets (District 24 Scarborough and East York) started teaching in 1967 at a small school in an East York neighbourhood that was growing rapidly, with a large influx of Italian and Greek immigrants. St. Aloysius, only a few years old, was already adding a new wing.

With much of the school a construction zone, Peets was assigned a portable for his Grade 7 class. "It was primitive. No air conditioning, but we always had heat — often too much," he says. "At the beginning and end of the school year, it was a sauna."

Before his first class, he says, "I was scared. Excited but apprehensive." But he quickly connected with the four other new hires at the school and the rest of the staff. "We'd rely on each other, and we had a lot of fun. People were envious of anyone who worked at St. Al's."

Sports leagues extended the network of social and professional connections to other schools. When Peets couldn't walk with his basketball team to a nearby school, "we'd just bundle kids into a Volkswagen Bug, kids sitting on each other and no one wearing seatbelts," he says. "It sounds crazy today."

The construction on site provided a learning opportunity, he says. "I could see progress every day, and it was instructional for the kids to see how the school was being built, especially since many had parents working in the trades." But until construction finished, the gym was off limits. If the students couldn't go outside for phys-ed, "we'd push the desks in the portable to each side and play floor hockey in the middle," says Peets — girls playing one shift while the boys sat waiting on the desks.

That year, Expo 67 and centennial celebrations were in full swing, and the Leafs were the Stanley Cup champions. Americans had experienced race riots that summer and would go on to lose Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy the next spring. Peets responded by bringing current events into the curriculum. "The kids were aware of what was going on," he says, "so I tried to give them some background and history to understand it."

A few years before, Bill Davis, then minister of education, commissioned the Hall-Dennis Report into Ontario's education system. Released in 1968, "it was revolutionary," says Peets. The report proposed a shift from traditional teaching, with its emphasis on discipline and rote learning, to student-centred teaching, and it launched a decade or so of experimentation and change in Ontario schools.

Anna Milla (District 11 Waterloo), who became a friend of Peets's in later years, was in teachers' college in 1968. "We all received a copy of the Hall-Dennis Report. I highlighted a lot of pages in mine," she says. The report's suggestion that "the walls should come down for teaching, and the students should lead the learning," says Milla, were immediately modelled in teachers' college, where her instructors encouraged group work, team teaching and the open-concept school model. "They went gung-ho with us. We were the first crop."

All of her plans and new-teacher idealism changed, however, when she walked into her freshly assigned Grade 5 classroom at St. Bernadette Catholic Elementary School in Kitchener, Ont., in September 1969. Like DiFrancesco, her first class had 38 students — and 27 of them were boys.



1966

Tom Peets as a
Toronto Teachers'
College student.

"The class was so unsettled, I had to take a step back," Milla says. She decided to introduce new methods gradually. Because the children had little experience working in groups, "we started with partner work. Then, when we went to group work, I chose the groups, rather than letting the students choose."

The contrast between old and new teaching played out across the hall. Milla's counterpart was an older teacher who avoided group work and required students to raise their hands and wait to be called on. "My classroom was considered noisy compared to hers," she says, her tone sharpening slightly, "because my kids were engaged."

She learned just how engaged they were in late November that year, when she contracted mumps. "I was so run down. Starting to teach is a challenge to your immune system — you really have to toughen up," she says. Being sick and off work after taking on a large class with occasional discipline issues prompted doubts about her career choice. But then her principal hand-delivered a stack of get-well cards made by her students. "I knew they really missed me and appreciated me," she says. "So I hung in there."



TODAY

Tom Peets



TODAY

Anna Milla



★★★★★

It was the last week of August 1979. Marie Gabriel (District 28 Region of Durham), following the advice she'd received during teacher training, was visiting her new school to see her classroom, "but the floors were being waxed and I couldn't get in!" she says. It wasn't until the first morning of classes that she would walk into her room, as the freshly minted sewing and textiles teacher at General Vanier Secondary School in Oshawa, Ont. Meeting her students for the first time, she says, "I remember thinking, 'Are they really trusting me with all these kids?'"

The school administrators trusted her with more than the children. Every year, the school hosted a fashion show, complete with student-produced sets, decor, lighting, printed invitations and, of course, clothes. Gabriel's predecessor had started the event, which had grown into a showcase for the vocational school and its students and attracted an audience of about 400, largely made up of parents, educators and local business owners. "It wasn't even the end of October, and other teachers were telling me what had been done in past years and asking me what I was planning," she remembers.

Vocational schools in the late '70s were looked down on, says Gabriel, as places to send students who weren't succeeding in academically oriented schools. It was a narrow view, she feels, based on many teachers' limited experience. "When all you've ever done is go to university," she says, "you don't understand that fixing a car is as important as memorizing Shakespeare; more important, in fact, in the real world."

1979

Marie Gabriel's first year included planning a student-led fashion show that brought in hundreds of attendees.



TODAY

Marie Gabriel

For many students, vocational schools offered opportunities to study subjects they cared about and could succeed in, along with incentives to build literacy and numeracy skills. The kids in Gabriel's sewing classes, for example, "would realize they needed to read to follow directions and use math to measure."

In her first years as a teacher, she realized how important mentoring was in education. "Our staff room was like a professional development day, every day," Gabriel says. Teachers would discuss strategies that worked (or didn't) with different students. The technological education teachers would give one perspective on instructing students; the academic teachers would suggest another. The school encouraged teachers to learn from one another. Gabriel would spend time in an English class, for example, and English teachers would participate in her sewing class.

Later, Gabriel went on to specialize in co-operative education and, eventually, trained other teachers in the field. She shifted to the other side of the mentor relationship and began helping new teachers who had benefited from better teacher training. "Young teachers have a longer runway to learn and be better prepared for the classroom," she says. Not everything has changed, though, for first-year teachers. "They still have that deer-in-the-headlights look every time."

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF MARIE GABRIEL



★★★★★

When Jonathan Arnel's mother died, he discovered her diary among her treasures — it was a record of her first year of teaching at Bear Creek Public School, a one-room school on Bear Creek Sideroad near London, Ont. The year was 1955. Ruth Bender was 20 and far from home, and her diary offers a lively glimpse into her caring, compassion and commitment to teaching. Here is an excerpt from her very first day.

"The way I carried on I suppose everyone thought that I supposed in my narrow little mind that I was the first person to ever teach school! All summer I squawked about all the work I should be doing. Naturally all my (or at least most) efforts were verbal. I came down here on the Monday before school although mentally I had been here long before that. As a result of coming Monday, I missed a Literary Picnic. I snooped around in the desk (it seemed so strange to be actually supposed to be doing it). I cleaned out the cupboard eliminating things I need most and keeping many useless articles. Isn't that the conventional procedure to cleaning? I also unpacked some new books which I pretended I knew where to put. All the time I was there I kept rehearsing the first day. The Big Day!

1955

Ruth Bender's diary reveals the surprise and delight she felt in her first year at Bear Creek Public School near London, Ont.

The First Day dawned. Imagine! I wasn't as excited as I thought I should be. On this momentous occasion I wore an olive green cotton dress, purchased especially for the event. I also wore tan coloured shoes and nylons. Oh dear, here we go on a siege of girdles and stockings — really grown-up and proper and professional. On this first day after I had delivered my first sermonette, we set about at some work. We did an arithmetic test. We also wrote a composition on Summer Holiday. This was the extent to which we taxed our brains on the first day. I spent the rest of Tuesday, September 6, 1955, preparing for Wednesday. Real excitement crept in now, I could scarcely sleep at all. Ah, ready for our first day of hard work.

Bear Creek, a small one-roomed, siding-covered building housed our huge population of 8 pupils. For the first long while, I kept looking around for the rest, always feeling most of them were away sick. Gazing down from my place on the platform on the friendly and well-scrubbed young faces, I didn't see one of whom I expected trouble. (the calm before the storm) Shirley, the biggest and oldest girl was in grade 8. Allen Eden, the first of the gang to arrive at school was in grade 7, although by far the oldest in the school. Margaret Grigg and David Buchanan were in grade 5. Joyce, bright eyes, Fitzgerald was the youngster in grade 4. Later on she joined the grade fives, rank and file. Two Annas — Leivington and Buchanan — comprised grade 3. Jennifer Leivington a sweet little tot in grade 1, concluded roll call for a few months."

★★★★★

When Marilyn DiFrancesco (District 22 Etobicoke and York) started teaching Grade 6 in 1968, female

teachers were expected to follow a dress code. “No pants, unless they were part of a pantsuit with a matching jacket,” she says. “Otherwise, it was a skirt and a top.”

The expectation, too, was that a woman’s teaching career would be brief. Administrators, she says, talked about “the magic number of seven — seven years before you’d get married and have kids, and you wouldn’t come back.”

The peak of the baby boom was turning eight years old in 1968. In DiFrancesco’s first class, of 38 pupils, she found that arranging desks in rows helped keep the students focused. “We became more progressive later on, putting kids in groups of four and six,” she says, “but with large numbers, as soon as you put kids together, they’re poking each other or snooping on each other’s papers.” Maintaining a level of formality helped too: “I was always called ‘Miss Dankiw’ then. When I got married, it was ‘Mrs. D,’ but they never used my first name or anything like that.”

Parent volunteers for field trips and other activities were plentiful, she recalls, because so many women were stay-at-home mothers. Those women also managed Home and School Association chapters, which were active in school life and raised funds for trips and special equipment.

As more women entered the workforce, often wearing pants, DiFrancesco — and many other female teachers — passed the magic seven-year cutoff without leaving the profession. She continued teaching full time until 2000 and occasionally for eight years after that. “I really, really liked teaching. The kids keep you alive and current and thinking. When I retired, I lost a bit of my identity,” she says, wistfully. “I’d been Mrs. D for so many years.”



TODAY
Marilyn
DiFrancesco

★★★★★

Support staff also experience those first-year excitement – and challenges.

“It was nerve wracking, exhausting – but gratifying!” says **Connie Keeler (District 17 Simcoe County)**.

Linda Milhausen (District 17 Simcoe County) agrees. “It was exciting, scary but so fulfilling.”

Rose Brooks (District 17 Simcoe County) remembers her experience as educational, inspiring and challenging.

“It was eye opening,” says **Rowena Husch (District 2 Thunder Bay)**, “but rewarding – so high energy.”

★★★★★

Administrators describe that first year with the same mixture of excitement and apprehension.

“My first year was scary, exciting and stressful,” says **Jennifer Jolliffe (District 8 London Middlesex)**. “I wish I could have a do-over! As I gained confidence, I learned to enjoy being an administrator. I was so fortunate to work with many amazing teachers!”

George Denny (District 18 Haliburton Kawartha Lakes), was faced with a whole different level of stress. “I had a super staff but the second week of my posting saw Tuesday, September 11th, 2001. Horrible.”

★★★★★

In fact, stressful seemed to be a common theme around first year.

“Exciting, busy, challenging.”
Paula Chambers (District 24 Scarborough and East York)

“Change, accommodation, challenging.”
Richard Goodbrand (District 31 Wellington)

“Busy. Surprisingly long days.”
Joan Swenor-Wolfe (District 22 Etobicoke and York)

“Stressful, rewarding, enlightening.”
Devona Crowe (District 2 Thunder Bay)

“Just one word: stressful. We walked out that year against the Harris government.”
Andre Litalien (District 3 Algoma)

“Stressful, exhausting, rewarding.”
Sharon Frayne-French (District 14 Niagara) ☸

teaching in troubled times

Redefining the classroom and bringing learning to life

by **Stuart Foxman**

M

any say there's no such thing as a traditional classroom because no two classrooms are alike. But when you teach in a young offenders' unit, a psychiatric hospital or a home for pregnant teens, you're in a different kind of classroom altogether.

“Meet every student as an individual and give them second chances. Never, ever give up on a kid.”

—Sharon Bray

Jan. 31, 1997, was the start of a new school term. Sharon Bray (District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand) pulled open the heavy front door and walked through a metal gate, opened by someone she couldn't see who was seated high above behind dark Plexiglas. And then she went through a second metal gate. And a third.

Finally, she walked into a large, dark, central room, windowless to the outside world but with five large windows that looked into five classrooms: science, math, art, history and geography, and English. English was her classroom.

Welcome to school in the Barton St. Jail, properly called the Young Offenders' Unit at the Hamilton-Wentworth Detention Centre.

“It was not a pretty place,” she remembers, “but the art students had created images and colour that were wonderful. They were working with human shapes and were clearly talented and curious.”

Bray could also see computers in all of the classrooms, and that, she says, was hopeful. There were plenty of books, which was hopeful too. “I felt like a new teacher in a new classroom,” she says. “I liked the challenge! When the boys arrived, along with a guard who sat in the central area during classtime and was never once needed that I recall, they were happy to see a new face. I was smiling, for sure.”

Her students — boys aged 13 to 18 — were in for theft, assault, drug offences and the like. Some had been convicted and were serving short sentences, while others were awaiting trial. For safety, the students were allowed only one implement: a short pencil, like the ones used for golf scorecards.

“One boy, a leader kind of a kid, took it upon himself to let me know that he knew quite a bit about the school, the jail and the court system. He wanted me to know who he was and his background, and then he introduced me to other boys and their quirks, like don't call him by a certain nickname or he won't be happy,” she says. “Mostly, he wanted to tell me that the former English teacher had given the boys the last 15 minutes of class as computer time if they had applied themselves fully for the first 60 minutes. I know they were in the facility for ‘correction’ of some sort, but they were just teenaged boys — and that 15 minutes meant so much to them.”

Many came from lower socio-economic backgrounds, but not all. Some were barely literate, while others were university streamed. Bray recalls one student who was the son of a teacher. She says the student population wasn't all that dissimilar from what you'd find in many schools.

Bray taught four to six boys at a time. It was tough because they were at different academic levels, so teaching focused on independent learning, with Bray moving from one student to another.

Sharon Bray
in London.



PHOTOS, COURTESY OF SHARON BRAY



Sharon Bray
in London.

But they all related to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. The plot, they reasoned, reflected their own life experience: rival factions, gangs, madness and mayhem. "They liked the power struggle and the criminal element," says Bray.

School was seen as a positive and productive time in the students' daily schedule. "They were happy to be there," she says.

She recalls one streetwise boy who bragged about his great scams. "But he decided to use that big brain of his to do school work," recalls Bray. "I could see the physical change in him as he sat up straighter, read more, concentrated more and produced more. He knew a high school diploma could open a few doors."

Another boy couldn't read or write. Bray worked with him on the alphabet, then on nouns. His greatest achievement was sending his sister a card after she had a baby. "Together we worked on the words he wanted to say to her. He managed to write the card in a very juvenile hand, but it was lovely and he was quite proud," she says.

Bray hadn't planned on teaching young offenders. In fact, she hadn't planned on teaching at all. She was a lab tech in a Hamilton hospital from 1967 to 1981. During downtime at work, she read Shakespeare and often shared her dream of studying English at university. One day, a colleague urged her to stop talking and get doing, and Bray finally did.

After graduating, she decided to teach English, and in 1988 joined the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board. She taught at a big inner-city high school but got restless; she wanted to broaden her skills and knowledge. At the same time, a teacher at the Barton St. Jail was looking for a job exchange. So they swapped roles for a year.

Was teaching young offenders a challenge? Bray didn't find Barton Street challenging enough. "I missed the big classroom and the vibrant discussion."

She knew she was a fleeting presence in the lives of the young offenders. Still, she worked to make a difference. "I wanted to help kids who might be turned around," she says. The experience left a mark on Bray too. "Meet every student as an individual and give them second chances," she says. "Never, ever give up on a kid."

"If something
isn't working,
do something
else. It was a
different setting
and different
students, but you
could still teach."

—Karen Sykes

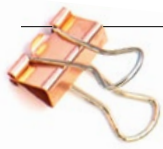
In November 1978, Karen Sykes (District 39 Peel) drove along Lake Shore Blvd. in west-end Toronto, turned onto a long, paved driveway and parked her car. She was excited: She'd just been laid off and was thankful for this supply-teaching opportunity. "There were beautiful old Victorian cottages, tall trees showing lovely fall colours, neatly trimmed hedges and meticulously cut lawns," recalls Sykes.

Welcome to school at the Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital.

Sykes had never been there before, though she lived nearby. The expansive property, on the shore of Lake Ontario, was hidden behind a brick fence.

"I didn't know what I was getting into," says Sykes, who was 24 at the time.

"Until that moment, I hadn't even thought about there being a children's residence there." There was, and Sykes was the new supply teacher.



"I learned to be extremely flexible to the situation and to the timeline of the day."

—Karen Sykes

Lakeshore Psychiatric opened in 1890 as Mimico Asylum, and was soon renamed Mimico Insane Asylum. The cottage system was considered leading edge for psychiatric treatment, and Mimico was the first facility in Canada based on the idea.

For Sykes, approaching the Lakeshore school cottage was "intimidating," she says. "Mental health issues were not spoken of during those times. People were just referred to as 'crazy'. No one ever explained to me why the kids were there."

But Sykes needed the work. She had started teaching in 1976 but, in 1978 when enrolment declined, she was laid off. "It came down to the minute you signed your contract. The Etobicoke board had to let 81 teachers go. I was number 81."

Every day, Sykes waited for a call from the woman who assigned the supply-teaching jobs. Sykes took everything offered. That's how she ended up at Lakeshore. "If I only wanted the easy jobs, I wouldn't have been called as early in the morning," she laughs.

At the school cottage, Sykes found four little desks in a converted bedroom, along with a chalkboard, bookshelves, crayons, markers, paper and notebooks. That was one of four classrooms. The kitchen had been turned into part office, part staff area, with a Gestetner copy machine.

Each morning, the students, aged seven to nine, were accompanied to class by their care worker. "They still had to come to school, to create some kind of normal life for themselves," says Sykes.

The principal told her to follow the care workers' lead if the children acted out. Sometimes in class, the children cried and screamed. Sometimes they threw things. If a child's behaviour escalated, the care worker removed them. "The calmer they were, the longer they stayed," she says.

With the care workers focused on behaviour issues, Sykes was free to try to teach. She says the children particularly enjoyed storytime, when she read to them. At lunch, they walked back to their residence, and then returned for afternoon classes.



Karen Sykes in Ireland, 2019.

Sykes never knew why the Lakeshore kids were there. Did every one of those children belong in a psychiatric hospital, removed from their homes, their families and their schools? Not by today's standards, she says.

Throughout her career, Sykes taught many students with mental health issues. She suspects that in another era, some might have been placed at Lakeshore. "It made me wonder if they would have been part of that community in a different time," she says.

As a supply teacher, Sykes just held the fort until the regular teacher returned. Still, she felt that by keeping the students occupied, she was contributing something.

She worked at Lakeshore perhaps 10 times, she remembers, in what turned out to be its last year as a psychiatric hospital. It closed in September 1979, partly because the facilities had become substandard — partly due to the trend toward deinstitutionalization. The grounds are now part of Humber College's Lakeshore Campus.

After her supply teaching ended at Lakeshore, Sykes landed a short-term assignment at another school. She spent 15 years with the Etobicoke board and another 25 with the Peel board, mostly teaching kindergarten to Grade 5.

While the Lakeshore assignments occupied mere days in her career, they had a lasting impact. "I learned to be extremely flexible to the situation and to the timeline of the day," says Sykes. "If something isn't working, do something else. It was a different setting and different students, but you could still teach."



BOTTOM RIGHT PHOTO, COURTESY OF KAREN SYKES

“Kids have complicated lives. We have to figure out how to help them keep moving forward.”

—Jan Haskings-Winner

Students get distracted for lots of reasons. On Sept. 3, 1991, Jan Haskings-Winner (District 24 Scarborough and East York) discovered that her pupils had good ones. After all, it's hard to focus when you were up all night with a crying infant, or you tossed and turned because your delivery date is imminent.

Welcome to school at Bethany Home in Toronto, the social aid centre for pregnant teens and teen moms run by the Salvation Army.

Haskings-Winner remembers the home having a colourful but worn carpet, wood on the walls and a sunroom with a few comfy chairs. The students, aged 13 to 18, learned in one room. They called her Jan. Some came during the day for school and other support services, while others lived at Bethany temporarily. She remembers often holding babies so their moms could focus on the lessons she was giving.

Haskings-Winner had taught in Malaysia for 16 months; in Englehart, Ont. (50 kilometres south of Kirkland Lake) for four years; and in Lindsay, Ont., for one year. By the early 1990s, she was eager for a change and jumped at the chance to teach at Bethany.

Haskings-Winner taught 13 or 14 girls at a time, one subject per period, with each girl studying at her grade level. Given the circumstances, she kept the class demands “normal, but not unreasonable.” She recognized that her students were under high stress.

Still, the girls were dedicated to education, which didn't surprise her at all. “They were quite passionate,” says Haskings-Winner. “Kids who go to school while pregnant or parenting are pretty committed. They realize school is important because it's not just for them anymore. Someone is depending on them.” She remembers one student living at Bethany who gave birth on the Friday before Thanksgiving. This girl was so keen she tried to return to class on Thanksgiving Monday.

Haskings-Winner learned quickly that most Bethany students came from challenging situations. Usually, the baby's dad wasn't part of the picture. Often, the students' parents no longer wanted them at home. Some students had experienced abuse.

So along with school lessons, Haskings-Winner found herself teaching life lessons, about healthy relationships and how each of them deserved to be treated as a person and as a young woman. “I worked to develop a community in my class. They felt there was a support network,” says Haskings-Winner.

In her two years at Bethany, she recalls only one of the students placing her child for adoption. The rest kept their babies. Haskings-Winner even served as the labour coach for one. “And I fainted at the hospital!” she says. The mom was holding her hand tight, and Haskings-Winner was on the floor. That young mother finished high school at Bethany and went on to college. If the students stayed in school and eventually graduated, Haskings-Winner was thrilled.



Jan Haskings-Winner
at Eastdale Collegiate.

After leaving Bethany, she taught at Eastdale Collegiate in Toronto, where she also ran a teen parenting group. Many of the Bethany students followed her there. The girl who had the Thanksgiving baby came back as a young woman to help the moms in the group navigate being a parent and a student. She went to college and ended up with a job supporting young moms who had been kicked out of their homes, as she had been when she was 14.

Another Bethany student who followed Haskings-Winner to Eastdale wanted to drop out many times. She was behind in her schooling, and her baby kept her awake till all hours. Haskings-Winner encouraged her to keep going, and to get extensions so she could finish her work. She persevered and graduated.

Fast-forward 11 years. Haskings-Winner was visiting another high school and taking a break in the office. A parent walked in and immediately recognized her. It was that former student, there to sign in her daughter; the very baby who cried all night was a teenager herself now.

Haskings-Winner had a 35-year teaching career. She says the students she had anywhere, and certainly at Bethany, were often grappling with issues. Some were evident, others invisible, but all required kindness and compassion.

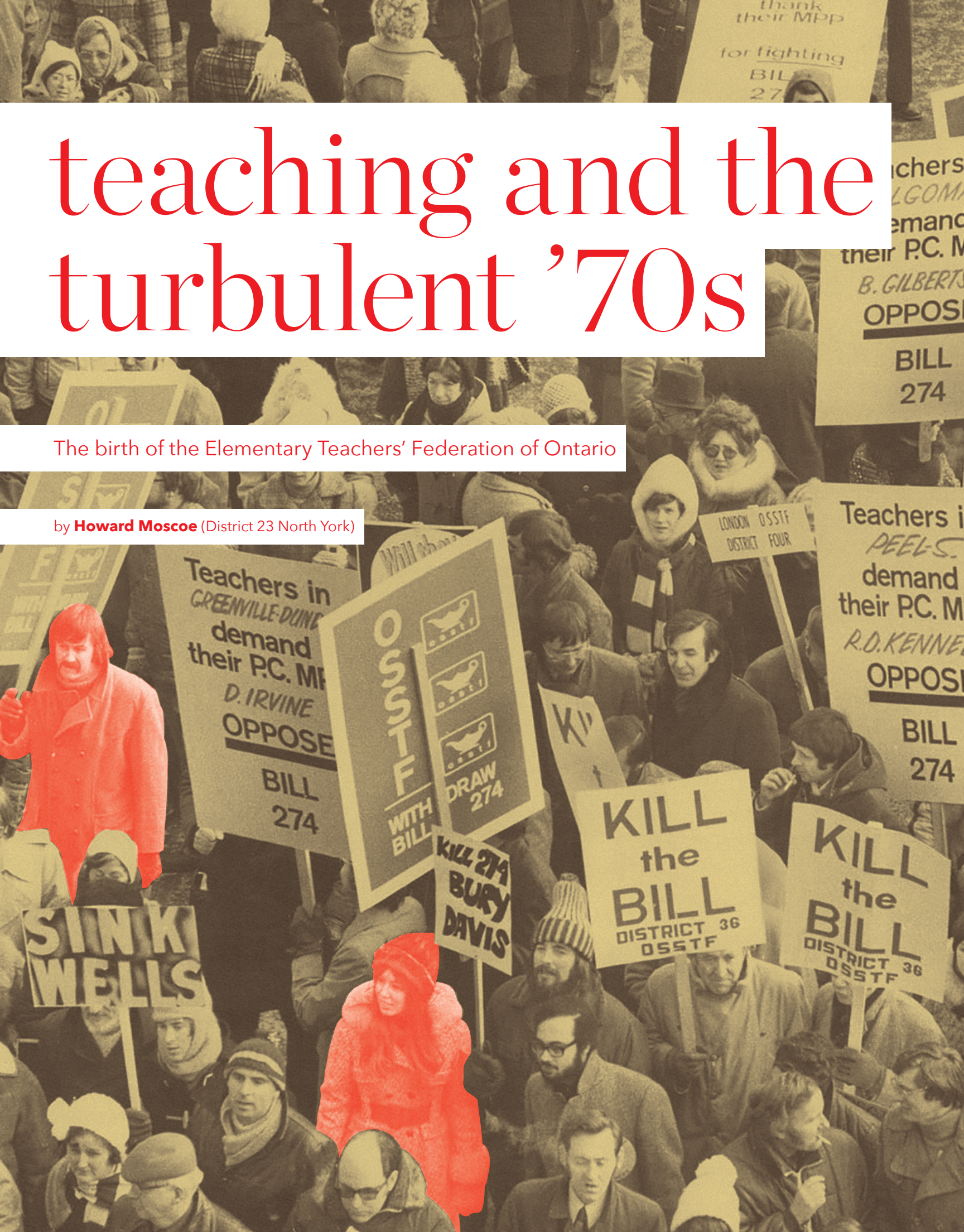
“Kids have complicated lives,” she says. “Everybody is in a different place. How do we help kids to learn, be positive and stay healthy? We have to figure out how to help them keep moving forward.”

And there's proof positive this this works. Haskings-Winner recently reconnected with that same former student on social media, who told her, “You were my favourite teacher that always believed in me, and I love you for that. I'm doing well because of you. I always and still do hear you in my head. You truly shaped my life, and I will never forget you.”

teaching and the turbulent '70s

The birth of the Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario

by **Howard Moscoe** (District 23 North York)



Teachers with signs mass outside Queen's Park in their one-day demonstration against Education Minister Thomas Wells' bill to retroactively prohibit resignations.

It was Tuesday, Aug. 13, and the opening bell of the 1974 annual assembly of the Ontario Public

School Men Teachers' Federation (OPSMTF) had sounded. One hundred and seventy delegates from across the province were gathered at the Skyline Hotel near Toronto's Pearson Airport to debate issues and set policy relevant to the teaching profession and elementary education in Ontario. While there were some 65,000 elementary teachers in the province, OPSMTF represented only 13,000 of them. Eighty per cent of elementary teachers were women, and their organization, the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario (FWTAO), was holding a parallel and much larger assembly downtown at the Royal York Hotel.

I addressed the assembly as head of the North York District: "I rise to bring to the floor the first woman delegate to our assembly, Betty Skilbeck, who is a North York voluntary member."

The speaker, Ron Edwards from North Bay, paused to allow the applause to die down. He replied, "I regret to advise the North York delegation that we are unable to seat Ms. Skilbeck. There is no provision in our constitution that would allow a voluntary member to serve as a delegate."

PHOTO, TORONTO STAR PHOTOGRAPH ARCHIVE, COURTESY OF TORONTO PUBLIC LIBRARY



Teachers carry placards outside Queen's Park as they protest the proposed legislation nullifying their resignations.

A challenge to the chair's ruling failed on a vote, 100–66. It was the opening shot in a war to bring men and women teachers together in a single body representing all elementary teachers in Ontario.

Teachers in Ontario were becoming increasingly militant. On Dec. 18, 1973, 80,000 Ontario teachers had walked out of their classrooms, and 30,000 of them assembled on the lawn of Queen's Park to protest Bill 274, proposed legislation that would take away their "right to resign." Teachers did not have the right to strike. They were considered members of professional associations rather than trade unions. When an impasse occurred in negotiations, all teachers in a district would resign en masse. The federations would then blackball the school board, and no teacher would apply to fill the vacant positions.

It was the largest demonstration ever in the province of Ontario. The Conservative government backed down and teachers won full bargaining rights, including the right to strike. They came to understand the power of a united front.

The push for amalgamation of the elementary panel grew from the urban centres. Notwithstanding the fervent opposition from the provincial FWTAO, Toronto — and later North York — elementary teachers had merged into local amalgamated bodies: the Toronto Teachers' Federation (TTF) and the North York Elementary Teachers' Federation (NETF). Teachers in those districts had created self-funded organizations with full-time presidents. Ottawa–Carleton followed a year later.

That August afternoon, the Toronto and North York delegations won an amendment to the constitution that would allow voluntary members to serve as delegates. It was supported by a vote of 151–19. Betty Skilbeck and Patricia Todd, a Toronto voluntary member, were seated as delegates and the movement toward amalgamation began in earnest.

At the 1975 assembly, the North York and Toronto districts brought forward a series of constitutional amendments that granted voluntary members (i.e. women) full rights in the organization, including the right to hold office. Mary Hill from Ottawa–Carleton was elected to the provincial executive.

That same assembly adopted the following resolution from North York: "That the Name of the Ontario Public School Men Teachers' Federation be amended by deletion of the word Men." It carried by an overwhelming vote, and the organization would be known as the OPSTF from then on.

1974 also saw the opening of a second front in the unification war.

I wrote to FWTAO, "Please consider this my application for membership in your organization. I have enclosed the required fee."

The reply: "Thank you for your interest in joining FWTAO. Unfortunately, you are ineligible for membership." My membership was rejected because I was a man.

My appeal to the Ontario Human Rights Commission was also rejected: "While it is clear from its constitution that the (women's) Federation discriminates in membership on the basis of sex...it appears that while membership in the Ontario Teachers' Federation is a condition of employment in the teaching profession in Ontario, membership in FWTAO is not required to obtain a position in the province's schools." They also ruled that the section of the labour code barring unions from sex discrimination did not apply, because FWTAO was not a registered trade union.

I then lodged a complaint with the Ontario Teachers' Federation, asking them to discipline FWTAO because they were in violation of regulation 16B of the Teaching Profession Act, which calls for "respect for human rights."

Meanwhile, the name change resulted in a surge of women teachers joining OPSTF. While the Teaching Profession Act required them to be members of FWTAO, they were willing to pay an additional fee to become voluntary members of OPSTF.

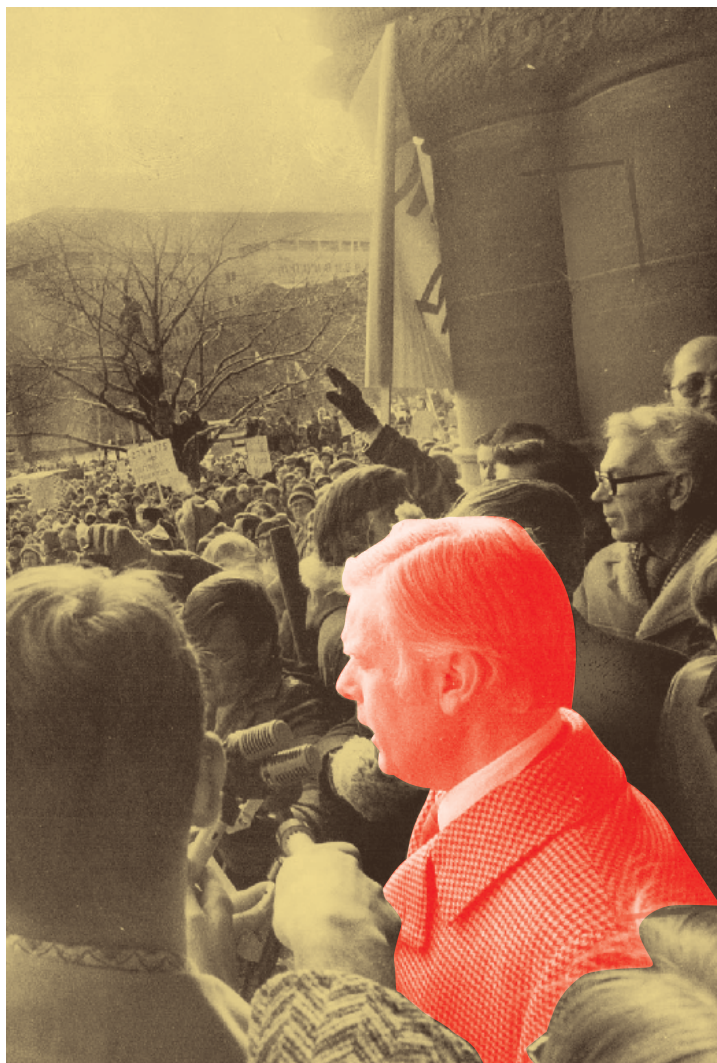
It wasn't because OPSTF was actively recruiting women but rather because they believed, as most of us did, that there was strength in unity. FWTAO had been established in 1918, largely to secure equal pay for equal work. Not only were women paid less but they were also relegated to second-class status by a myriad of oppressive rules; for example, pregnant women were prohibited from teaching.

By the '70s, most of those injustices had been resolved. The argument that a united federation would not represent the interests of women well because education was male dominated was beginning to wear thin, especially since 80 per cent of the teachers in the province were female. Women would have full voting control of a united federation.

The name change set off a war between FWTAO and OPSTF that played itself out in three court cases. I will spare you the boring details.

Ironically, what brought about the final resolution of the issue was an Ontario Human Rights Commission decision. Marg Tomen, an Ottawa principal, had filed a complaint (*Tomen v. O.T.F.*, 1989) stating that the Teaching Profession Act was discriminatory because it compelled her to be a member of the women's teachers' union. She won. An Ontario Human Rights Commission board of inquiry ruled that the bylaws made under the Teaching Profession Act (1944) compelling membership on the basis of sex were discriminatory. It would appear that, because the teachers now had bargaining rights, FWTAO had become a registered trade union, which, by law, could not discriminate on the basis of sex.

The Tomen decision came down in 1996. The Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario was born in 1998. ☘



Media, officials and demonstrators on the steps of the legislature.

"My grandfather was a horse thief, my grandmother a bootlegger, my father a bookmaker and my brother a scalper; so there was nothing left for me but politics."

— Howard Moscoe



Howard Moscoe was first elected to office in 1978 as an alderman for North York.

Call Me Pisher: A Madcap Romp Through City Hall is the hilarious, informative and undoubtedly (to some) maddening account of City Councillor Howard Moscoe's 32 years in public office. Order your copy at yorklandpublishing.com.

from pastor to prof

How happenstance opened the door
to an unexpected career

by **Joyce Spence** (District 23 North York)



Two of the Spences' sons:
Kenneth (left) and Stephen.

W

hen my husband, Murray, and I married, he was the pastor of a very small church in Westport, Ont. It's a farming community with a few stores, a bank and a post office in town.

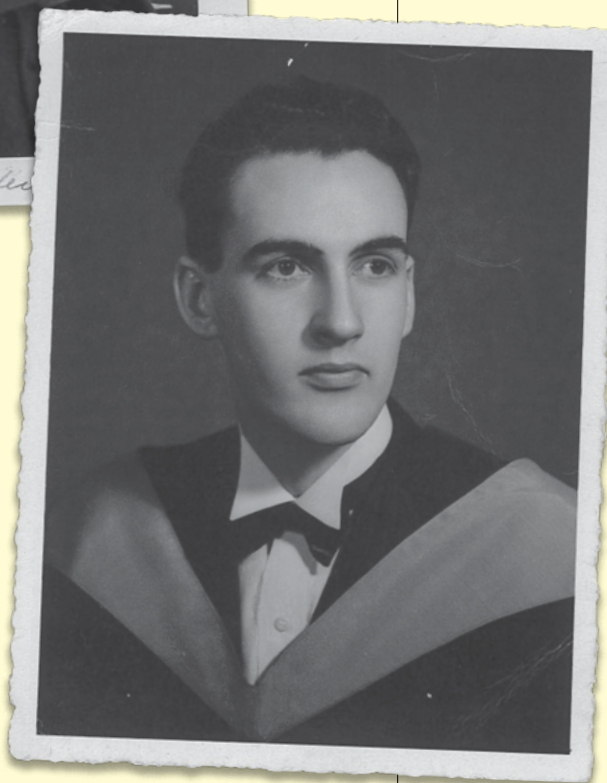
On Labour Day weekend in 1951, members of the S.S.#5 North Crosby School Board knocked on our door and asked to speak with Murray. We invited them in and learned that the teacher who had been hired to start on Tuesday had resigned, so they were there to ask my husband to take the job instead.

Murray explained, "I don't have a teaching certificate." But the board had arranged with the appropriate officials for Murray to teach without it if he promised to attend summer school the next two years. Why had they come to him? he asked. Because he was the only pastor in town with a degree, they replied.



Murray Spence and his first-born son, Kenneth.

Spence's university graduation portrait, 1950.



Next issue: We didn't have a car. No problem, said the board members — they had arranged for a woman named Roma to drive Murray to school, as she taught at the next school up the line.

He didn't have a curriculum outline, either. But they had taken care of that too: Each day, Roma would guide him through the day's course. All problems solved. He would earn \$1,600 per year and have only 15 children — in eight grades — half of whom had arrived from the Netherlands that summer.

Turned out, Murray enjoyed the challenges of his first year of teaching, and this happenstance opportunity opened the door to what became a new, much loved career.

He did attend summer school in 1952 and 1953. After the second year, a summer school friend suggested Murray apply for a teaching position in Brampton, Ont., which he did. When

he arrived by bus, a member of the school board and a Baptist pastor met him. We were pleased that the board had arranged an apartment for us. Murray was hired to be a teacher in the two-room school in Chinguacousy Township in Peel County, and transportation had been arranged with Mrs. Field, who taught at the Huttonville School. He also served as the caretaker, which provided a little extra income. He often heated soup for the kids' winter lunches too.

Murray's teaching career evolved from that one-room school to a Grade 5 class with special-needs students. He went on to instruct grades 7 and 8, and later became vice-principal at an elementary school. Then he taught grades 9 and 10, with English as a specialty, and eventually moved to Widdifield Secondary School in North Bay, Ont., again with English teaching as his specialty.

A representative from of the Ministry of Education then offered Murray a position with the ministry that operated from Sudbury, Ont. His assignment there took him to the Far North, often leaving on Monday and returning on Friday.

One Friday evening, our youngest son ran to tell me, "Daddy has come home to visit!" Murray knew then that it was time to make a change. He was contacted by a member of the North York Board of Education near Toronto and offered a position as co-ordinator of special education for the City of North York, which he accepted. He also lectured at York University during those years. Murray retired in 1995.

Murray died four years ago. Two students from his Peel County class attended his celebration of life and one asked if he could speak. He said that he had moved to the area during the summer, and on the first day of school noticed that all the kids disappeared at noon. He had his lunch with him and thought maybe he should eat it but wasn't sure. "Mr. Spence noticed I was there. He said in a gentle voice, 'Peter, did you not hear the announcement that today students could go home for lunch? Well, you just eat your lunch. They'll be back soon, and you'll have time to play with them,'" he said. "The teacher in my previous school wouldn't have been so kind." 🍀

Homegrown holiday

Rediscover Canada and recharge your batteries

by **Doug Wallace**

It's trite but true: The grass appears greener on the other side of the fence. But holidaying in your own backyard can yield surprising and rejuvenating results.

With such a wide swath of geography and geology, cultures and cuisine, tripping through the True North just feels right.



Island retreat

Îles de la Madeleine, Que.

This archipelago in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is celebrated for its red sandstone cliffs, solitary lighthouses and swaths of pristine beach. Part of Quebec — though closer to the Maritimes — the islands are a serene escape, brimming with natural beauty and elements of cultural heritage. Fall is a gorgeous season for wandering the studios along the arts trail or indulging in a food tour. Culinary highlights include

lobster, seafood pie, clam chowder, artisanal cheese and craft beers. Active pursuits will see you out cycling, sea kayaking, birdwatching, kite flying, fishing and golfing. And while there is a variety of accommodation styles to choose from, you're staying at Domaine du Vieux Couvent (the Old Convent) for the pampering, the gourmet bistro and the soothing view.

tourismeilesdelamadeleine.com

**COVID-19 REMINDER**

As we go to press, we are still in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we mentioned in our last issue, Renaissance is planned and produced months before the magazine lands in your mailbox. If we're still not able to travel, add this all-Canadian travel feature to your bucket list for the day we can!

Rest assured that RTOERO continues to follow the advice of the Canadian government on all COVID-19 protocols. Stay safe and stay healthy.



PHOTOS, COURTESY OF LE QUEBEC MARITIME

pack for the weekend in 6 easy steps

1

Keep in mind that everything in your suitcase has to mix and match. Go with versatile, neutral basics that can be dressed up with accessories, such as scarves, jewelry, and a sportcoat or blazer.

2

Take four pairs of shoes, max: one dressy, one casual, one running and a pair of flip-flops for the spa. Make sure at least one pair is waterproof. Choose running shoes you can also wear with casual pants.

3

Pack toiletries that do double duty, such as moisturizer with sunscreen, shampoo with conditioner and scented lotion.

4

Skip books or magazines, and take only a tablet. (Bonus: You don't need a laptop if you have a tablet.) If you pack a camera, make it a point-and-shoot and leave the heavy SLR at home.

5

Create a communal cord bag for all of your electronics, including cameras and phones. Bring along a mini-to-mini USB cord in case the music dock in your room won't accept a standard-size USB.

6

Build a mini-drugstore kit. Throw in anti-nausea and diarrhea medications, ibuprofen, acetaminophen, antihistamines, decongestants, natural sleep aids and heartburn remedies. Include hydrocortisone cream for insect bites, a stronger prescription analgesic or muscle relaxant for hiking sprains and an anti-inflammatory gel or balm for muscle aches.



Soo weekend

Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.

The natural beauty of this quadrant of northern Ontario draws a steady stream of visitors. The gateway to world-class outdoor adventure with the Canadian Shield at your doorstep, “the Soo” has been a gathering place for centuries due to its unique position at the junction of lakes Huron, Michigan and Superior. The bass, salmon and trout fishing here is legendary, but your sojourn can tick a lot of other boxes too. Cheer on motocross races, visit conservation areas and game preserves, climb hills, play golf, explore waterfront boardwalks and more. Enjoy the fall colours on the iconic Agawa Canyon Tour Train, a day trip that takes you over towering trestles, alongside pristine northern lakes and rivers, and through the awesome granite rock formations and vast mixed forests of the Canadian Shield.

saulttourism.com

PHOTOS, COURTESY OF SAULT STE. MARIE TOURISM



Natural escape

Courtenay and Comox, B.C.

Wandering through these twin towns of the Comox Valley on Vancouver Island makes for a relaxing weekend of fun. Take the ferry to Nanaimo and drop anchor at the Kingfisher Oceanside Resort & Spa, a beach resort, yoga retreat and destination spa noted for its detoxifying hydrotherapy circuit and top-rated restaurant, Ocean7. From there, you've got food tours to indulge in, bikes to ride, salmon to catch and craft beer to enjoy. The Comox Valley Wine Tour will hit all the high tasting notes, including 40 Knots, the Island's largest winery. And you can dine out on stories about your helicopter ride over the Vancouver Island mountain range and Comox Glacier. Whale-watching and marine safaris add both inspiring scenery and wildlife adventure to the mix. discovercomoxvalley.com



TOP, CENTRE LEFT AND BOTTOM LEFT PHOTOS, DESTINATION BC/BOOMER JERRITT.
ALL OTHER PHOTOS, DOUG WALLACE

Wine school

Nova Scotia wineries

With more than 70 grape growers and almost two dozen wineries, Nova Scotia is no stranger to viticulture. In fact, the province's wine-producing pedigree goes back to the 1600s, when it was one of the first areas in North America to cultivate grapes. Not bad for the New World! With all this wine to explore, a visit here has an educational spin, due in part to the region's cool maritime climate and rocky soil, which favour distinctive varietals you may not be familiar with, including L'Acadie Blanc, Seyval Blanc and New York Muscat. The region is also home to a new appellation of origin wine called Tidal Bay, a refreshing, crisp, dry white that's perfect with Nova Scotia seafood. Tours from May to November let you sip and snack your way through it all. winesofnovascotia.ca





PHOTOS, COURTESY OF TOURISM NOVA SCOTIA

home safe home

“Most people remember to lock the doors when they go away, but they don’t take other important steps,” says Keith Simons, general manager of Canadian Security Professionals. “For example, they leave their garage door opener in the car. That is a problem, because it’s relatively easy to break into a house through the garage.”

Here are a few more tips from the experts at Johnson Insurance to help protect your home from burglary, fire, flood and other damage while you’re away.

INSTALL A HOME SECURITY SYSTEM

Even if you’ll be gone for only a week or two, it’s a good idea to install a home security system. These devices have a control panel that is connected to sensors, which activate when doors or windows are opened. Some also include fire and carbon monoxide alarms, broken-glass detectors and motion sensors. Sophisticated systems also control home lighting and temperature. Post signs outside your home that indicate that it’s protected by a security company – and be sure to notify the monitoring centre of your travel plans.

INVEST IN GOOD LOCKS

We know you’ll remember to lock all your doors and windows before you go. But not all locks are created equal – deadbolts are best for external doors and windows, while slide locks are effective on sliding glass doors.

ASK A NEIGHBOUR TO CHECK IN

In case of an emergency, give a trusted neighbour your vacation information, contact numbers and that house key you keep under the mat (it’s an easy find for burglars). It’s good to have someone come by to check on things, and they’ll also help create the impression that someone is at home. Ask them to:

- Collect your mail and newspapers daily.
- Shovel any newly fallen snow.
- Park in your driveway occasionally if your car is absent.

If your neighbour can’t come by every day, invest in timers for your interior lights, television and radio so they go on and off at various times, which makes it seem like the house is occupied.

DO A QUICK UTILITIES INSPECTION

Taking small steps will help you protect your house from fires and floods – and could save you money too. Before you leave:

- Ensure all smoke detectors are working.
- Unplug all appliances (except those that are on timers).
- Turn the heat down to about 13 C. This will cut your hydro bill but still keep the pipes from freezing.

Taking care of business

Powers of attorney safeguard your financial affairs when you can't

by **Lesley-Anne Scorgie**



It's important to figure out how your finances will be handled when you can't look after them yourself – long before you need someone else to take over.

In Canada, it's pretty straightforward: You set up a power of attorney (POA) for property or create joint accounts. Yes, you still need a clear last will and testament that defines your wishes after you pass, but prior to that, it's essential to appoint a trustworthy representative to handle your financial affairs if you are unable to. Before you choose, it's important to understand the differences between a POA and joint accounts.

A POA is a legal document in which you give someone you trust, called your

"attorney," the right to make decisions for you if something happens and you are no longer able to look after matters on your own. The person to whom you give POA for property can make decisions about your financial affairs, including paying bills, collecting money owed to you, maintaining or selling your house, or managing your investments.

Your assigned POA can't make a will for you or change your existing one, add or change a POA, or amend the beneficiary on a life insurance policy. You can still act on your own accord even with a POA in place.

If medical challenges are on the horizon, you'll want to assign a POA for personal care. The person you

name can make decisions about your health care, housing and other aspects of your personal life, such as meals and clothing, if you become mentally incapable of making those decisions.

Joint bank accounts are effectively communal ownership of assets, and the joint parties all have the freedom to do anything they want with the funds in that account, without limitations. They're commonly used by spouses/partners, and sometimes adult children or caregivers are added. Though joint banking is convenient to set up, it is riskier than a clearly crafted POA unless you establish a dual-consent requirement for every transaction or for ones over a specific threshold value (say \$500).

Power of attorney 101

- **Ensure trustworthiness.** You should ask someone in whom you have complete confidence; in my opinion, it should also be a person who has a history of solid financial and personal judgment. It can be your spouse/partner, a friend, a family member or anyone else who is a willing participant. Note that your POA might ask for payment for any activities or transactions made on your behalf.
- **Be specific.** If clear, workable guardrails aren't established, you risk the POA being unable to perform their tasks effectively. Be clear, and keep your POA up to date. And don't have a cast of characters all acting as your collective POAs.
- **Understand your banks' role.** Most financial institutions have strict policies and paperwork that must be followed for POAs. Know how your bank treats a POA, what their checks and balances are to prevent fraud,

how often they will communicate with you and so on. Leave no room for surprises. Also note that, with your permission, a POA can conduct your day-to-day banking.

- **Know that you can change a POA relationship.** You can replace your POA, update the limitations of the agreement, add another POA to increase accountability, convert the POA into an enduring POA and more. The bottom line: It's a flexible tool that can meet your changing needs. Changing a joint banking arrangement, however, requires a willingness on the parts of both parties to make the change.

Joint accounts 101

- **Ensure trustworthiness.** Just like with a POA, you need to trust your joint account holder implicitly. If the relationship breaks down, you risk the account being emptied, which is effectively legal for either owner to do. You can contest it in court, but that's an expensive avenue.

- **Check for financial savvy.** What are the spending habits of your joint account holder? If either party gets into a financial pickle – such as racking up too much debt, which can lead to court-ordered repayment or bankruptcy – your account can be accessed by creditors. Also, if your joint owner simply spends too much money, your funds might be used to pay off high credit card balances and other bills.

- **Research your banks' estate policies.** Do you understand what happens to your accounts when you die? Ask your financial institutions for the details.

In all cases, I can't stress enough how important it is to have a quality conversation with your lawyer about whether a POA or joint banking is better for you. You will also want them to weigh in on what happens when you pass, including tax liabilities, probate and other considerations. ☘

WANTED

RTOERO MEMBERS WITH HEARING LOSS

Who Want to Try a Revolutionary Hearing Device¹

Your hearing difficulties could be caused by damaged hearing hair cells inside your inner ear (cochlea). When damage occurs in the high-frequency areas of the cochlea (where consonants are heard), speech may sound garbled and comprehension may become difficult. The right hearing aid could help you improve your comprehension.

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Celluloid school

We asked: What's your favourite back-to-school movie?

To Sir, with Love

Plot: An idealistic American teacher takes a job in a tough London East End school and discovers he needs more than credentials to motivate his students.

—Trish Egerter (District 17 Simcoe County)
—Toula Nanos (District 22 Etobicoke and York)
—Susan Bailey (District 27 Ottawa-Carleton)
—Pam Baker (District 50 Atlantic)

Ferris Bueller's Day Off

Plot: Ferris Bueller, a high school slacker, skips school for a day in Chicago and finds adventure around every corner.

—Gus Cammaert (District 21 Renfrew)
—Joan Trotman (District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand)
—Claudia Mang (District 22 Etobicoke and York)

Goodbye, Mr. Chips

Plot: Beloved teacher Mr. Chipping retires from Brookfield School, a fictional minor British boys' public boarding school.

—Devona Crowe (District 2 Thunder Bay)

Mr. Holland's Opus

Plot: Composer Glenn Holland knows he'll write an accolade-winning piece of music, but, in the meantime, he takes a teaching job at an Oregon high school.

—Dave Dykeman (District 41 Elgin)
—Anne Mackay (District 28 Region of Durham)
—Ginny Bregg (District 34 York Region)

Rudy

Plot: Daniel Eugene "Rudy" Ruettiger dreams of playing football at Notre Dame. Problem is, he doesn't have the marks or money to attend — nor the talent and size to play college football. But that doesn't stop him from following his dream.

—Lorraine Knowles (District 36 Peterborough)

Dead Poets Society

Plot: Unorthodox English teacher John Keating supports his students as they seize the day and "make [their] lives extraordinary."

—Michelle Contant (District 3 Algoma)

Up the Down Staircase

Plot: On her first day at Calvin Coolidge High, fledgling teacher Sylvia Barrett walks into a school populated by an apathetic faculty and delinquent student body. Undaunted, she sets out to make a difference.

—Connie Keeler (District 17 Simcoe County)
—Mary Guido Hassell (District 13 Hamilton-Wentworth, Haldimand)

The Breakfast Club

Plot: Five disparate high school students are forced to spend Saturday in detention and discover that they have more in common than they thought.

—Pamela Carson (District 15 Halton)
—Sandra Wright (District 2 Thunder Bay)

Kindergarten Cop

Plot: A detective poses as a kindergarten teacher in order to track down a criminal.

—Barbara West (District 28 Region of Durham)

The Trouble with Angels

Plot: Two best friends at an all-girls Catholic school run by nuns play pranks on their teachers and classmates — much to the chagrin of the iron-fisted Mother Superior.

—Carole Traister (District 34 York Region)

The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie

Plot: Jean Brodie, a free-spirited teacher at a Scottish girls' school during the 1930s, encourages her young pupils to embrace romantic ideals, educating them about love and art rather than hard facts.

—Tom Di Chiazza (District 34 York Region)

Back to the Future

Plot: Marty McFly travels back in time in an eccentric scientist's time machine and must make his high-school-aged parents fall in love in order to get back home.

—Laurie Fountain (District 46 Muskoka)

Fame

Plot: Gifted teenagers follow their dreams of fame at the High School of Performing Arts in New York City.

—Joan Swenor-Wolfe (District 22 Etobicoke and York)

Freedom Writers

Plot: Based on a true story, a California teacher unifies her disadvantaged, racially divided students and improves their grasp of academics by asking them to keep journals about their troubled lives.

—Patti Oshar (District 7 Windsor-Essex)
—Cathy Darrah-Brioux (District 39 Peel)

Educating Rita

Plot: Rita, a married hairstylist in her 20s, wants to go back to school and turns to Dr. Bryant for tutoring. He rediscovers his love of teaching, and she realizes her academic potential. But there's trouble when Rita's blue-collar spouse learns that his wife is more interested in education than homemaking.

—Mary Fong (District 34 York Region)



With forgiveness comes redemption

One woman's
search for closure

by **Karin DesChamp**
(District 36 Peterborough)



Left: A young Heinrich Weitz (far right) poses with his fellow soldiers on the front line.

Right: Henry, now 94, is known for his wit, charm and fascinating life story.

Henry's my dad. He's a widowed father of four, grandfather of seven, great-grandfather of 13 and great-great-grandfather of six. Dad was a mechanical engineer and was often called a genius.

He's 94 years old, retired now, and living in Rubidge Retirement Residence in Peterborough, Ont. At the retirement home, Dad is known for his quick wit, ready smile and charisma with the ladies — and his life story.

My father was a soldier in the Second World War. He was conscripted in 1943 when he was 17 years old and, after a few weeks' training, sent to the front line in France. He has shared many horror stories with me over the years and said that if it hadn't been for a veteran soldier who took him under his wing and saved his life many times, he wouldn't have survived.

But survive in the trenches he did — for a full year — until he was captured by the Americans and taken to a prisoner of war camp in Laon, France. He lived in tents with mud floors with other men who were too young to shave. Sustenance was water and several crackers each day. My dad told me about scraping snow with his bare hands to find rotten leaves to chew because he was so hungry.

You may ask, "Given how many experienced the horrors of war, why does this story need to be told?" Well, because my dad was a German soldier. His name is Heinrich Weitz. He was sent to the front line when the Gestapo discovered that he was part of the resistance movement against Hitler.

But this story isn't about my dad.

My mom was 14 years old during this time. Her widowed mother, my grandmother, became a tailoress to the wealthy folk to support her two daughters by day. Together, she and her girls slept in bomb shelters by night.

But this story is not about them.

At the end of the war, Dad was released and allowed to go home to his parents. This was a time of celebration even though the town where he grew up had been bombed, many relatives had died and food was scarce. One Saturday night, my mom and her sister went to a street dance. Mom's and Dad's eyes met, they married in 1946 and, shortly after, started a family.

Mom; Dad; my sister, Wilma; and I shared a home with my grandparents. In 1953, despite the fact that they had little money and spoke almost no English, my parents decided they wanted to move to Canada, where they were certain our family would have a better life.

Canada needed mechanical engineers after the war and they readily accepted my dad. He settled in downtown Toronto, which was a far cry from the promised land — of forests, lakes and Niagara Falls — he'd seen illustrated in his grade school picture books.

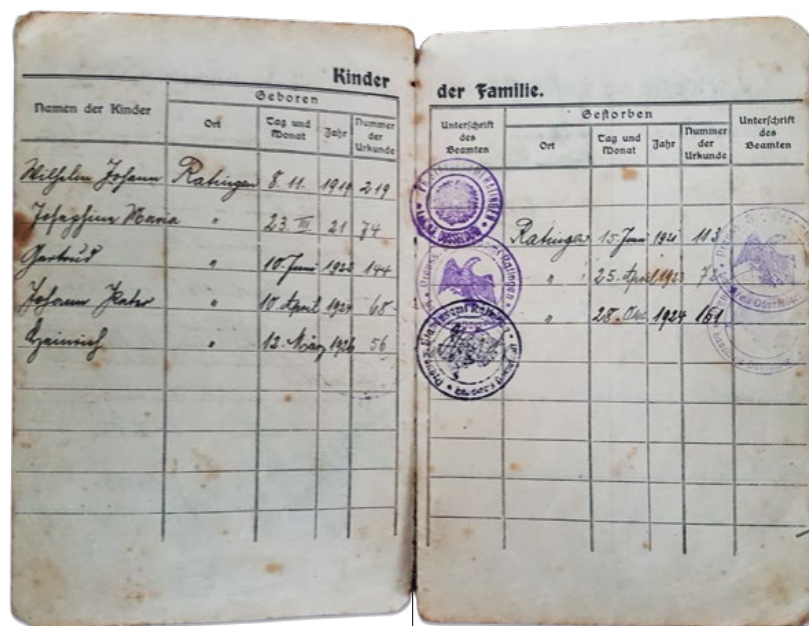
Not wasting a minute, he started looking for work so that my mom, Wilma and I could join him. Sadly, it seemed no one was prepared to give him a chance; he slept under empty cement bags at new construction sites, alone, unable to speak the language and starving once again. There was no One Roof, Kawartha Food Share or New Canadians Centre back then.

But this story is not about that.

Finally, Christopher Stopple at Amak Manufacturing (later called Beaver Equipment) on Front St. in Toronto hired Dad as a plant foreman. Six months later, Mom, Wilma and I boarded a ship named the *Seven Seas* and, in nine days, crossed the Atlantic. We were once again together as a family.

We managed in a shared home: Our nuclear family lived on the first floor, my aunt's family was on the second and our Oma occupied the attic. Mom and Dad worked hard to support us and, while times were tough (we lived in what was then the poorest area of Toronto), I just thought everyone was poor. We happily played games in the streets, many of which you may remember: skipping; jumpsies; hopscotch, red rover; and Mother, may I? Life gradually improved.

Karin DesChamp with her beloved dad



The Weitz family's German birth records.

But this story isn't about that, either. The story I want to tell is my story.

My full name (and please don't trip over it) is Karin Helene Ursula Weitz Robinson DesChamp. I am a proud and patriotic Canadian citizen, as is each member of my family.

I started teaching at age 19 and worked to get my degrees after I married, had two children and was working full time. During this period, and almost every year thereafter, I was selected to organize the Remembrance Day service at my school. And every year, I sat on the edge of my seat feeling the collective guilt of all German people regarding the Holocaust.

I tried talking with colleagues, friends, family and even my minister, but the guilt continued to weigh heavily on my shoulders. One day, not too many years ago, I joined a multi-faith celebration at the United Church I attended in Lindsay, Ont. The weekend workshop and the Sunday service that followed were led by a Muslim imam, a United Church minister, a First Nations Elder and a Jewish rabbi. I was enthralled with everything they shared, but I began to cry when the rabbi spoke.

Here is part of his sermon. Read it carefully.

"And so the Israelites ran from the Egyptians and they came to the Red Sea. Miraculously, the Red Sea parted and the Israelites safely made it to the other side. Then the Egyptians began crossing the divide and when they were in the middle of the sea, the high walls

of water slammed shut and they, on their horses crying out in fear, were drowning. The Israelites, safe now, were rejoicing and dancing and calling out to God in thanksgiving, shouting, 'God, do come and dance with us.' But God shook his head in response and answered, 'How can I sing and dance with you when my children are dying?'"

In that pivotal moment, I knew I was forgiven.

My dad's absolution came on Nov. 11, 2018. He was in his easy chair in his room at the retirement residence when he heard a knock at the door. His "Come on in!" was met by the entrance of a stranger — an elderly man, a veteran Canadian soldier from Royal Canadian Legion Branch 52 in Peterborough.

The veteran extended his hand in a gesture of friendship and said, "Henry, I'm pleased to meet you. My name is Brian. The war ended 75 years ago. Do you think we can be friends?"

They stared into each other's eyes and they were each seen. Really seen.

Brian has visited Dad on every holiday since, each time bringing him a greeting card and a gift. But, of course, the best gift of all was forgiveness cemented in a new friendship.

I wasn't sure how to bring this snapshot of my life to a meaningful close until I heard the last few lines of a sermon given by my church's minister, Rev. Julie van Haften, on June 23, 2019. She said, "Whenever you draw a line, a line that divides people between us and them, you can be sure that Jesus is on the other side." ☸

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