



A Newsletter for Members of LIFE Institute at The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University

Martha brings a full and diverse lifetime to LIFE's Presidency

Martha Wall

As your incoming president I've been asked by Kenneth Smookler, LIFE-lines' editor, to introduce myself to you so that I'll be more than just a face on our new website!

I was born in Kingston, attended the University of Toronto to study Modern History, and upon graduation became a primary specialist, teaching in Scarborough, San Francisco, Vancouver, Montreal, and Toronto, before finally working with children with learning disabilities.

In between moves, I worked as a counter girl on the exciting night shift in a restaurant in San Francisco's Tenderloin District, a coding clerk for an insurance company, an interviewer for a drug study, and a secretary and registrar for a business college.

After tiring of teaching, I joined my husband, who had started a small publishing company, Wall & Emerson, specializing in university and college textbooks, and worked as an editor.

Continuing education is and has been an important part of my life for years and that is why I was so glad to discover the LIFE Institute. What makes LIFE extra special is that involvement is so easy! As a volunteer, member-run adult educational organization it

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Martha Wall has waited, clerked, and taught widely.

Joan Lee: a talented pianist reborn

Charles Wright

A rare treat was on offer at the Toronto Arts and Letters Club during the Silver Screens Arts Festival this year. Two extraordinarily talented musicians played to a full house in the beautiful club hall with its elegant, comfortable setting and its excellent acoustics.

Life member Joan Lee began with one of Schubert's most beautiful pieces, the sonata in B flat major, which she played with all the finesse and feeling that the composer must indeed have intended. The audience was enthusiastic and perhaps even a bit surprised to see and hear a performance of this calibre as many were not at all aware

of Joan's talents and their history. It is only very recently that she decided to pick up an incredible musical ability that had lain dormant for almost 60 years (yes, that is six decades). From her first piano solo at age eight to teenage performances with the Royal Conservatory Symphony Orchestra at Massey Hall, to the Gold Medal as

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Joan at home at her grand piano

Science-Fiction writer Isaac Asimov: "If you could build a small package, something small enough to carry in your coat pocket, a machine which would instantly start and stop, in which you could instantly reverse yourself or go forward, which would require no batteries or other energy sources, and which would provide you with full information on an entire civilization, what would you have? A book."

Life took Joan Lee down a different path

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piano soloist in the ARCT examinations, she was headed for the vocation of a concert pianist, but life decided to take her down a different path.

Sharlene Wallace is one of a very small group of accomplished harpists and certainly one of Canada's most prolific and influential. She is an international competition winner and performs at numerous festivals and concert series across North America and Europe.

We were fortunate to have her on this program also. When played so expertly the harp must be one of the most soothing sounds of any instrument, with its intriguing range and combination of melody and chords. Sharlene played 10 pieces with delightful variety of style and varying musical genres, including three of her own compositions.

I am sure that the great majority of the audience (including this reviewer!) had never before attended a solo harp

concert and it proved to be a lovely experience. Musicians and non-musicians alike in the audience could not help but appreciate the level of skill and dexterity that must be required to bring out such beautiful sounds from such a difficult instrument.

In the last section of the concert Joan Lee returned to the stage with an amazing display of virtuosity, performing three of Chopin's signature works, including two that one only expects concert professionals to tackle. She began with the Fantasie-Improptu, then the well known and loved Waltz in C sharp minor, finishing with one of Chopin's most challenging works, the Scherzo no.2 in B flat minor.

This is a towering piece of length, depth, dynamic range and passion that calls for great pianistic technical skill and sensitive musicianship, Joan Lee provided both of these to the obvious delight of the audience which showed its appreciation in a standing ovation .

Here It Comes: The New LIFE Website! Available very soon!

Register for your Winter classes on-line!!

Very soon you will receive a notice that the LIFE Institute's exciting new website is up and running. We know that you will find this website easy to navigate; it contains helpful and easily accessed answers to most questions you might have. If you have ever ordered anything on-line, this will be easier than any site you have used before! And, if you're out of town or travelling, you will still be able to access our website from any computer.

This website will allow you to become a member of LIFE, register for courses, find out about events, activities and volunteer and committee opportunities, investigate becoming a moderator or class liaison, make a donation to LIFE, and so much more.

All the information you need to go online and access our website will be sent to you very soon. If you do not have a computer, you are encouraged to find a friend or relative who can assist you in registering for classes. Just in case, we will have computer buddies available to help you. So, have fun exploring and discovering a whole new online world at LIFE!

(You will still receive a print copy of the winter 2012 calendar to help you.)

It's like being back in school without the exams

Martha Wall, continued from Page One

encourages, in fact relies on, all of us to take an active role in its operation. There are just so many opportunities for participation, in addition to taking courses. It reminds me of being back in school, but without the tests and the preoccupation with boys and all those anxieties that marked our teenage years.

Perhaps you used to work on the Prom Committee — well, now you can help prepare Oakham House for Winterfest.

Why not write for us

Maybe you were on the yearbook — well, write an article for LIFELines. If you used to run a club, you can do the same at LIFE. Or you were the friendly one who always talked to everyone in your class — well, why not volunteer to be a class liaison?

You used to love making class presentations — now become a moderator and offer a course. A very important way to support LIFE is to accept a position on one of its standing committees (Curriculum, Calendar, Moderators or Travel).

After accepting that commitment, perhaps you might choose to join us on the Board of Directors. You will find an article in this newsletter giving you a brief picture of what's involved in

being on the Board and who are some of your directors.

It just goes on and on. And the very special and best feature of this kind of participation is that you meet and get to know your fellow members in a way that is hard to equal — on a continuing basis, in a congenial atmosphere of working together for common goals. This is how lasting friendships are built.

Now, to the future. As you know, our brand new website ushers in a whole new era of online registration starting with our winter term and it provides much more up-to-date and easily accessible information, all in a modern and appealing format.

Some of us may require some help at first to navigate the system, and help will be available. There will be a few bumps in the road, but we're all heading in the right direction — using the best of technology to make LIFE easier!

Scarce classroom space

LIFE's membership is growing quickly, and, as always, classroom space is at a premium. We may have to look much more closely at off-campus solutions, especially for our larger classes.

We have already made use of the

Bond Street Hotel, Oakham House, and the Textile Museum, but these are costly to rent. So, let's look for other places, including searching for partnerships with businesses or offering courses in our homes or condo party rooms.

It's wonderful to be able to have most classes at Ryerson, but let's be flexible and imaginative about our overflow.

We could use more clubs

Another special feature about LIFE is its welcoming atmosphere and the opportunity to make friends with people who share your interests.

One wonderful way to further this is through the clubs we offer. The Movie Group, the Investment Club, the Computer Club and the brand new 19th-Century Novel Book Club are examples. But we could use more — is there someone out there who could start a chess club, for example, or a bridge club? A Special Events Club? In my experience, it's these sorts of gatherings where friendships are often forged.

LIFE has so much to offer, and I hope that that you will enjoy all of its classes, clubs, and social events in this year and the next and for many more to come!

The Ryerson campus meant a lot to Jack Layton

On August 27, shortly after Jack Layton's death, The Globe and Mail ran an article on the places in Toronto where Jack most enjoyed spending his time.

One place was CJRT, Ryerson's campus radio station at 297 Victoria St. — now Heaslip House, home to LIFE and the Chang School of Continuing Education.

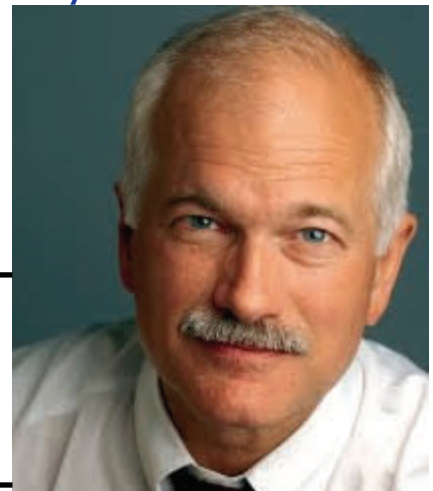
When he was a professor of political science at Ryerson, Jack prepared and delivered lectures on municipal politics over CJRT.

Ryerson professor Myer Siemiatycki, an academic colleague and long-time friend

of Jack's, said: "It was where his voice first reached a large number of Torontonians."

Prof. Siemiatycki went on to say that, after Layton moved on to politics, he frequently visited Ryerson. "The Ryerson campus meant a lot to Jack. He certainly had tremendous affection for Ryerson."

Jack Layton's talks on municipal politics were where his voice first reached a large number of Torontonians.



Robert Rocca's biggest puzzle: finding rooms for us all

Kenneth Smookler

It's a good thing that Robert Rocca loves solving puzzles. He is the Manager of University Scheduling and is the man responsible for allocating rooms at the University. With over 1,000 courses being taught this fall, there are close to 3,000 sections, each of which needs a room.

And how many rooms are there?

Ryerson has 139 general purpose classrooms, including 12 at the AMC theater which are only available from 8 a.m. to 1 p.m. There are some 27,000 full time day students at Ryerson and the need for rooms differs in many ways.

Some courses take only one hour while others run two or three hours. Some courses have as few as 10 students and some run almost 200. And some professors (Mode 1) may be required to split up an overlarge class and teach subject X103 twice during a term and some professors (Mode 2) are in another classification in which they can refuse to do so.

Fortunately Mr. Rocca has a program called Infoslem En-Campus software for Colleges and Universities.

Akin to painting the Brooklyn Bridge

His work is somewhat like painting the Brooklyn Bridge; it was claimed that, once the painters reached the far end of the bridge, they would immediately turn around and start over where they first began.

Mr. Rocca begins to schedule the fall timetable in April for a July 15 deadline and the winter timetable in July for a November 17 deadline. He does have a little time off after that, which gives him the opportunity to allocate exam classrooms, a chore with a completely different set of requirements.

Fortunately, he is not exactly new to the job; he began doing this at George Brown in 1991 and moved over to Ryerson eight years later.

Is there any order to the way in which classrooms are scheduled?

As a matter of fact, there is. Undergraduate courses get first call, then the graduate students are fitted in and, finally, Continuing Education, which includes LIFE, is awarded everything else, which you would think might also be known as "What's Left."

But there is still one more; there is a branch of Ryerson known as Facilities Rental. They are the people to whom any outside group would apply if they want to hold an activity at Ryerson. That's where What's Left usually winds up.

Why "usually"?

Because the main university programs have one scheduling system, while Continuing Education and Facilities Rental have another. One result is that some rooms slip through the cracks and are allocated twice internally. That is why mod-

erators sometimes get to their classroom to find that a seminar on World Hunger is being held there by an NGO from Ottawa or UNRRA.

It is one of Mr. Rocca's fond hopes that, eventually, everyone will be using the same software and the same scheduling system, which will avoid the problem of having one group list a room in its system while another thinks that they can put a class or a rental into that same room.

Another problem, of course, is that, while everyone wants to have a podium, not every classroom is so equipped. The University is planning to equip all of its general-purpose classrooms with podiums but, in the meanwhile, luck and the ability to whine constructively all have a place in acquiring the right room for the course you wish to teach or moderate.

But, eventually, Mr. Rocca gets all this done, closes his books (until exam time) and sits back. The marvel is that, when I went to interview him, the man was smiling and appeared completely unstressed.

Yes, LIFE moderators also include Canada's 'Word Lady'

Should you wish to know the origin of a word today you could do worse than consult Katherine Barber, the "Word Lady."

She was Editor-in-Chief of the Canadian Oxford Dictionary for 17 years. And she now entertains the studious and the curious of the Canadian reading public with witty tellings of the story of words.

Among those fortunate curious and studious are members of one of LIFE's largest classes, studying the History of the English Language.

It surely is a rich and hybrid history, as Katherine has been documenting for those of us in the class

Remember the song the Newfies sing? — "I'se the b'y that builds the boat". Well, the concealed "I is" at the start happens to have better antecedents in Middle English than some of the misplaced words the rest of us commonly use. At one time, "is" or "ys" stood for every "am". "art" and "are" that we have used since.

According to Katherine, only in Newfoundland and the Caribbean has the old usage survived.

Want more word stories like this?

Well you don't have to be a late registrant for Katherine's course to meet your need (though we all hope that Katherine will repeat her course). Direct your web browser to <http://katherinebarber.blogspot.com> and you will become a beneficiary of her skills. At last sighting she was giving a timely dissertation on "things that go bump in the night." (For the record she has also given LIFE students a nifty ballet course.)

Speech sufferers could never be at a loss for words

We at LIFELines always keep our eyes open and our ears pricked for news of new developments that will improve the quality of life for you our readers, as you (and we) begin to deal with those troublesome impediments of later life. This article, which describes an application to help those struggling with speech problems, is plucked from UofTMagazine and reproduced with the author's permission.

Graham F. Scott

Freedom of speech is one of our most treasured human rights. But some medical conditions — including some types of autism, strokes or Lou Gehrig's disease — can rob people of their ability to talk.

A University of Toronto alumnus and two students aim to help patients express themselves again with a new technology called MyVoice.

"The devices that currently exist to help people communicate are extremely expensive, and really bad," says Alexander Levy (BA 2010 UC), MyVoice's CEO and lead designer.

The project's origins lie with Bill Scott, a patient at the Toronto Rehabilitation Institute who had developed an acute speech impediment after a stroke.

Unable to talk reliably on his own, Scott was given an assistive speech device — a clunky computer that speaks words aloud when he taps or selects them from a list. Like many people using such machines, he found it slow, difficult to use and a battery hog (sometimes lasting only a few hours).

But unlike those other patients, Scott was referred to U of T's Technologies for Aging Gracefully lab (TAGlab) in the Department of Computer Science. The TAG team knew they could build something better.

Levy and his colleagues — Aakash Sahney, who is in the professional experience year of his engineering degree, and Kevin Tonon (BSc 2007 VIC), a master's student in computer science — found a solution literally in their own back pockets.

The iPhones and Android smartphones they were already carrying had speakers, touch screens and Internet access. Write some software, they concluded, and presto: a next-

generation speech aid for a few hundred bucks (current devices run up to \$15,000). the software was even finished, a \$2,500 prize from the Ontario Centres of Excellence (a provincial technology incubator) for a video explaining the technology. In early 2010, search giant Google awarded Levy's team a \$50,000 research award and some Android phones to work on.

Levy and his team officially launched MyVoice as a free app for iPhone and Android last spring, and by early August the software had been downloaded 6,000 times.

MyVoice is the first speech aid that can tailor its words by location

generation speech aid for a few hundred bucks (current devices run up to \$15,000).

Because smart phones have GPS built in, MyVoice is the first speech aid that can tailor its words by location. At a movie theatre? MyVoice shows you words such as "tickets" and "popcorn," and because it's Internet-connected, it can download new vocabulary on the fly.

Finally, it boasts a polished, glossy aesthetic that its ugly-stepsister tablets can't match. "There's a lot to be said for strong design," says Sahney, noting that MyVoice's users may have cognitive impairments or scant technological literacy.

MyVoice won its first award before

Levy planned to unveil a version of MyVoice for the iPad in September, along with a subscription service that will allow users to extensively customize the program with their own words, pictures and phrases. The team is promoting MyVoice in the medical community, and investigating potential applications for the program in special education.

Showing off the software in their seventh-floor lab in the Bahen Centre, Levy and Sahney describe their enthusiasm for their project. "We're psyched," says Levy, pausing a moment to pick just the right word.

If MyVoice takes off, tens of thousands — perhaps even millions — of people could similarly find themselves never again at a loss for words.

Pure fun for young and old

Act II Studio invites LIFE members and friends to its first ever pantomime, a silly, satirical, traditional British farce that will help you get in the mood for the holiday season.

Snow White and the Several Dwarfs is

love and politics, a cottage/castle coalition of upstairs meets downstairs, with undercurrents of evil and excitement. Pure fun for both children and adults!

Afternoon and evening performances will be held November 24, 25 and 26, 2011

at St. Vladimir Institute Theatre, 620 Spadina Avenue, just south of Harbord Street.

Join us for the fun and laughter. Bring a child: your own inner child, a grandchild or friend's child. Audience participation is encouraged, so come and cheer for Snow White and boo the evil Queen! For further information check the LIFE blog.

The Book Nook by Ralph Wintrob

That seven-year wait will be well worth it

Ralph and Kitty Wintrob are long-time members of LIFE who have had considerable success in moderating reading groups and involving us in the world's literature. Ralph has agreed to provide LIFELines with an in-depth review of a book he considers worth our attention.

It has taken David Bezmozgis seven years to produce a follow-up to his remarkably insightful debut book, *Natasha*, a story collection about Russian Jewish immigrants to Canada, based on his personal experience.

The Free World, a wonderfully ironic title, takes a step back, to one Latvian Jewish family's departure, not flight, in 1978, from their homeland . . . they take a load of saleable goods with them . . . and their limbo life in Rome, waiting to be accepted into an English speaking country.

Was it worth the wait, when his first book was received with such acclaim? Glancing over the reviews, there can be no doubt. Bezmozgis is a skilful, uncompromisingly honest writer, said one reviewer, who has produced here a heartfelt saga of historical scope and depth. There has been universal praise and admiration.

And indeed, we do get quite wound up in the transitory, transitional lives of the Krasnansky family. There is not a great deal to like about them. They are a product of their time and place. But we can certainly identify with their failings and failings as they try to make it in a world now without boundaries and restraints. It's tough being free. And we wonder if they'll make it. For theirs is not an ideological flight. It is an opportunistic one.

We have all been there

We have all been there, past or present. But WE make our choices from some moral base. Theirs has been leached out of them by The System. They will cheat and doublecross without compunction, even on spouses.

When it comes to a battle between pragmatism and idealism, there's no contest. Communism has taught them that you can't survive on trust. So they have no anchor from which to move forward into the "free world."

So, it's their dislocation that Bezmozgis tries to capture here. What moves and shakes them in their limbo existence he has tried to get perfectly right. Samuil, the paterfamilias has little influence on his two sons and their spouses. His wife tries hard, but with little success.

Samuil had bought the Communist line completely, had given his life for its ideals. He has left it all behind reluctantly, and has the hardest time of all the family adjusting. It is Samuel's death that forms the climax of the novel, as he confuses dream/illusion and reality, past and present, in his final moments.

It's painful to read, but Bezmozgis has caught it perfectly. Samuil's fate is tragically ironic but inevitable. And of course it stands as a high point to the story because we wonder whether the others, less indoctrinated, more pragmatic, will suffer the same fate ultimately.

Bezmozgis' strength is that he gets inside these people, not judgementally, but compassionately. We may not like them, but we care about them. We compare our struggles with theirs.

Treading a tortuous path

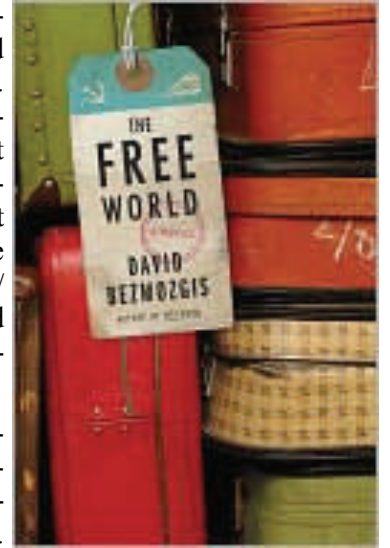
Bezmozgis does not manipulate his characters. He lets them work out their fates according to their natures and past experience. He neatly captures the cadence of their speech to add to their verisimilitude.

Where Bezmozgis differs with the traditional genre of immigrant story is that in the others we know the protagonist will triumph over adversity. Here we do not, because the Krasnansky's are in a transitional stage only in this novel. And, because they are so wanting in moral compass, it will be a tortuous path they tread.

I remember Bezmozgis telling a graduating class of mainly ex-Russian high school students in Toronto that he is a model of a person who can succeed at anything you set your mind to here. It's a great North American notion. But we know it takes more than just the will to survive to succeed.

If it takes Bezmozgis seven years to produce a sequel it will be well worth the wait. First, we do want to know the fate of the Krasnansky family. Will theirs be triumph or tragedy?

Second, we can see that Bezmozgis is carving a path from the great Russian novels which have inspired him in his writing to create his own niche in that glorious tradition.



Cover courtesy of Barnes & Noble

Everything in LIFE is what your Board does

You've seen our names at the back of your calendar, you may know several or all of us, but perhaps you don't realize what your Board of Directors actually does.

Well, we're a working board, which means that each one of us has certain responsibilities, including of course, the usual roles of past-president, president, treasurer, vice-president and secretary, but also chairs of committees, such as Moderators, Membership and Volunteers, and liaisons, or serving in positions such as registrar and special events planner.

We meet as a board once a month to promote, direct and supervise the operation of the Institute. We thrash out issues, cope with problems, and try to represent your interests as members of LIFE.

For example, this may involve the preparation and discussion of the budget, as we try to keep costs and revenues in balance. Or it may include strategic planning for the future and recruitment of new members to join our committees.

An important function is maintaining a close, continuing relationship with Ryerson through frequent meetings with Sandra Kerr, Director of Pro-



Consuelo Castillo joins Rosanne in the office

grams for 50+ at the G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education.

All the activities that keep LIFE humming along depend on our efforts—the Curriculum, Calendar, and Moderators Committees work to ensure an interesting selection of courses and a well-prepared group of moderators for you.

The Special Events Coordinator plans and provides for our entertainment at Welcome Days, Winterfest, and March Mingle, while the Coordinator of Membership and Volunteers ensures that our members are as in-

involved and cared for as possible. And that is only a fraction of what we do!

Here are some specifics to give you a real taste:

This term we hired a new employee, Consuelo Castillo, to work with Rosanne in the office;

We are currently negotiating our annual payment to the university with the Ryerson Financial Director for classrooms, office space, and services of Sandra Kerr and Mena Carravetta;

We are engaged in the final preparations for rolling out our brand new website;

We've tried to cope with the shortage of classroom space and find new off-campus sites as the fall term begins; we held an orientation session for new board members;

A transition team has prepared a report on how to ensure that LIFE's board is filled with experienced and enthusiastic members;

A strategic planning committee has been formed and met to discuss the future possibilities for LIFE. The list goes on! But best of all, we find that being part of this working board allows us to become more involved in the LIFE Institute, a place we all value.

LIFE walks: a great way to explore our lovely city

It was a great summer for LIFE Walks. Fine weather provided the opportunity to explore Toronto's parks and ravines, historic sites and old and new City neighbourhoods.

In all 31 walks were offered on Tuesday and Friday mornings from May 3^d until mid September with only one walk a week in August. Over 200 LIFE members registered for the walks program which entitled them to the schedule of walks for each month. In addition to the meeting place and a brief description of each walk, a classification of Grey or Green indicating whether the walk was mostly on city streets or in a park or ravine, and the level of physical demand from easy to strenuous was also noted. Almost all of the walks were readily accessible by TTC.

All but two of the walk leaders were LIFE members, most of whom led two or more walks. Miles Hearn from the Toronto Field Naturalists and Gerald Whyte, President of the Riverdale Historical Society, also led walks. Typically the number of people par-

ticipating in each walk ranged from 20 to 30, with a core group of walkers who came on most of the walks. Comments like "I've lived in Toronto 40 years but never came here" or "I've learned so many new things about our city" were frequently heard. In addition to getting out and exploring the city and its environs, LIFE walks provide social interaction and the opportunity for people to meet.

The LIFE walks committee is already beginning to think about walks for spring and summer 2012. If you participated in walks this past year, you have already received a survey asking for feedback that could help planning future walks. Your comments are greatly appreciated. If you didn't participate in walks this past summer, but think you might like to join, or possibly even lead a walk in the future, let the committee know. You can contact Roy Fisher (roy.fisher@utoronto.ca) or Pam Hitchcock (pamandjohn@sympatico.ca).

Our Bodies and Our Minds

Telomeres — here's to a longer life?

Frances Smookler

Scientists have been saying that if you have longer telomeres, you are likely to live longer. I'm pretty sure I know your reaction to this -- where do I line up to get some?

But, wait a minute, let me explain what's involved.

Maybe you haven't heard about telomeres. Telomeres are pieces of repetitive DNA at the ends of each of your chromosomes. They create protective caps (think of the tips of shoe laces) that keep your chromosomes separated from one another.

Every time your body's cells divide, their chromosomes' telomeres get shorter. When telomeres can't shrink any more the cells die or shut down. In fact, checking out the length of your telomeres would give a pretty good idea of just how much your body has aged.

It is thought that the shorter your telomeres the more susceptible you are to problems connected with aging — things like cardiovascular disease, diabetes, Alzheimers' and some cancers.

But why, you might ask, do telomeres get shorter? There is more than one reason, but the primary one is the natural operation of the body.

As cells divide at regular intervals during our lives, they must duplicate their DNA. The cell copying machine is called polymerase, and when it does its work — because of where it is sitting on the chromosomes — it is unable to copy right to the ends. So each time a DNA copy is made, your chromo-

This first article sprang from a presentation Frances Smookler made to a Science class several years ago; it was brought back to her mind by the current article in The Scientific American and she has graciously given us this updated version for LIFELines.

somes become a bit shorter. You may wonder what keeps this shortening process from getting completely out of control until, after a few cell divisions, there is no chromosome left?

The answer is telomerase (an enzyme). Telomerase glues those bits of repetitive DNA (telomeres) on to the ends of the chromosomes. But the bits glued on are a little shorter in length after each cell division, though still allowing the polymerase copying machinery to accurately reproduce the rest of the chromosome.

Nobel prize winners

Telomerase and telomere activity was figured out in the mid 1970s by molecular biologists Elizabeth Blackburn and Carol Greider, winning them a Nobel Prize in 2009 (along with geneticist, Jack Szostak, who worked with them).

Blackburn discovered how “a unique sequence of bases in the telomeres allowed them to act as caps on the ends of the chromosomes and protect the chromosomes from degradation”.

Greider, a graduate student working with Blackburn, identified the enzyme, telomerase, which, during cell division, directs this process.



Frances Smookler

Other than at cell division time, telomerase should not be active in healthy adults. Its really big job is to make sure that chromosomes remain intact when an embryo is growing.

However, once a child is born, telomerase turns itself off in almost all cells until, as part of the cell division process, it directs the dissolution and shorter reconstruction of the telomeres and, thus, precipitates the cell's aging.

But couldn't we arrest (or even reverse) aging by turning telomerase back on in our cells and reprogram the way it works so that telomeres don't get shorter? Certainly doing this might promote cellular immortality. But stop — there is a problem.

Studies have shown that telomerase activity is present in 90% of cancer cells. In these cells it maintains or even, in some cases, increases telomere length.

Robust telomerase activity enables cancer cells to replace lost telomeric sequences and divide indefinitely i.e. those cells don't die

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Lifestyle changes could slow down telomere erosion

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when they should.

This finding has led to speculation that, if a drug could be developed to block this **unwanted** telomerase activity, it might aid in cancer treatment. In fact, breakthroughs in cell biology and telomere research do appear to be leading to treatments for cancer

I mentioned that the primary reason telomeres get shorter is as a result of cell division activity. But there may be another reason, as well.

In vitro studies in 1995 have shown that telomeres are highly susceptible to oxidative stress. Telomere shortening that is thought to be caused by free radicals, rather than by normal cell division, would explain the difference between the expected loss of length (from normal end-replication) and unhealthy life-style related telomere shortening, which can be even greater.

Advocates of human life extension have promoted the idea of lengthening telomeres in certain cells through temporary activation of the telomerase (by drugs) or possibly permanently (by gene therapy) but the trade-off still remains that, though longer telomeres might

slow down aging, there is a good chance that they would increase the cell's vulnerability to becoming cancerous.

Is there anything we can do to slow down the progressive loss in telomere length without increasing the risk of cancer? Well, maybe there is.

In a study in 2009, participants attended a three-day retreat, during which they ate only whole foods, fruits and vegetables, and engaged in moderate aerobic exercise, relaxation techniques and breathing exercises.

Gauges of cellular health

Three months later it was found that there was a healthy 29% restoration of previously diminished telomeres in the participants' blood. Also, an earlier study published in 2005 found that weight gain and increased insulin resistance were correlated with accelerated telomere shortening. As well, test subjects who had been in long term stress situations have been found to have shortened telomeres.

And so, it sounds like life-style changes and, of course, controlling free radical activity by including anti-oxidants in your diet, could slow down some of your telomere erosion. The current thinking is

that, aside from normal aging loss, telomeres are "gauges of cellular health and serve as barometers of environmental and emotional stress and predictors of various diseases". According to an article in a recent issue of *Scientific American*, this theory is presently being tested in a study using 100,000 saliva samples.

Increasing life span

Since aging, disease and death are all the result of cell death there is a lot of speculation that control of telomeres and telomerase activity might be the key to increasing human life span, perhaps indefinitely.

This might be a good thing, provided the potential cancer downside could be averted, although there would still be ethical and practical issues that would need to be addressed. Of course, there have been very few advances in human biology that have not raised serious questions.

In the meantime, until scientists have sorted out what to do about telomeres and telomerase, I hope you will try to remember to take your antioxidants, exercise, avoid undue stress and skip the fat-making food.

And one more thing – don't forget to breathe.

Patrick Bloomfield

I am taking my third *Digital Photography* course. Am I a slow learner? Far from it. Today's digital cameras, even the "point and shoot" variety, are wonderfully complex and adaptive machines. You don't learn all about them in a day or a week or a year. You just go on learning. Add in the format of this course — diligent instruction, outdoor and indoor shoots and a pub lunch together afterward — and you also have a lot of fun. Here Martha Pluscauskas, who shares the moderating with Roger Payne and Sheila Clarke, reveals the secrets of photo editing. If you also seek more than just family snaps, there may well be another course coming.



LIFE's film will show that seniors flourish and contribute

Judith Levkoe

The LIFE Documentary Project is a gift from the G Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, in honour of LIFE's 20th anniversary.

The Film Committee has put together the plan needed to develop this project over the last few months and with the help of LIFE members has assembled a cast of eleven, who have inspired us for their accomplishments, both in the past and currently. In the film they tell us about their past, their enthusiasm for lifelong learning and what it means to them to be part of LIFE.

Featured are: Joan Lee, Dorothy Knight, Doug Paton and Charles Wright. Our Supporting Cast includes: Geoff Arnold, Sharon

Hampson, John Simke, Josephine Spencer, John Twomey, Kitty Win-trob, and Marilyn Wright.

Approximately 35 people are involved in the planning and execution of this dynamic project including Maureen Sheridan, of the Chang School as Co- Producer, Kevin Courier as Interviewer, Luke Higginson a Ryerson Graduate as Videographer, Harvey Evoke as Director, Marilyn Wright as Financial Development and Marcel Deurvorst as Production Manager.

All too often we hear about the negative aspects of aging for the individual and society.

This documentary illustrates the chance for empowerment and mastery at our stage in LIFE, a stage when seniors are traditionally relegated to minor roles. The film demonstrates

that older adults can continue to flourish and contribute to the lives of seniors and to society.

Filming has already begun and we have had great fun and inspiration as we meet with each of the individuals and learn about their lives, their reasons for involving themselves in lifelong learning and how they have gained from and contributed to others in their classes at Ryerson University.

We expect to have the documentary ready for its premiere at Silver Screens in June 2012 and to distribute 500 copies to government, health services, universities and colleges throughout the country by the end of next year.

Please let us know if you have any suggestions or thoughts about other individuals or parties who may be supportive of this project.

Well-earned honour for a remarkable woman

Kenneth Smookler

On Thursday, October 19, at the Leaders in Learning ceremony, the Jack Brown Award* was presented to LIFE's chosen recipient, Beth Singleton, a remarkable young woman who well deserves this honour.

She is a continuing education student at Ryerson, with a Masters degree in Health Administration, who is now enrolled in Ryerson's Gerontology Certificate program.

For the past 13 years, she has worked at the Sunnybrook Health Sciences Centre with hospital volunteers to ensure that the services and programs they provide are appropriate to the population they serve.

She now works with an Emergency Department physician on preventing delirium in elderly, long-stay patients in the Emergency Department and on a Mobility Volunteer Program, a pro-

ject with the goal of reducing rates of delirium, falls and functional decline in the general elderly population.

In receiving this scholarship, Beth said, "I feel blessed to meet so many elderly people with a wide range of experiences, goals, and lifestyles and feel my studies have enriched my understanding of both individuals as they age, the collective impact of this group on society, and society's reaction to the elderly and their needs."

We'll all be lucky if we meet a Beth in the hospital some day!

Beth will be invited to attend LIFE's March Mingle and you may have the chance to meet her then.

**For those of you who are unfamiliar with this award, it is an annual award, named after one of LIFE's past presidents, and given to both full-time and continuing education Ryerson students who intend to work with seniors.*

All about Pumpkinification

So you thought that the recent festival of the humble pumpkin was a North American ritual. Far from it.

The humble pumpkin had a meaning — and a much longer derivation — in Roman times.

The Oxford English Dictionary tells us that Pumpkinification was the "title of a travesty (ascribed to Seneca) of the apotheosis of the Roman emperor Claudius Caesar."

According to 19th-century author Charles Merivale in his History of the Romans under Empire, the Latin writer Seneca wrote a satire on the deification of Claudius to which he gave the name of Apocolocyntosis (or pumpkinification).

The OED has a 2004 citation from The Times: "I thought that the pumpkinification of celebrity cooks came in France after the Revolution."

Travel tips for the savvy traveler

Beware the pre-existing condition demon

Ken Smookler

We're all of an age which delights in the fact that we have what may be the most accessible medical system in the world.

If we need medical care we don't usually have to check the state of our finances. We know that in most cases the Ontario Health Insurance Plan (yes, I mean OHIP) will cover us.

But what if we are travelling? How good is our health coverage while we are away?

Well, within Canada, if you are an insured resident and you are hospitalized or need medical care in another province or territory while travelling, you have OHIP coverage up to a maximum of 12 months.

OK. That's nice to know. But what about the rest of the world? OHIP will only cover the amount that would have been payable in Ontario; as for the rest, that's why Travel Medical insurance was invented.

(Trivial fact — did you know that, when Life Insurance was first proposed, there were initial claims that it was illegal because essentially you and the insurer were betting on the duration of your life. That *caveat* didn't last long but it shows you how devious the legal mind can be!]

Travel Medical insurance falls almost entirely into two categories — insurance which comes with your credit card and insurance which you buy separately. Each has its own pitfalls.

Some credit cards provide you with Travel Medical insurance just because you carry that card and some require you to use the card to pay for the trip; be sure to read the conditions of use before you decide to rely on the card.

There are no longer any cards that automatically give you Travel Medical Insurance much over a week with-

Ken Smookler is Editor of *LIFelines* and a seasoned traveler. He enjoys sharing the ups and downs of his trips with readers.

out regard to your age.

Until this year my Citibank MasterCard gave me up to 22 days coverage just because I was a cardholder but in June Citibank sold the card to CIBC which failed to offer Travel Medical without completing a detailed medical questionnaire.

The best I can find for someone my age (over 80 and further details are irrelevant) is my TD Visa Infinite card which gives me two days Travel Medical and will sell me another 15 days without a questionnaire.

Alternatively there is the relatively new Capital One Aspire Travel World MasterCard which offers an automatic eight days Travel Medical to the over 65's. Unfortunately they tell me that this card does not offer top-up insurance at all; that must be purchased elsewhere.

One bright spot

There is one bright spot on separately purchased Travel Medical Insurance. The greatest hazard in this field is the "pre-existing condition".

Many insurance fights revolve around whether the insured traveler has been laid low by a pre-existing condition which was not properly disclosed when purchasing the policy.

But, according to a recent article in the Toronto Star, Quest Travel Insurance will write a policy which protects you even against an undisclosed pre-existing condition. Other policies from this company are available with much shorter periods of stability required of pre-existing conditions. And they are prepared to accept clients up

to age 90.

One last hazard to be aware of. A friend of mine bought a policy with a down payment up front and a final payment shortly before departure. Illness struck between the two payments and the company is taking the position that the coverage only was in the amount of the down payment; full coverage only applied on receipt of the balance.

I find this unusual. To me as a lawyer, a contract is usually made when the two parties reach agreement and a payment is accepted. But the company is relying on wording which I found murky and is refusing payment.

For those of us over 65, my advice is to shop carefully *and read the fine print!* And . . .

. . . if there is any part of the policy at all unclear get it clarified. And if it isn't clarified — look elsewhere.

In my next column I'll deal with the rest of the travel insurance areas, Trip Cancellation, Trip Interruption, Automobile Rental, Baggage Insurance.

Coining some answers

Question: *Why are many coin banks shaped like pigs?*

Answer: *Long ago, dishes and cookware in Europe were made of a dense orange clay called "pygg". When people saved coins in jars made of this clay, the jars became known as "pygg" banks.*

Question: *Why do dimes and quarters have notches, while pennies and nickels do not?*

Answer: *Mints began putting notches on those coins made from precious metals (silver and gold) to discourage shaving them. Pennies and nickels were not made of precious metals and were not valuable enough to shave.*

LIFE Travels 2012

There's so much to look forward to. Here's what we're working on. Mark your calendars:

LIFE Travels to Cuba

12 days. March 15-25, 2012. Experience the real Cuba in a trip led by Michael Kerman, who has many years of experience leading such trips. Visit schools, artists, urban farms, children's theatre, etc. Hear first-hand about the realities of life in today's Cuba. A week in Havana, plus time in the Viñales Valley, a UNESCO World Heritage Centre.

Full details and prices imminent

Cradles of the Renaissance: Venice, Florence and Rome

13 or 16 days. Tentative dates: April 28-May 10, 2012 (to May 13 with Rome). This trip, led by our own Jerry Walker and Michael Quinn from Pauwel's Travel, is centred on Venice and Florence, with an optional 3-day addition to Rome. Experience these three great cities in depth, as well as others such as Verona, Siena, San Gimignano, and Orvieto. Immerse yourself in the wonderful world of the Renaissance.

Full details and prices very soon

Comprehensive Newfoundland and Labrador Tour

12 days. Mid to late August / early September 2012. We're negotiating on this one. This tour will give you a complete immersion in the culture and daily life of Newfoundland, as well as a taste of Labrador. Its easy pace and local guides give you many opportunities to appreciate this unique province. There will be a course on Newfoundland in the Spring Calendar.

Full details, prices & specific dates when available

South America

12-17 days. October / November 2012. This one we're just beginning to work on. We're aiming at a core trip of 12 days or so, probably centred on Rio and Buenos Aires, with add-ons before and after (the Amazon? Peru?), all tied in with 1 or 2 courses on South America.

Full details, prices & specific dates when available

QUESTIONS? E-mail us at lifetravels@ymail.com

You, too, could help a New Canadian professional

Sandra Kerr

Programs for 50+ invites you to participate as a mentor in The Chang School's International Accounting and Finance Professionals program. ("IAFP") This is a bridging program for new Canadians living in Ontario who wish to gain professional registration and/or employment.

Mentors will provide support to help Internationally Educated Professionals (IEPs) in financial services (accounting, banking, insurance, investments, securities, and wealth management), understand the Canadian context of their profession and formulate their career plans.

In the Philippines, Mary was a successful accountant in a leading bank and taught accounting in a major university.

In Canada, she ran into the usual barriers that face professionals when they move from a familiar social and cultural milieu to an unfamiliar one.

As she applied for several jobs, and visited countless potential employers without a result, her confidence in her abilities gradually started to fade, and she began to have doubts about her ability to work at a reasonably senior level of her profession in Canada.

Then she heard of the IAFP program at Ryerson University. The program manager shared insights about work in Canada, and how professionals need to market not only their technical skills, but their soft skills.

When the program manager at Ryerson talked about developing and demonstrating communication, interpersonal and cultural competencies, Mary was not sure what it all meant.

Mary's mentor, arranged through the IAFP program, had worked in recruitment in the accounting field for more than 25 years. They agreed on a process to work together.

Naomi, her mentor explains: "It was about her — I wanted her to achieve whatever she wanted to achieve. We worked on her resume and her cover letter, and she started to apply for jobs. At the same time, we worked on her soft skills and did some practice interviews. I was just a coach."

They would either communicate through E-mails or on the phone. Every time Mary went to an interview they would first look at Mary's strengths and weaknesses and come up with a strategy to deal with different types of questions.

In Mary's own culture, you talked a

lot, but Mary's mentor told her to be sure to focus on the question and answer what the interviewer was trying to learn about her.

Mary's mentor was not a professional in the field, but she did know all about interviews and was a wonderful support for Mary.

For Cristina from Mongolia, the mentor performed a slightly different role. He proved to have an excellent command of creating network and professional connections. He was an experienced accounting professional and had many contacts in industry.

Like Mary's mentor, he helped Cristina regain some of her confidence by clarifying the nature of the skills she had and the goals she was planning for. Then he had her go out and meet some people in industry in her field, for informational interviews.

Cristina initially thought this process was going nowhere, as she met one person after another, with no result, or so she thought. When the program manager at IAFP talked to her about her experiences, she sounded quite cynical about the mentoring process.

However, within a few weeks, the people she met through her mentor started to call her and refer her to po-

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Your role as a mentor

The program gives you an opportunity to play a variety of roles: advisor, guide, subject matter expert, learning consultant, coach, process consultant etc. The support you can give can be critical in speeding up an Internationally Educated Professional's transition to the Canadian labour market. It also helps reduce the stress of transition.

What specific tasks do I perform?

As an *Advisor* or *Guide*, you are expected to use your knowledge and experience in the Canadian context or profession to provide ongoing advice and guidance. You may act as a sounding board to listen to some of the concerns and anxieties. As an *Interpreter*, you will help your mentee develop a sound understanding of their profession or career requirements, the organizational realities in the Canadian context, and the wider issues related to their learning and professional development. As an *Advocate*, you use your networks to help open up opportunities for learning

experiences or professional events. As an *Expert Mentor*, you may offer to hold conversations with mentees seeking expert knowledge in your area of specialization (face-to-face, or via telephone or e-mail).

What skills do I need?

Mentors in the program are expected to have a set of core skills (effective listening, providing encouragement, support and constructive feedback) which will help the mentees achieve their career development objectives. Gaining trust of your mentees through strong interpersonal skills is an important requirement. There is a saying that captures the essence of a mentor's skills: "people don't care how much you know, until they know how much you care".

Will I be responsible for the mentees learning & development?

The mentees are responsible for their own development. Your role is to facilitate and support this process.

LIFE cruises Russian rivers and waterways

A collection of memories collated by Judith Lowther

In May twenty-seven members of LIFE Travel Club assembled in Moscow and boarded the *Ama Katerina* to begin our cruise from Moscow, through a series of canals, lakes and rivers, made interesting by a connection of locks and bridges, to St Petersburg.

Before the tour began, seven of us set off for the subway to Red Square and St Basil's Cathedral.

The Moscow subway stations are like palaces or museums, some lined with statues of war heroes or historical figures, some with stained glass, sculptures, each an art gallery in itself.

The Moscow Kremlin is the heartbeat of this vibrant metropolis. It is likened to a square but is actually a triangular plot of land first settled in the eleventh century which over time has acquired 20 towers with tent roofs.

One of these towers, The Saviour Gate Tower, is known as the official entrance to the Kremlin and an exit onto Red Square with "Big Ben" (no, not that one) chiming time into the surroundings.

Other sites inside the Kremlin are the white stone monuments from the fifteenth-sixteenth centuries. The most striking of these is the Ivan the Great Bell Tower, the tallest structure, which can be seen from as far as 30 kilometres away.

Next to the Bell Tower is the Tsar-Kolokol, the world's largest bell weighing in at more than 200 tons. Its other claim to fame is that it has never been rung because of a huge slab that cracked off during casting which has never been repaired.

Moving on to Uglich was a highlight for many participants. We were divided into groups of twelve and went for lunch.

Some went to a Soviet era apartment block — the crumbly window sills,

the teetering railing rusted through in spots, and the big wooden door behind which was a living room, bathroom, bedroom and small galley kitchen.

All the furniture had been pushed against the wall to accommodate a large table around which 12 of us squeezed, leaving only a corner for our hostess to serve borscht, carrot salad and of course vodka. Although she didn't speak a word of English, she pulled out her albums and showed us photographs of her family and the garden where she grew vegetables in the summer.

A mother and daughter were hostesses of another group where a similar meal was served. There was a sense of their warmth and graciousness.

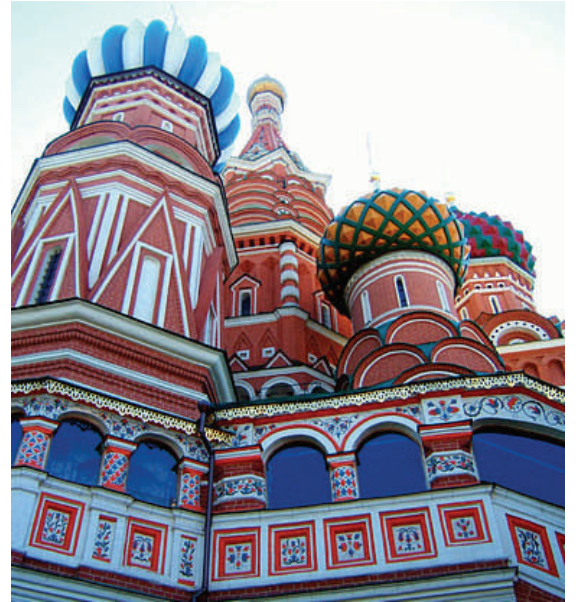
The china cabinet with nice dishes on display and the pretty lace curtains with plants hanging in the window made their guests feel right at home.

It reminded one of us of her parents having people over for Sunday dinner on her farm in Alberta. Our hostesses even had a couple of the group doing some Russian dances.

Another group had their lunch in a 120-year-old dacha hosted by a lovely Russian lady and her grandson.

Moving on we arrived at Kizhi. The magnificence of the ancient wooden structures (all built by hand and most without nails) defies description. Of course the cathedral with 20 wooden onion domes is breathtaking, but the immensely practical houses with their attached stables and sophisticated energy saving heating systems were equally wonderful.

Moving along the waterways, there are memories of early morning and the thin sheets of ice breaking up around the hull of the ship, the sun shining on the ice crystals.



St. Basil's Church in Red Square

On board the ship many activities took place from lectures to tea preparation to Talent Night. A couple in our group were prepared to put themselves to the test and go for it, but at a pre-arranged time for practice they realised that, without music to hand, their memories had failed them. They had to withdraw and that left the "Canadians" without representation at the Talent Night. Too late a brain trust started and a long repertoire emerged. Lesson learned "Be prepared"!

After seven days cruising through the waterways, we finally docked in St. Petersburg and the adrenalin started pumping!

There is so much to see and do and so little time to take it all in. The Hermitage is vast and opulence personified.

It's hard to believe that the treasures were transported to Siberia for safe keeping during the Second World War and those that could not be moved were sand-banked. All survived and everything was

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Free hugs, tight jeans and high heels on a sunny day

Continued from Page Fourteen

painstakingly restored to its former glory. The traffic in both Moscow and St. Petersburg seemed to be always rush hour but the Russians take it in their stride and rather than honk they manipulate their vehicles around to be on their way.

Unfortunately when a high-ranking official visits the roads are closed. This happened when we were returning from our final excursion of the trip. Instead of the expected 40 minutes it took 3 hours!

Our local guide regaled us with stories of her life and, as we were off the usual route, had local information about life in the city, making the trip more enjoyable and bearable.

The young people who were part of the tour as staff on board the ship or as local guides that travelled with us when ashore were of the highest calibre. They knew

their subject and spoke excellent English. St. Petersburg is a real delight for art lovers. After enjoying the tours of the Palaces of Catherine and Yusupov, and of course the Hermitage, it was a bonus to have an extra day to visit the Russian Museum and see a special exhibit of the art of Boris Grigoriev, one of the well known Russian artists of the first half of the twentieth century.

There were over 150 pieces of graphic portraits of famous men of the Russian culture. Along with it were 65 works by non-conformist artists of the second half of the twentieth century. This period was one of the most significant phenomena in Soviet art history.

Hunger pains eventually drove us to a restaurant on the second floor of a bookstore on the corner of Nevsky Prospect (the main street) and the canal. It was the former Singer Sewing Machine building,

now a bookstore and restaurant. We sat and ate, while watching the street theatre below. Free hugs were being given to those who would enjoy them, tight jeans and high, high heels on beautiful girls and throngs of shoppers enjoying the warm weather and cloudless skies.

Memories linger and when they are all put together they make us realise how much understanding and appreciation we gained for our time in Russia.

Networking found her a job

Continued from Page Thirteen

sitions in their organizations. And it was one of the most pleasant surprises for her when she finally got a job through one such contact.

“My mentor did not get me a job, but he gave me enough confidence, and some networks that I used, to gain insight into the field of my interest. I was getting technical knowledge and skills through the courses I was doing within the program, but without a knowledge and understanding of how things work in Canada, I would not have been able to move forward.

“What my mentor did was something I could never have understood without the experience of networking. Very often, you do not realize how important these networks can be. So my mentor’s role was only indirect. It worked in ways that I could not imagine, and I was finally able to find a job in my own field. Even though it was a contract job for a six-month

period, it boosted my morale for all times to come,” says Cristina.

Research has demonstrated that mentoring is an effective strategy to deal with problems faced by learners in times of transition. The Internationally Educated Professionals are in a state of transition, both culturally and in terms of employability skills. Through mentoring support, The Chang School is creating a better environment for accelerated learning and quicker and less costly integration into the labour market.

Please consider giving some of your time and talent to help. We would also be interested in hearing from any friends you may have who are not part of LIFE institute but would be interested in becoming a mentor in this program. Give me a call, or drop me a line: Sandra Kerr, Director, Programs for 50+; phone: 416-979-5000 ext. 6979; email: skerr@ryerson.ca.

That great book of great insults

He has all of the virtues that I dislike and none of the vices I admire — Winston Churchill.

I have never killed a man, but I have read many obituaries with great pleasure -- Clarence Darrow.

He is a self made man and worships his creator — John Bright.

He is not only dull himself; he is the cause of dullness in others — Samuel Johnson.

He has no enemies, but is intensely disliked by his friends. — Oscar Wilde..

He had delusions of adequacy — Walter Kerr.

He loves nature in spite of what it did to him — Forrest Tucker.

His mother should have thrown him away and kept the stork — Mae West.

He uses statistics as a drunken man uses lampposts . . . for support rather than illumination — Andrew Lang.



LIFElines

Learning Is ForEver



A Newsletter for Members of LIFE Institute at The G. Raymond Chang School of Continuing Education, Ryerson University

Published byLIFE Institute
 EditorKen Smookler
 Co-EditorPatrick Bloomfield
 Proofreader.....Sandy Fry

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How to Reach Us

President	Martha Wall	wall@wallbooks.com
Special Events	Marcel Deurvorst	mdeurvorst@rogers.com
Member at Large	Roy Fischer	roy.fischer@utoronto.ca
Moderators' Committee	Geoffrey Kemp	geoff.kemp@sympatico.ca
TAN Rep./Strategic Planning	Judith Levkoe	levkoejudith@sympatico.ca
Liaisons	Jennifer McDonnell	jmcdonc612@rogers.com
Registrar	Ellen McLean	emclean99@sympatico.ca
Recording Secretary	Jean Paton	jeandougpaton@rogers.com
Vice President – temporary Travel/Moderators Committees	Simon Pearson	smnprsn@yahoo.com
Financial Officer	Bob Radcliffe	rradclif@sympatico.ca
Curriculum Committee	Leslie Rae	leslie.rae@sympatico.ca
Member at Large	Sharon Roebuck	smroebuck@hotmail.com
Governance	Paul Rook	prook@sympatico.ca
Legal	Fran Smookler	freidl30@gmail.com
Membership and Volunteers	Leonie Thelwell	leonie_thelwell@sympatico.ca
Website Contact/ Communications	Marilyn Wright	marilynwright@rogers.com
Ex-Officio Past President/Board Develop- ment	Louise Brousseau	louise_brousseau2@hotmail.com
Director, Programs for 50+ The Chang School, Ryerson	Sandra Kerr	skerr@ryerson.ca
LIFE Office Administrator	Rosanne Bernard	lifeinst@ryerson.ca