

# CUPARUC

newsletter of the concordia university pensioners association  
bulletin de nouvelles de l'association des retraité(e)s de l'université concordia

Vol. 8, no. 2. April / Avril 1999

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

First of all, on behalf of the CUPA Executive, let me express our appreciation for the overwhelming moral and financial support so many of you have shown during the legal battle to defend our pensions, in which the Association is engaged. As you no doubt know, the litigation was initiated by a group of CSN-affiliated unions, which alleged that the University had abused the Pension Fund. Thanks to your support and to the dedicated efforts of Howard Fink and John Hall, CUPA has won the right to intervene in this dispute. A date has not yet been set for the next phase of what may be a rather lengthy legal contest. Howard and John will give us an update at the Annual General Meeting on April 29.

Our involvement in this litigation may well help to explain the radical increase in our membership which has expanded from about 300 to over 450 in little over a year! Audrey Williams, helped by a small team of volunteers, has spent many hours updating our membership list, while dealing with mail and 'phone calls directed to our office on the Loyola campus.

The open forum on health-related issues, which we held on February 1, brought out some forty members, and a summary of this event appears elsewhere in this issue.

Our social programme has enjoyed uneven success this season. A great throng turned out at the Hippodrome de Montréal in November and at the Christmas luncheon, but little interest was shown in either the Casino visit on February 14 or the theatre excursion in March, which we have had to cancel. If you have any suggestions about social events for the coming year, please drop us a line. We hope to see a substantial number of you at the Annual General Meeting on April 29!

## MOT DU PRÉSIDENT

Tout d'abord, permettez-moi d'exprimer la profonde reconnaissance de l'Exécutif à l'égard de l'extraordinaire appui moral et financier dont tant d'entre vous nous ont témoigné à l'égard de la lutte juridique que mène votre association pour la défense de notre régime de retraite. Comme vous le savez bien, ce litige a été initié par un groupe de syndicats affiliés à la CSN, lequel prétend que l'Université avait mal utilisé la caisse de retraite. Grâce à votre appui, sans parler de l'effort qu'y ont consacré Howard Fink et John Hall, l'ARUC s'est vu attribuer le droit d'y intervenir. Aucune date n'a encore été prévue pour la prochaine étape de cette lutte, qui pourrait être de longue durée. Howard et John nous en feront une mise-à-jour lors de l'Assemblée générale annuelle le 29 avril.

Notre participation à ce litige a bien pu contribuer à l'augmentation impressionnante du nombre de nos membres, lequel est passé de quelque 300 à plus de 450 en un peu plus d'un an! Audrey Williams, aidée par un petit groupe de bénévoles, a consacré de nombreuses heures à la mise-à-jour de la liste des membres, tout en s'occupant du courrier et des coups de fil qui parviennent à notre bureau sur le campus Loyola.

Le forum ouvert sur les régimes d'assurance maladie, que nous avons tenu le 1er février, a attiré une quarantaine de membres. Un résumé de cet événement paraît ailleurs dans cette livraison.

Le programme d'activités sociales de la saison a connu un succès inégal. Les membres ont assisté très nombreux à l'Hippodrome en novembre ainsi qu'au dîner de Noël, mais il y avait peu d'intérêt pour la visite du Casino le 14 février, et il a fallu annuler la visite du théâtre en mars. Si vous avez des idées quant au programme de l'année qui vient, envoyez-nous un petit mot. Nous comptons sur une assistance nombreuse lors de l'Assemblée générale annuelle le 29 avril!

Geoff Adams

## FORUM ON HEALTH INSURANCE

On Feb. 1, 1999 a meeting, attended by some forty CUPA members, was held to familiarize members with the provisions of the Quebec and Concordia medical insurance plans and to give them an opportunity to ask questions of experts. In attendance were Jennifer Auchinleck, of *Project Genesis*, a voluntary organization which monitors problems in the area of social services, and Ernest Haigh, Concordia Benefits Officer.

In introducing the work of *Project Genesis*, Ms. Auchinleck described how this operation had been created in 1977 in the Côte des Neiges area and had in recent years been concentrating on social programmes and, in particular, health care, of which drug insurance is an important element. Implementation of new legislation in June 1996 had completely changed the way in which these services are organized, the most evident change being that almost all Quebecers are obliged to pay considerably more for their medications. She reminded those present of the essential elements:

1. An annual premium of up to \$175 per adult is calculated on the Quebec income tax return, according to family income.
2. When obtaining prescription drugs – and recognized prescription drugs appear in a list produced annually by the RAMQ – every adult has to pay for the first \$8.33 of the drugs consumed each month (the “deductible”). Once this has been paid, each adult pays 25% of the remaining cost (the “co-insurance”).
3. There is a maximum for the contribution listed in the preceding paragraph, after which the total cost is paid by the RAMQ. This maximum is \$62.50 per month (\$750 per year) for all adults except seniors receiving the Guaranteed Income Supplement, who pay less.
4. Persons under 65 who are covered for prescription drugs under a private group insurance plan – e.g. the Concordia Benefits Plan – must keep their private coverage and insure their spouse and/or children under this plan.
5. Persons 65 and over have the choice of joining the RAMQ plan or of depending entirely on private coverage. (As was subsequently pointed out by Mr. Haigh, the premium for total drug coverage by the private plan would be around \$65 per person per month, since the RAMQ would not be subsidizing any of it. That is why the University recommends that persons 65 and over insure themselves with the RAMQ for the drugs covered by it as well as with Concordia

## FORUM SUR L'ASSURANCE-SANTÉ

Le 1er février 1999, l'ARUC a organisé une assemblée, à laquelle assistaient quelque quarante membres, afin de mettre les membres mieux au courant des provisions des régimes d'assurance-maladie du Québec et de l'Université et de leur offrir l'occasion de poser des questions à des experts. Y étaient présents Madame Jennifer Auchinleck, de *Projet Genèse*, organisme bénévole qui suit de près les problèmes du domaine des services sociaux, et Monsieur Ernest Haigh, du Service des avantages sociaux de l'Université.

En présentant les activités de *Projet Genèse*, Mme Auchinleck a décrit la création de cet organisme en 1997 dans le quartier Côte des Neiges et la façon dont, ces dernières années, il avait porté son attention sur les services à la société, et, en particulier, ceux portant sur la santé, dont l'assurance médicaments constitue un élément important. La mise-en-vigueur, en 1996, d'une nouvelle loi avait changé complètement l'organisation de ces services, le changement le plus remarquable ayant comme résultat l'obligation pour la presque totalité des résidents du Québec de payer beaucoup plus leurs médicaments. Elle en a rappelé à l'assistance les éléments essentiels:

1. Une prime annuelle de jusqu'à 175\$ par adulte, selon le revenu familial, fait partie de la déclaration d'impôt sur le revenu du Québec.
2. Au moment d'obtenir des médicaments sur ordonnance – et les médicaments reconnus figurent dans une liste émise chaque année par la RAMQ – tout adulte doit payer les premiers 8,33\$ du coût des médicaments pris chaque mois (la “franchise”). Une fois ce montant payé, chaque adulte paie 25% de ce qui reste (la “co-assurance”).
3. Un maximum est prescrit pour cette co-assurance, à partir duquel la totalité est payée par la RAMQ. Ce maximum se chiffre à 62,50\$ par mois (750\$ par année) pour tout adulte, sauf pour les 65+ touchant le Supplément de revenu garanti, pour qui ce maximum est moindre.
4. Les personnes âgées de moins de 65 ans et pour qui les médicaments font partie d'un régime privé d'assurance – groupe – p.ex. le régime d'avantages sociaux de Concordia – doivent continuer à y participer, avec leur conjoint(e) et leurs enfants.
5. Les personnes âgées de plus de 65 ans ont le choix entre la participation au régime de la RAMQ et la dépendance totale d'un régime privé. (Comme l'a noté subséquentement M. Haigh, la prime pour cette dernière se chiffrerait à quelque 65\$ par personne par mois, puisqu'il n'y aurait aucune contribution de la part de la RAMQ. C'est pour cela que l'Université conseille aux 65+ de participer au régime de la RAMQ pour les médicaments que celle-ci reconnaît aussi bien qu'au régime de Concordia pour ceux qui ne sont pas reconnus, sans parler des autres services assurés cou-

for prescribed drugs not covered by the RAMQ and the other insured services covered by the Concordia plan).

Ms. Auchinleck also pointed out that the legislation had caused numerous problems, in that low-income persons had been hit hard, to the point where some of them had had to give up their medication to pay for food or lodging, or were feeding or housing themselves inadequately in order to pay for their medication. The cost of drugs is rising much faster than the general rate of inflation, and governments seem to be unable or unwilling to attempt to curb the drug companies. She also noted that one of the results of the *virage ambulatoire* had been that the free medication traditionally offered during hospital stays now had to be paid for, since patients were discharged so promptly. One result of this was that people, especially seniors, often found themselves back in hospital, resulting in higher costs for the system, and some had even died. Her group was not opposed to having a drug insurance plan – they merely wanted to ensure that the plan was fair.

Mr. Haigh expressed regret that his colleague Angela Morse, who had particular expertise in this area, could not attend, as she had been the victim of a traffic accident a few days previously, but stated that she was on the road to recovery. He started by stressing the difference between the RAMQ and Concordia plans. The former was essentially directed towards medication, while the latter covered a wide range of other items, such as the cost of semi-private hospital accommodation, the services of paramedical practitioners such as physiotherapists, nurses, podiatrists, as well as such things as out-of-province coverage. He apologized for the fact that the revision of the Medical Benefits brochure had not yet appeared, but it was promised for 1999. A mimeographed updated version was available from his office on request. He mentioned the following points:

1. As far as possible, before submitting to any unusual and/or expensive treatment it is advisable to call MetLife or Benefits, to determine whether or not the proposed expense is covered under the Concordia plan.

2. The mere fact of a doctor's writing something on his pad does not necessarily mean that it is a "prescribed drug" or a covered expense.

3. RAMQ information, forms, etc. can be obtained from the local RAMQ office – in our case at 425 de Maisonneuve Boul. W. – although one should be prepared for a wait, unless one goes early in the morning.

verts par le régime de Concordia.

Mme Auchinleck a d'ailleurs souligné que la nouvelle loi avait causé de nombreux problèmes, en ce que les personnes à faible revenu se trouvaient pénalisées, jusqu'au point où quelques-unes avaient été obligées de renoncer à leurs médicaments afin de payer la nourriture ou le logement, ou bien elles se nourrissaient ou se logeaient d'une façon inadéquate afin de payer leurs médicaments. Le coût des médicaments augmente à un taux plus rapide que celui de l'inflation, et les gouvernements ne semblent ni pouvoir ni vouloir essayer de restreindre les entreprises pharmaceutiques. Elle a constaté également que le virage ambulatoire a eu parmi ses résultats que les médicaments gratuits offerts traditionnellement lors d'un séjour à l'hôpital, devaient désormais être payés, à cause du renvoi beaucoup plus rapide des malades. Comme suite, ces malades, surtout les plus âgés, se retrouvent de retour à l'hôpital, avec comme résultat des coûts plus élevés pour le système, et même des décès. Son groupe ne s'opposait pas à l'existence d'un régime d'assurance pour les médicaments – on voulait tout simplement s'assurer que ce régime soit équitable.

M. Haigh a exprimé ses regrets quant à l'absence de son collègue, Mme Angela Morse, qui jouissait d'une expertise particulière dans ce domaine. Elle avait été victime d'un accident de circulation quelques jours plus tôt, mais elle était déjà en voie de rétablissement. Il a commencé par insister sur la différence entre le régime de la RAMQ et celui de l'Université. Celui-là se limitait essentiellement aux médicaments, alors que ce dernier contemplait un éventail de services, tels que le coût d'une chambre d'hôpital semi-privée, les services de professionnels paramédicaux, tels que les physiothérapeutes, les garde-malades, les podiatres, aussi bien que la protection lors des voyages en dehors de la Province. Il s'est excusé du fait que la révision de la brochure sur les avantages sociaux n'avait pas encore paru, mais qu'elle était prévue pour 1999. Une version mise à jour et photocopiée était disponible sur demande. Il a donné les conseils et les renseignements suivants:

1. Autant que possible, on fait bien, avant de se soumettre à n'importe quel traitement insolite et/ou coûteux, de contacter la Métropolitaine ou le Service des avantages sociaux de Concordia, afin d'établir si effectivement les dépenses seraient couvertes.

2. Ce que le médecin griffonne sur son bloc-notes ne veut pas dire nécessairement qu'il s'agit d'une ordonnance ou d'une autre dépense couverte.

3. Les renseignements portant sur les services de la RAMQ, les formulaires, etc. sont disponibles au bureau du quartier de la RAMQ – dans notre cas celui-ci est situé au 425 ouest, boul. de Maisonneuve. On devrait envisager une attente plus ou moins longue, à moins d'y aller tôt le matin.

4. En cas d'un accident ou d'une urgence, etc. dans un

4. In case of an accident or emergency illness, etc. in another country, contact the number on the MATE card, which has been sent to all participants, and inform Concordia. Sometimes MetLife will decide that it is advantageous to airlift a patient home to Canada rather than pay exorbitant costs in another country.

5. The Concordia plan is experienced-based – that is, the premium levied for a given year will depend on the cost of claims in the preceding year, so that the cost of the plan is related to the use that Concordia plan participants make of it. Currently, all members of the plan, whether retired or active, pay the same premiums.

In the question period that followed, it was established that Mutual Life has indeed taken over MetLife, but Mr. Haigh assured those present that the company was highly rated by our consultant, and there were no indications of change in the quality of service, but he undertook to investigate a particular case raised by a member. The Company is currently tracking the use made of the plan by persons 65 and over. MetLife will not pay for anything that RAMQ covers, but it will *consider* anything that RAMQ does not. Suggestions from the floor included a couple of tips – a) if you have several prescriptions, get the least expensive ones first, getting you up to \$2 back on each, while starting with an expensive one would give you only one \$2 payment, (although it should be noted that there is an annual maximum of \$100 for such reimbursements) and b) if you are taking prescriptions on a regular monthly basis, buy one lot on the first of the month and the next lot on the last day of the same month, and take nothing the following month! Another member recommended, on the basis of his personal experience, that owners of hearing aids should insure them against loss, as the Government would not pay for a replacement. Members were also reminded to be sure and include in their income tax medical expense claims anything paid for by them and not reimbursed by RAMQ or MetLife, including vision and dental costs, and, above all, the premiums paid to the Concordia plan both by the participant and by the University.

Numbers to call: Ernest Haigh – 848-3674; Angela Morse – 848-3672; Metlife - 355-5245. Jennifer Auchinleck (Project Genesis) may be reached at 738-2036.

autre pays, on devrait rejoindre le numéro qui figure sur la carte MATE, qui a été envoyée à tout participant au régime de l'Université, et aussi mettre l'Université au courant. Dans certains cas la Métropolitaine peut décider qu'elle gagnerait à transporter un malade par avion au Canada, plutôt que de payer des frais astronomiques dans un autre pays.

5. Le régime de l'Université se base sur l'expérience des faits - c'est-à-dire, la prime prélevée dans une année donnée dépendra du total des réclamations de l'année précédente, de sorte que les coûts du régime sont fonction de l'utilisation qu'en font les participants au régime de Concordia. A l'heure actuelle, tous les participants au régime, qu'ils soient ou non à la retraite, paient les mêmes primes.

Au cours de la période consacrée aux questions, M. Haigh a reconnu que, effectivement, la Mutuelle -Vie a acquis la Métropolitaine, mais il a assuré les membres que l'expert-conseil de l'Université a attribué une très bonne cote à cette compagnie, et aucun changement de la qualité du service n'était prévu. Il a quand même accepté de faire l'examen d'un cas particulier qui avait été soulevé. A l'heure actuelle, la compagnie étudie l'utilisation du régime que font les 65+. La Métropolitaine, tout en refusant de payer tout ce qui relève du régime de la RAMQ, est prête à *étudier* tout ce qui n'en relève pas. Des suggestions en provenance des membres présents comprenaient les tuyaux que voici: a) quand on a plusieurs ordonnances, il vaut mieux commander les moins chères d'abord, car chacune vaut un remboursement de jusqu'à 2\$, alors qu'une ordonnance coûteuse ne vaudrait qu'un seul remboursement de 2\$, (quoiqu'il soit à remarquer qu'il y a un maximum de 100\$ par année pour de tels remboursements) et b) quand on achète une ordonnance une fois par mois, on devrait faire le premier achat le premier jour du mois, et le suivant le dernier jour, avec aucun achat le mois suivant! Un autre a prévenu les propriétaires de prothèses auditives de les assurer contre la perte, puisque le Gouvernement ne paie pas les remplacements. On a aussi rappelé aux membres de ne pas oublier de compter dans les dépenses médicales à déclarer dans leur déclaration d'impôt tout ce qu'ils auront payé sans être remboursés soit par la RAMQ soit par la Métropolitaine, y compris les services visuels et dentaires, et surtout, les primes du régime de l'Université, - celles versées par le participant et celles versées par l'Université.

Numéros de téléphone à retenir: Ernest Haigh – 848-3674; Angela Morse – 848-3672; la Métropolitaine - 355-5245. On peut rejoindre Jennifer Auchinleck (*Projet Genèse*) au 738-2036.

**ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

Thursday, April 29, 1999 at 10 a.m.  
Senate Chamber - Loyola DL-200

**ASSEMBLÉE GÉNÉRALE ANNUELLE**

le jeudi 29 avril, 1999 à 10h00  
Chambre du Sénat - Loyola DL-200

## ONE OF A KIND

by Kathy Waters

*(As part of the "Remember when?" series, we asked Kathy Waters, of the English Department, to tell us what it was like to be the first woman full-time faculty member in a male bastion - 1961 Loyola College. Her reminiscences, at once entertaining and sad, conclude with some judgments on the current situation - Ed.)*

When I accepted a full-time tenure-track position at Loyola College in 1961 it never occurred to me that I was a rare creature. While the large majority of professors were not Jesuits, and many were not Catholic, all of them, as well as the students, were men. I wonder what was in the mind of the dean who informed me that I would be sharing an office with a herpetologist whose field of study was snakes. Adding to the shock of my gender was the shock of my teaching field, Modern British Literature, in which I earnestly plunged classes of young Catholic men into the rampant phallicism of D. H. Lawrence and the obscenities and anti-Catholicism of James Joyce. With the support of the President, Patrick Malone, S.J., I easily won the battle to have their texts and similar ones removed from the locked cabinet of the ancient librarian and placed on open shelves.

If there was sex-based discrimination I was unaware of it. I was naive; I identified with patriarchal values; Loyola in the 60's was an open, growing, egalitarian and stimulating milieu; and I had two wonderful chairs, Gerald McGuigan, S.J., and Giff Hooper, who not only were gender-blind in hiring and judging, but gave me a teaching schedule that allowed me to be home many afternoons with my two babies (some other young faculty mothers were not so fortunate in their chairs).

I do remember two occasions when my gender was an issue in the early years, and both of these were associated with the Jesuit dining room in the Refectory Building. The first was the Episode of the Coffee Cups. Several of us habitually gathered in a small room for late morning coffee. A Jesuit colleague always insisted on bringing us fine china cups from the nearby dining room. When he was absent one morning I innocently volunteered to get our nice cups. When I opened the heavy oak doors and entered, a bevy of horrified Jesuits rose in fluttering anxiety to tell me that I was not allowed there. I said I would leave—after I loaded my tray with cups and saucers. The other occasion was the Luncheon with the new Prime Minister, Lester Pearson, to which all faculty were invited except me, because the lunch was in the Jesuit dining room. This didn't particularly bother me, since I

was a devoted worker for wee Tommy Douglas and the NDP. Of course the "cloistered" status of the Jesuit dining-room turned out to be a Jesuit-invented fiction.

I was unaware that many years earlier feminists had written of identical academic experiences. In 1928 Virginia Woolf in *A Room of One's Own* recounted crossing the grass quadrangle of a Cambridge college: "Instantly a man's figure rose to intercept me. . . . His face expressed horror and indignation. Instinct rather than reason came to my help; he was a Beadle; I was a woman. This was the turf; there was the path. Only the Fellows and the Scholars are allowed here: the gravel is the place for me." In 1913 Dorothy Sayers wrote in a letter from Oxford (my own Alma Mater): "I was the only woman taking the exam, and sat, severely isolated like a leper, in one corner of the exam room. . . . The first day, while looking for my desk, I wandered into the men's part of the room, whereupon the old chap who sees you settled rushed at me with wildly waving arms and a terrified expression, and shooed me away to my seclusion like an intrusive hen." Woolf and Sayers knew by "instinct" what the trouble was: that they were women. I did not develop that instinct for another decade.

By the end of the 60's the arrival of a few other women faculty brought me female collegial friendship. A close woman friend and I particularly delighted in wearing the latest outrageous fashions to Convocation under the shortest black robes we could find. One year it was micro miniskirts; another it was white lace elephant-leg pantsuits. More seriously, we began insisting on women being represented on important bodies such as search committees.

What raised my feminist academic consciousness was the surprised annoyance of some of my liberal, enlightened male colleagues when my closest friend, deciding in 1970 that it was time for a woman president of the Faculty Association, ran for election and won. With no resistance from the Jesuit administration, but some from Faculty Association members, she brought about such measures as six months of paid maternity leave before there was any provincial law in this area. Like Sir George, Loyola introduced Women's Studies that year, and the next year offered the first Women's Studies Programme in Canada that included advanced courses.

I was still a "liberal" feminist, believing that if women aimed for equality, doors would open for them. In the early 70's I wrote an article for some Loyola publication, urging graduating women to take their careers

seriously and make their choices accordingly. A radical feminist instructor wrote a thoughtful critique in reply which made me aware that my article was in fact blaming the women and showed no understanding of what we now call systemic discrimination which is particularly powerful because it is invisible.

It would be delightful to conclude that, with the mid-70's merger, the establishing of the Simone de Beauvoir Institute for Women's Studies, and the hiring of many women in the 1990's, the rarity of women is past history.

But currently at Concordia, in contrast to five years ago, there is not a single woman in the Senior Academic Administration: no Dean, Vice-Rector, Associate Vice-Rector, Rector, Chancellor. There are few, if any, on decision-making committees of the Board of Governors, such as the Real Estate Committee which seems to shape today's Concordia. Perhaps a woman in a "power" position at Concordia today would feel more isolated than I did at Loyola decades ago.

## GOING BACK TO ONE'S ROOTS

by Muriel Armstrong

*(We asked Muriel, who, like her husband Don, hails from Alberta, what it was like to "go back home", especially when that included living next door to one's kids and grandkids - and all that when she could well have stayed in Montreal West and attended CUPA meetings! - Ed.)*

True, our roots are in Alberta, and I did spend seven years in Edmonton as a university student and high school teacher. But, move back to Edmonton? As I assured all of our friends and neighbours, I had too vivid a recollection of hiking to classes three hours before sunrise in the teeth of a frigid blast to consider ever returning to this part of the country. "Over my dead body", I said.

No, not Alberta! We were focusing all of our efforts on Victoria and Vancouver, and like the good academics that we are (were?) we were researching the areas very thoroughly - cost per square foot of housing, additional cost for a place with a view (not a static one; it had to be a dynamic, motion-filled panorama), easy access to public transportation, the availability of a *dépanneur* within walking distance, etc. etc. We were successful. We found a beautiful condo overlooking the harbour in Victoria, where we could see the Empress Hotel to our left, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca to our right, and all of the water traffic in between. We made an offer and it was accepted.

Then the phone rang. It was the older of the only two grandchildren we have. The family had recently moved on to an acreage just southwest of the Edmonton city boundary. He said, "There is a nice house next door to ours that is for sale, and we would like you to buy it." That shook us, but we still resolved to behave rationally. About 15 minutes later the phone rang again, and the five-year-old at the other end of the line said simply "Grandma and Grandpa, I love you" and hung up. A week later we owned that house next door, without ever having seen it! So much

for research! And what a vote of confidence (very well placed, I must add) in our daughter's good taste!

How well does it meet our criteria? *Dépanneur* within walking distance? Not unless you consider seven kilometres an easy walk. Public transportation close by? The nearest bus stop is at our local shopping centre - the West Edmonton Mall - about 20 minutes away by car. A view? Well, it's a bit scary: to the north we look out on almost two acres of lawn, all of which is crying for landscaping, and which in the meantime has to be mowed - using a tractor, of course. It is not your typical retirement location! In the background, however, are the neighbours' sleek saddle horses, which means that it *is* a moving landscape—not quite as much motion as there would have been in the Victoria harbour, but still...

The previous owners had the good sense to put lots of windows on the south side, so that we can look out on a dense spruce and poplar forest about twenty feet away. It's pleasant, in minus-twenty-five-degree weather, to be able to sit inside and enjoy the blue, blue sky and brilliant Alberta sunshine. It is very different from Montreal West, however: there we never saw deer slurping the birdseed from our feeders, or leaping with amazing ease and grace over our neighbours' fences. We didn't encounter foxes or coyotes either, or even cute little bunnies, white and almost invisible against the snow in winter, brown and still almost invisible in the summer. Or a moose, like the one that suddenly appeared over the shoulder of our daughter who was driving the lawn tractor and caused her, in my husband's words, "to set a new Commonwealth record for the 300-yard dash." Nor were we able to have the pleasure of daily visits from our daughter and two grandsons, and to learn about Sega and Nintendo games, and snowboarding, and to drill the latter for spelling tests, and help solve math problems. In the past, we were five

hours by car away from them; here we are a four-minute walk! In our conversations with our two Vancouver-based children, we regularly hear all about their dull,

rainy, chilly weather. Move to the soggy West Coast?  
Not muddy likely!

## A CHRISTMAS STORY

by Kurt Jonassohn

*(In the last issue we published an article entitled "Senior Moments", and your editor invited readers to contribute examples of their own senior moments. He was accordingly delighted to receive very promptly from Kurt Jonassohn one such example. Keep 'em rolling in! - Ed.)*

I was watching the late news on TV on Christmas Eve. As usual, I was lying on the floor - by far my most comfortable position. During a particularly uninteresting report my eye fell on my left hand. That startled me because it was bare; my ring was not on its usual finger - or anywhere else nearby. It is the only jewelry I wear and I am very fond of it. It also is of sentimental value because I bought it in a museum shop in Israel that I visited with my brother.

All kinds of thoughts blotted out the news on the TV. Usually my fingers are too fat and it is difficult to take the ring off its proper place; so, how could it have fallen off without my noticing it? Because I had not noticed its disappearance it was hard to know how long ago I had lost it or where. Then I tried to review all the places where I had been that day and resolved that next morning I would make the tour of them to see if I could recover it. After a while that idea looked particularly ridiculous because the

ring surely would have been picked up by someone long before I got there. Finally, I decided that the only thing to do would be to buy another one like it the next time I get to visit Israel - probably next summer.

Next day, Christmas Day, was very quiet. Both my children and their families were on vacation. I decided to answer a lot of accumulated mail to save myself having to make it part of my good intentions on New Year's Day. But my thoughts kept returning to the mysterious loss of my ring. One result was that mail from Israel got answered first. In the evening I decided to have some ice cream for dessert. I went to the fridge, opened the freezer compartment door, and there was my ring staring me innocently in the face. My first reaction was great joy. My second reaction was to contemplate the new mystery: since I am right-handed, I open the door with my left hand (with the ring) and reach in with my right hand. There must have been an occasion when I reached in with both hands - when? to do what?

Now, I am left with the problem of so many scholars: do I continue to believe in the randomness of such events, or in the action of an invisible hand?

## A MILLENNIUM STORY

*(J-P Pétolas has been informed that, while browsing through material in the recesses of the Roman section of the British Museum, a researcher recently came across a tattered bit of parchment - it might even have been papyrus. After some effort he translated it and found that it was a letter from a man called Plutonius, with the title of "magister factorium", or "keeper of the calendar", to one Cassius, and it was dated Dec. 3, BC 2. One may of course speculate as to how the writer knew it was BC, since C. hadn't happened yet, but only a spoilsport would think of that - Ed.)*

Dear Cassius,

Are you still working on the Y zero K problem? The change from BC to AD is giving us a lot of headaches and

we haven't much time left. I don't know how people will cope with working the wrong way round. Having been working happily downward since the beginning of time, we now have to start thinking upward. You would think that someone would have thought of it earlier and not left it to us to sort it all out at the last minute.

I spoke to Augustus the other evening. He was livid that Julius hadn't done something about it when he was sorting out the calendar. He said he could see why Brutus had turned nasty. We called in the consulting astrologers, but they simply said that continuing downwards using minus-BC won't work. As usual, the consultants charged a fortune for doing nothing useful.

As for myself, I just can't see the sand in an hourglass flowing upwards. We have heard that there are three

wisemen in the East who have been working on the problem, but unfortunately they won't arrive until it's all over. Then there's that story from Byzantium about a "bug" - what could that possibly have to do with the calendar? Some say that the World will cease to exist at

the moment of transition. We are continuing to work on the YzeroK problem, and I'll send you a parchment if anything develops.

Best regards, Plutonium.

## NEWS OF OUR MEMBERS / NOUVELLES DE NOS MEMBRES

We are happy to welcome the following members who joined CUPA since the publication of the last issue / *Nous sommes heureux d'accueillir ceux et celles qui sont devenus membres de l'ARUC depuis la parution de la dernière livraison*: **Nancy Belmore, Daphne Bentley, Jeanette Blick, Gunther Brink, Gary Coldevin, Harold Entwistle, Tom Gibson, June Kenny, R.L. Kovacs,**

**David Levy, Doris Mann, Vincent McNamara, Pat Morley, Ben Queenan, Mary-Madeleine Saddik, Mary Shore, Len Sugden, Gerry Tait.** We regret to announce the deaths of / *Nous regrettons d'annoncer le décès de*: **Pat Di Benga, Tadeusz Krepec, Fred Lear, Robert James MacPherson, Ann Mylchreest.**

### NOBODY NEVER TELLS ME NUTHIN' !

The Secretary-Treasurer, in a laudable attempt to save postage costs, had already printed the notice about 1999-2000 dues, which you will find attached, when she was informed that annual dues, according to our constitution, are established at the Annual General Meeting. As it happens, the Executive will be proposing at that meeting that the dues remain at \$15. Dues may be sent on or after June 1, 1999 to the Secretary-Treasurer, at the mailing address listed below.

### Y M'ONT RIEN DIT !

La secrétaire-trésorière, dans une tentative louable de réduire le coût de la poste, avait déjà fait imprimer l'avis portant sur la cotisation 1999-2000, que vous trouverez ci-joint, lorsqu'on lui a fait remarquer que la cotisation, selon nos statuts et règlements, est établie lors de l'Assemblée générale annuelle. Il arrive cependant que l'Exécutif proposera à l'Assemblée que la cotisation demeure à 15 \$. Cette cotisation peut être remise à partir du 1er juin, 1999 à la secrétaire-trésorière à l'adresse qui figure ci-dessous.

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