

THE VOICE

MAGAZINE

February 17, 2006
Volume 14 Issue 6



A Moving Experience *Celebrating Jean Vanier*

Misconceptions
... about Harper's Agenda

Good Vs. Bad
Who's to judge?

Plus:
Lost & Found
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February 17, 2006 - Volume 14, Issue 06

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A Moving Experience

Barbara Godin



Photo: Jean Vanier, a Canadian born in 1928, son of the late Governor General of Canada, Georges P. Vanier.

When I reached the top of the escalator, I was surprised to see the line up. The doors wouldn't be open for another hour and I had thought I would be one of the first in line. I was looking forward to the speaker, although I must admit that I really didn't know a lot about Jean Vanier. In fact, my first exposure to him was when I saw the brochure at work announcing that he was coming to London and the tickets were \$16.00.

What initially caught my eye when I saw the brochure was his name. My grandchildren attend Jean Vanier Elementary School in London, Ontario. There had to be a connection. The brochure was titled *Messengers of Hope, an Evening with Jean Vanier*. I spoke with a co-worker, who had seen Jean Vanier a few years earlier when he visited London. We decided we would go. I spoke to my husband about it and he was interested. So I called to order tickets. It was general admission; therefore, we knew we would have to go early to get a good seat.

We walked into the Grand Ballroom at the London Convention Center and there were two big screens showing pictures of Jean Vanier in the company of disabled men and women of all ages. Each picture displayed happy, smiling faces. Jean was hugging, laughing, and obviously enjoying his time with these individuals. Then the music began. The singing was wonderful. It was upbeat, inspirational. I wanted to dance and clap my hands. My husband and our friends were also enjoying the music.

As the room started to fill, I noticed a significant number of seats in front of us that obviously were reserved. As the Master of Ceremonies began his opening statements, I learned about *L'Arche London*. It is an international community of over 120 group homes for developmentally disabled people that Jean Vanier had founded. One of these homes was located in London. I listened carefully. I knew I wanted to know more about this organization and this remarkable man. The speaker introduced a group of youths from King's University with whom Jean had been in conference with for the last two days. These youths joined Jean and other community leaders in exploring ways that they could become so called messengers of hope. The lights were dimmed as rows of young people entered from the back of the room, all holding brightly lit lanterns. As they proudly entered, some were in wheelchairs, some challenged in other ways, and some not. I felt moved to the point of tears.

Next on stage, a group of developmentally handicapped dancers performed. The Spirit Movers, as they were called, were definitely living up to their name. I had never seen anything like this before. I had been to plays, musicals, concerts, but this was by far the most remarkable group I had ever witnessed. The dancers were obviously thrilled to be on stage, readily apparent by their waving arms and smiling faces.

Then Jean Vanier walked across the stage. A man I had only seen in pictures. He appeared much older than he was in the pictures. He wore jeans and a lightweight spring jacket over a shirt, even though it was February. His white hair was disheveled. Immediately I wondered why he had not combed his hair for this occasion. After everyone graciously gave him a standing ovation, Jean Vanier began to speak. His voice was calm, gentle, and sincere. His presence was bigger than life. As I listened, I learned what Jean Vanier was about, and his uncombed hair was obviously not even a consideration for him.

I listened to this great man's every word. I knew in some way his words would touch each and every person in this great ballroom. He would change their view, maybe only for a short while, but hopefully for a lifetime. At the end of the ceremony, the Principal of Jean Vanier Elementary School, along with students from my grandchildren's school presented their school's namesake with a special plaque. Then the Spirit Movers performed another dance before the evening ended. Prior to leaving, a courteous Jean Vanier presented himself to each person. He spoke briefly with each individual before he left to catch a plane to Paris.

Thank you Jean Vanier for reminding us all of what it truly means to be a caring, loving human being.

The following excerpt is indicative of the deeply-caring, introspective man Jean Vanier is.

I discovered something which I had never confronted before, that there were immense forces of darkness and hatred within my own heart. At particular moments of fatigue or stress, I saw forces of hate rising up inside me, and the capacity to hurt someone who was weak and was provoking me! That, I think, was what caused me the most pain: to discover who I really am, and to realize that maybe I did not want to know who I really was! I did not want to admit all the garbage inside me. And then I had to decide whether I would just continue to pretend that I was okay and throw myself into hyperactivity, projects where I could forget all the garbage and prove to others how good I was. Elitism is the sickness of us all. We all want to be on the winning team. That is the heart of apartheid and every form of racism. The important thing is to become conscious of those forces in us and to work at being liberated from them and to discover that the worst enemy is inside our own hearts not outside!

Vanier, J. (1992). *From Brokenness to Community*. Harold M. Wit Lectures. New Jersey: Paulist Press, p. 19.

All of Jean Vanier's books are available through [Daybreak Publications](#).

Further information on this selfless man and the L'Arche community is available at <http://www.larche.ca/>

In response to El-ahrairah Jones's recent article regarding the election of Stephen Harper's Conservatives (*The Voice*, v14i4). Many pundits, women on the street, and commentators look upon a Harper led Canada with fear. For example, my neighbour remarked "Harper really, really scares me." "What in particular," I asked her, "frightens you about him?" "All this conspiracy stuff," she responded.

Fears about Harper are often seem to stem from suspicion about his education in the notorious "Calgary school", rooted in the philosophies of Leo Strauss. Tom Flanagan of the "Calgary school" was, in the earlier days of Harper's political forays, Harper's advisor and mentor. Lawrence Martin, a columnist with the *Globe and Mail*, espoused the pre-election view that Harper was hiding his association with the "Calgary school" and Shadia Drury, a political scientist at the University of Regina was quoted in the *Globe and Mail* referring to the "Calgary school's" members as having a "huge contempt for democracy." The "Calgary school's" members are Tom Flanagan, Barry Cooper, Rainer Knopff, Ted Morton and David Bercuso and they are a group given to diverse views, but their main idea is keeping the "government out of people's lives" (Ottawa Citizen, sidebar). Harper was allied with this group when he studied as a graduate student in the 1980s.

Editorialist Robert Sibley of the Ottawa Citizen quotes from an article written by Marci McDonald, that Tom Flanagan "the 60-year old professor' was whispering in Harper's ear" (The person who whispers in the ear of the King is more important than the King. Robert Pippin, political theorist.) and suggesting that Flanagan and his conclave desired to establish a Canadian version of "American Straussians." Some of Bush's influential advisors, Dick Cheney and Paul Wolfowitz for example, were educated in the Leo Strauss philosophy by academics such as Harold Bloom and others who were students of Strauss and now teach the philosopher's ideas.

Sibley's article illuminates Strauss's theories in a more favourable context than Drury's attempt to debunk the philosopher. For example, Stanley Gibb, professor at the University of Missouri is quoted by Sibley from an article in the American Political Science Review describing Drury's account of Strauss "as one of the more curious episodes in the history of western political science" and that Drury's "citations and quotations are often misleading, tendentious, inaccurate, or taken out of context." Leon Craig, of the University of Alberta, says that political science students should be concerned about Drury's interpretation, because it "misinterprets and misrepresents Strauss's thoughts" (quoted by Sibley).

So what is it that Strauss advocates? He believed that "hiding" the truth of a text forced his students to decipher the text for themselves. Instead of delivering his thoughts in lectures, students must interpret and think through the ideas presented to them. It is a way of "understanding philosophic" texts, of "reading intelligently", says Sibley in his article. This pedagogical methodology is the root of the accusation that the Conservatives foster a "hidden agenda." This is the conspiracy that my neighbour is "really, really" afraid of.

For further study:

Drury, Shadia. *The Political Ideas of Leo Strauss*. (1988)

Martin, Lawrence. *Your attention, please: The East's great power rip-off is over*. Thursday, Jan 19, 2006

McDonald, Marci. "The Calgary school." *Walrus Magazine*. 2004

Sibley, Robert. "The making of a negative image." *The Ottawa Citizen*. 2006

Sidebar. *Ottawa Citizen*, B4, Sunday, Feb.5, 2005

Strauss, Leo. *On Tyranny (1948); Natural Right and History (1953); Liberalism Ancient and Modern*. 2004



So David Emerson, former heavy-hitting Liberal cabinet minister, saw fit to defect to the ranks of Stephen Harper's Conservatives. In one way, I completely agree with the public dismay. In a breathtaking and blatant exhibition of arrogant careerism, Mr. Emerson chose to betray the predominantly left-leaning voters in his riding who cast their ballots for him. It should be realized that many of them did so mainly as an act of strategic voting; an effort to keep the thinly-disguised Bush / Thatcher/ Harris-styled neoconservatives away from the levers of power. Now, Emerson has the gall to take the offensive, proclaiming outrage and bewilderment that he has been the subject of so much public vitriol. If someone in a position of influence had actually set out with the express intention of increasing public cynicism with respect to the political process, it would be difficult to create a more effective way of doing so.

I believe very strongly in the process of democracy. I have voted in every election -- municipal, provincial, and federal -- since the time I reached the age of majority. Furthermore, I hold the belief that many of the people who run for political office in this country are fundamentally intelligent, hard-working, and well-meaning individuals. It's easy to see, though, why so many people feel alienated by the world of politics. For one thing, there is the ludicrously antiquated "first past the post" electoral system, which more or less guarantees that a good chunk of the total votes cast will be cast to no avail. Then, there is the ongoing public perception of government corruption and venality, evident no matter which political party is in power. (Anyone remember Airbus?) Emerson's about-face is just one more nail in the coffin of credibility when it comes to politics.

On the other hand, though, I can't help but rejoice at the fact that this politician has displayed his true colours. For one thing, it demonstrates just how conservative the so-called Liberal party has become of late. Mr. Emerson is indeed correct when he suggests there is little difference between Stephen Harper's agenda and the one that Martin's Liberals were pushing when they were in power. As many of us are aware, it's just the same old "the rich get richer" kowtowing to the big business crowd. As witnessed by Martin's desperate last-minute attempts to portray himself as anti-conservative, it's not until big-L liberals find themselves on the verge of losing power that they actually condescend/pretend to any sort of progressive platform policies.

It is always good to have your enemies out in the open. Another reason that I'm happy about the Emerson backstab is the fact that it unveils Harper's claims to government integrity for the hollow pandering that they actually are. Expect more of the same and quickly. Another benefit of the whole fiasco is the point it makes about the futility of voting strategically. Voting should never be an act of holding your nose and choosing between the lesser of two evils. If you believe that progressive thinking is needed in Ottawa, then for Christ-sake vote NDP or Green. Finally, I am truly grateful to Emerson for removing any doubt as to what his personal political beliefs and morals are. And I am hopeful they will be firmly in the minds of his constituents when it comes time to mark their ballots and cast their votes once again, and hand this two-timing weasel his political head on a platter.

I'm sure many parents have come upon the same realization as I that, with your children, you should not put too much emphasis on "being good" or "being bad," because when it comes down to it, everyone is a combination of the two. We are human with good tendencies and bad tendencies and this distinction -- between good/bad people and people with good/bad tendencies -- is critical to developing both a healthy awareness of the world around us and of self, which is subsequently linked to confidence. However, upon further examination, even the distinction between good and bad deeds can also be unclear.

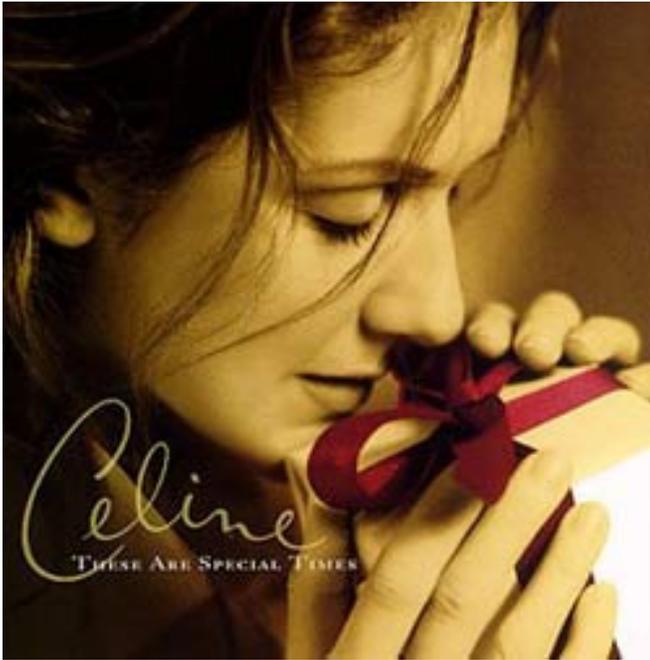
Firstly we will discuss the possibility of good and bad people. Many movies, books, and plays, particularly in the occidental world, capitalize on this non-existent and over-simplified notion, with the occasional allowance for good people to become bad and vice versa. Good people are capable of only good action, and bad are only capable of bad. Minor characters are insignificant in such stories and are thereby rendered neutral. The heroes of these good versus bad stories are often selfless, brave, honest, considerate, and generally paragons of virtue (although they may have a slight character flaw that makes them recognizably human, for example, Obiwan Kenobe is too trusting). On the whole, however, heroes are virtuous and deserve praise. Bad people are the opposite. They are selfish, destructive, dishonest, and deserve punishment. When Anakin Skywalker becomes Darth Vader, he has fully crossed over to the bad side and makes everyone around him miserable, bad people excepted. While previously, his flaw was a desire for power, especially to protect his family; his crossing over makes him entirely destructive under the Emperor's influence. His evil ways persist until Luke saves him, and subsequently Darth Vader saves Luke and becomes a hero through his selfless action. In such black and white conceptions of good and bad guys, the story provides a false sense of security in being able to write off the bad people and admire wholeheartedly the good ones.

The danger of condoning and propagating this belief of people being inherently good or bad is that we become quick to judge. Mistakes become inflated and judgments become final. While small incidents can at times point to larger problems, they are not always appropriate indicators and should not be used to reverse prior opinions. Examples in history of such damned or saved conceptions are diverse, ranging from the Puritans to basic bigotry.

What is important is the recognition that we are all human -- capable of good and bad. There are days when I feel generous, and days when I focus on my own needs. There are days when my patience seems infinite, and days when it's short lived. There are hours in which I'm ecstatic and then hours in which I'm angry. And then there are days when I am lethargic, apathetic, or somewhere in between. I'm human after all, prone to all the vagaries of spirituality, mindsets and external circumstances.

The difficulty with this perspective of people being of varying natures is that acts are difficult to label as either good or bad. Even selfless acts can turn out badly. A friend of mine recently got herself into trouble at work because she was trying to fix someone else's problem. Conversely, if you get angry while playing a sport (for example, after someone gives you a cheap-shot) you can channel that anger towards playing harder. These acts are all ambiguous because they depend on context, outcome, and so many other external factors. As someone else so beautifully described in an article I read, if you were born under different circumstances, you would see the world differently, and likely, act differently. So your good might be someone else's bad. The Bible says that stealing is not good, unless it's stealing food for your starving family. Sometimes, a little bit of sympathy comes in handy.

The old adage, try to walk in someone else's shoes before you judge them, comes to mind. That's not to say that all behaviours are excusable due to ambiguity. The point is merely that we should be more patient, more considerate, and more loving. Frankly, peace isn't just about tolerance while grinding your teeth. It is about real understanding and real sympathy. After all, to err is human, to understand -- divine.



This year, while braving the hustle and bustle of last minute holiday shopping at the local mall, I was surprised to find I had a few dollars left over after buying all of my gifts. I decided to treat myself to Celine Dion's latest release, *These Are Special Times*. I thought, *Perfect! This is just what I need to brighten up my day.*

The first song that quickly caught my ear was "Happy Christmas." I listened carefully to its lyrics after getting home, trying to understand what the song was saying about the Christmas season. The message is that Christmas should be celebrated by everyone, everywhere. Sadly, not everyone gets this opportunity, especially during times of war and political strife. Celine Dion has hope for the New Year; however, she asks that it be "a good one without any fear."

With all the bad news in the media these days, I wonder if that message behind the song is still valid? The song made me think that despite all the disasters and turmoil

that have happened in the world recently, we can still do our part to help make others' Christmas dreams a reality. This song is a perfect opportunity to stress an important message of a fearless and happy life for everyone, which will only come about if we commit to a new year of change.

"These Are Special Times," the title song, intrigued me. It started out in a slow beat, indicating that there was probably some sentimentality attached to it. Sure enough, as I continued to listen, I caught this sense of soft-heartedness within the song. "These are the special times, times we'll remember, the precious times, the tender times we'll hold in our hearts forever," Celine Dion sang ever so slowly.

Being a holiday themed disk, Celine was singing about how people who care about each other share the holidays. I found this to be especially true, as the holiday season is a time when people, especially friends, significant others and family are together, hoping to share special memories with each other. This song is a reminder that it is the memories between those we care about that should not be forgotten. It is these special moments that we treasure, holding them in our hearts forever and constantly reminding us that there are people in our lives that do care.

The next song was another very sentimental one that caught my attention. "Another Year Has Gone By" was so gracefully sung. It is about people who care for each other and is set during the Holiday season. In particular, Celine Dion sings in reference to two people who love each other, "And we're still holding hands when we're walking, acting like we've only just met, but how could that be when there's so much history, guess that's how true lovers can get, another year has gone by."

Based on the lyrics, this song gives the opportunity during the holiday season for two lovers to reflect upon the positive aspects of their relationship. It is also a reminder that even throughout the year, and even during the bad times, the one that you love will always be there for you. This love is expressed in simple ways and gestures in this song. The lyrics offer hope and inspiration for couples in love.

Another of Celine Dion's CDs that I thoroughly enjoyed was *A New Day Has Come* (2002). The cover scene of Celine at the beach was very tranquil and lovely, and several songs contained within provided additional hope and inspiration for me. *And what a coincidence, too*, I thought, as the title of this disk had the words "new day" on it, which reminded me of the New Year that was coming up.

In the title track, Celine Dion tells the message of renewal, whereby she sings, "Let the rain come down and wash away my tears, let it fill my soul and drown my tears, let it shatter the walls for a new sun, a new day has come." It reminded me that despite life's challenges, there is hope for brighter days ahead. In difficult times, it is okay to cry and express emotions of sadness and grief. Yet, there is a reminder that this sadness and grief is only temporary. The more difficult the moments one faces in life, the more each moment will wash itself out, just like tears being washed away. In finding the inner strength from one's inner self, a person can overcome these challenges.

Sometimes when we need to overcome life's challenges, we need to find solutions to life's problems. The song "Right In Front of You" tells of how one can find these solutions. "Right in front of you, right in front of me, we were looking, but somehow, some way, we couldn't see, that the love was always there, it's been around us everywhere, I had to fall to finally see, that you were right in front of me," Celine sings, as her vocal tone beautifully increases in strength, and with a heavy but melodic beat. When we look at things for the first time, we take it for granted sometimes, Celine clearly conveys. But, when we look again, we can often find the answer or true meaning.

In the end, when one has overcome such challenges, there is usually a reward. In the song "The Greatest Reward," Celine Dion sings about the rewards in life, beautifully conveying the message that being the reward of a person rather than an object is the most important reward of all. Reflecting, she sings of life and how when one changes their attitude and opens up to others, they are able to achieve the rewards or benefits that they deserve in their life. "Now the greatest reward is the light in your eyes and the sound of your voice and the touch of your hand you made me who I am," sings Celine Dione sweetly and seemingly effortlessly, causing me to ponder the rewards in my life.

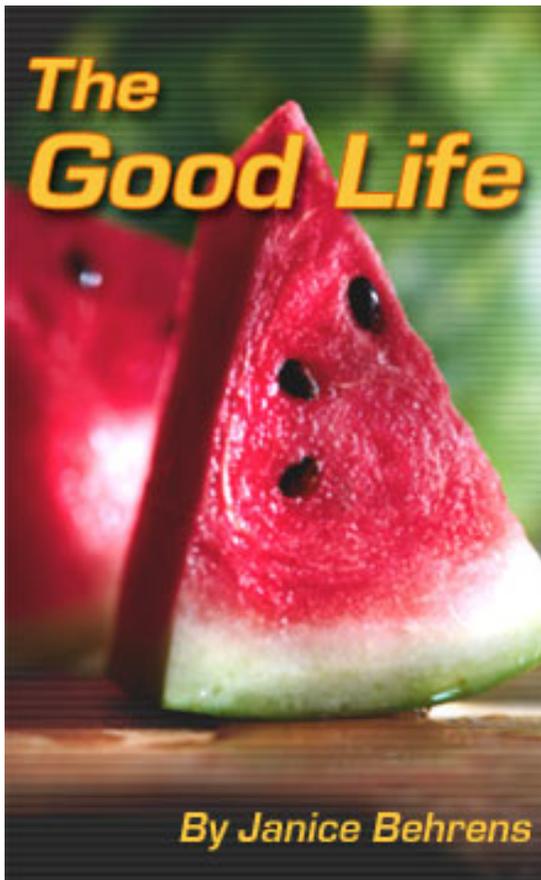
Overall, as an artist, Celine Dion offers new insight into the world around us, as expressed in these two musical works. Focusing on the holiday season and the New Year, we are all reminded that there are times we need to be reflective and thankful of what is around us. We also need to be renewed in order to change for the better. Even going beyond the holiday and the New Year season, these messages of hope continue throughout the rest of the year and for the rest of our lives.

I would highly recommend to everyone both of Celine Dion's *These Are Special Times* and *A New Day Has Come* CDs. In particular, I would recommend her musical works to people who are searching for meaning in their lives, or who are experiencing difficult times in their lives, as these musical collections are a reminder that there is something in life to look forward to. After all, everyone needs a reminder of the special times and the changes that are needed for a new day in one's life.

References

- Dion, C. (1998). *These Are Special Times* [audio recording]. Sony.
Dion, C. (2002). *A New Day Has Come* [audio recording]. Sony.





Unavoidable Rest Recharges the Soul

I suppose it is a pretty rare person these days who does not feel at least a little overwhelmed from time-to-time by the number of demands on their time. On a personal level, my day-to-day energies are directed towards a great number of activities. My full time involves lots of travel and deadlines, taking courses from two different institutions, volunteering in a couple of different capacities, exercising, and making sure I have enough time and energy to devote to both my family and myself. Sometimes I feel like one of those jugglers who has a dozen or so plates spinning on the end of sticks and must keep them all going. Inevitably, there are times when some of the plates come crashing to the ground.

Overall, I am quite content with the circumstances of my life. I am lucky enough to have a job that I really enjoy, one that challenges me in all the right ways and ensures that I keep learning and growing. Although my husband works every bit as hard as me, and his life is every bit as complicated, his schedule is a lot more flexible. This means that he picks up most of the slack when it comes to cooking and cleaning, and most nights we are able to enjoy supper together as a family. Despite the necessity of multitasking (is there really any way to avoid that these days?), I try to remain cognizant of the fact that I need to devote my attention to whatever task is immediately at hand. I

try to make sure that I have at least an hour or so of downtime every day. There are times when I feel scattered and out-of-control, but fortunately those times are relatively few and far between.

One of those times, though, happened quite recently. I was on the tail end of a business trip, traveling by car through northern British Columbia. I was hosting a series of meetings and seminars, as well as trying desperately to keep on track with several important projects and day-to-day things that were happening back at my office. In preparation for the road trip, I had packed some workout gear and determined that I was going to confine myself to eating healthy meals and getting exercise each day. Despite these intentions, though, I found myself being talked into going out for dinner with clients each night. When I got back to the hotel rooms every night, I ended up staying up until the wee hours responding to e-mails, etc. By the second to last day of the trip, I was feeling completely exhausted. And I was missing my family and my home.

On Thursday night, with only two more meetings the next day, I was heading for a hotel that I knew had high-speed Internet access. I was planning on grabbing a bagel from Safeway and spending the evening in front of the computer screen. As I was driving along, though, the ominous black clouds that had been threatening all day finally burst open, and there was a downpour of freezing rain of epic proportions. All the traffic on the road was creeping along, with the windshield wipers of the cars making a futile attempt to keep up with the deluge. At last I saw a sign for the motor inn and pulled in. No way was I about to risk my life on the road any longer.

When I checked-in at the front desk, I discovered that I was the only occupant so far that night. When I went to my room, I found out it was really more of a rustic cabin than an actual motel room. There was a small television set with rabbit ears, but no telephone. To boot, this area was one of those information technology "Bermuda Triangles," so I had no cell-phone reception. There was absolutely no way for me to get any work done. I couldn't do any on-line research to prepare myself for the first meeting of the next day, which was to be the most crucial appointment of my trip. To boot, I realized that I had left the novel I had meant to pack (to fill those imaginary free hours I would have on this trip) sitting on the sideboard at home. *Great*, I thought, *what am I going to do now?* There was so much to get done and no way to do it. I turned on the television set, to find only snowy interference on every channel.

Looking out the window, I noticed that the freezing rainstorm had turned into just a shower, and I could see a patch of blue sky. My initial thought was to grab my stuff and hit the road again. Suddenly, however, it occurred to me that I had just been presented with something I hadn't experienced for a very long time. It was only about four-thirty in the afternoon, and I had the rest of the day and evening completely to myself, with no predetermined chores to fill my time, not even so much as a book to read. It was like entering a cloister for a day. It dawned on me that perhaps enforced inactivity was something that should be welcomed, instead of avoided.

The first thing I did was get out my work-out gear and do some yoga stretches. I held each position for a length of time longer than I normally would have. I felt the stretch and pull of each muscle in a leisurely and focused way. By that time, the rain outside had stopped. I went out for a walk along a quiet back road. I felt the faint warmth of the sun as it shone down on me. I paid attention to the smell of the trees. I felt my heart lighten inside me. A great sense of peace descended on me. I no longer felt anxious or worried about work. I knew that I would be home with my family again in a couple of days, and until then, I somehow knew that everything would go well. Or at least everything would go the way it was meant to.

That night, I ate an apple and a pink grapefruit for dinner that I had been carting around with me. I savoured every bite and felt completely full afterwards. Then I had a long hot bath. As I went to sleep that night, I was surrounded by a great silence and stillness.

When I woke up the next morning, I felt totally refreshed and ready for anything. I arrived at my appointment with plenty of time to spare. I listened to some classical music on CBC Two before going in. Everything went extremely well. I was confident and relaxed. It was as though, stepping out of the rush of activity, just for one evening, had recharged my energies and helped realign my soul. When the next such opportunity comes along, I'm sure I won't fail to recognize it for the blessing that it is.



WRITE FOR THE VOICE!

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK

What's new here and around the world

Mandy Gardner

**The Point of No Return****Mandy Gardner**

You and I probably can't see it happening. The sun keeps rising and setting in the sky, snow falls in the winter, and there is rain in the summer. We keep going to work, studying, and contributing to society as best we can. But the cracks have well and truly formed in our balanced world, whether we were expecting it or not. Polar bears are going hungry, seal babies are being swept out to sea for lack of stable ice footing, natural disasters, and starving people are on the rise. What's happening to our planet? The inevitable results of an uncontrolled Industrial Revolution, that's what. Greenhouse gases have billowed from our economy-building smokestacks for long enough to seriously affect the climate and, it turns out, there's no going back.

That's right friends -- no going back. All the protests, letters, campaigning and summits of these past years is, essentially, in vain, as it's no longer in our hands to save the multitude of feathered,

scaled, winged and furred creatures of our land.

According to the scientists who met last year in Britain for an environmental conference, the threshold "beyond which climate change is likely to be unstoppable" has been passed already by accumulated greenhouse gases. The conference, officially the Conference on Avoiding Dangerous Climate Change, was held in the UK Met Office last year and it produced a strict threshold not to be surpassed in the agglomeration of greenhouse gases. Government officials from all over the world supposedly took this information seriously, yet here we are on the other side of the line. What happens now? Professor Burke of Imperial College London says "we have very little time to act now. Governments must stop talking and start spending. We already have the technology to allow us to meet our growing need for energy while keeping a stable climate. We must deploy it now." (McCarthy, 2006). While leaders around the world struggle to meet past-due deadlines for green technological implementation, the planet is going to have on average a two degrees Celsius increase over the mean worldwide temperature before the Industrial Revolution.

This is a temperature increase that means definite changes in global climate. According to research done by The Independent, these global temperatures mean 97 per cent of coral reefs will die, Scottish Puffin colonies are in peril, crop yields throughout Africa, Europe and the Americas will diminish, and half of Australia's Kakadu national park will disappear. Closer to home, polar bears will be wiped out along with various sea mammals and fish. As a result, the Inuit will lose their traditional hunting culture through lack of prey.

There is of course still hope in all this doom and gloom. Steve Connor of *The Independent* says, "nobody, least of all the climate scientists, would say we know all there is to know about climate change. And however bleak the outlook, there is still every reason we should take action now to minimise carbon dioxide emissions." Let's hope the people in power feel the same way, and actually DO something about it.

References

- Connor, S. (2006, February 11). Why flutter of butterfly's wings explains global warming. *The Independent*.
 McCarthy, M. (2006, February 11). Global warming: Passing the 'tipping point.' *The Independent*.

AUSU THIS MONTH



AUSU Election, Now Under Way

The 2006 AUSU election is now open, and members can expect to see campaign materials from candidates on this website and in our forums. Below is the candidate sheet, as approved by our Chief Returning Officer, Bevan Iwaskow. Candidates will be invited to create campaign posters for you to view, and as they become available you'll be able to access them by clicking on each candidate's name. If the name is blue and underlined, then there is a poster ready for viewing. We hope you all turn out to vote this year, for the council that will provide student services through March 2008!

This year's candidates are:

MacDonald McInnis - Calgary, AB
Joy Kryz - Edmonton, AB
Jamie Czerwinski - Sherwood Park, AB
Sarah Whaley - Surrey, BC
Lisa Priebe - Calgary, AB
Karl Low - Calgary, AB
Tania Davies - Carlsbad, CA
Alica Robichaud - Saint John, NB
Zil-E-Huma Lodhi - Waterloo, ON
Barbara Rielly - Westport, ON
Megan McIntyre - Niagara Falls, ON
Angele Gaudette - Sudbury, ON
Real Beaulieu - Nepean, ON
Peter Tretter - Greely, ON
Lonita Fraser - Hamilton, ON

AUSU Course Evaluations

Would you like to know what students have thought of an AU course? If so, you are not alone. Many students find the input of their peers invaluable when selecting courses or a program of study. AU students may not have cafeterias and hallways in which to share this knowledge, but AUSU has provided an alternative: AUSU Course and Program Evaluation surveys. Accessible through the "Course Evaluations" link on the right side of the top bar of AUSU.org, these surveys ask a series of questions about AUSU courses and programs. Students may rate each course or program only once, to ensure the validity of the results, so you must be logged in to access a survey form. Anyone, however, may view the results. If you haven't already, please rate some courses you have taken so that others may benefit from your experience. Note: these surveys are not the ones that AU distributes with their course manuals. No AU staff or faculty member has access to the AUSU website, nor can they determine who has filled out a survey. Your anonymity is assured.

AUSU 2005/06
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Dear Barb:

I enjoy reading your column. Here is my situation. I have been dating the same man for the last three years. We are both in our thirties and have not been married previously. We get along great and share many common interests. Recently, I have been getting the feeling that he wants to get married. Just the thought of being married makes me cringe. My parents were divorced, as well as both of my sisters. I was devastated when my parents divorced, but I kind of expected my sister's marriages to end. I think I have lost faith in the stability of marriage. Do you think I need counselling, or should I just give up on the idea of marriage? Maybe I'm not the marrying kind.

Krista - Montreal

Hi Krista. No, don't give up on marriage!

You definitely have justification to feel reluctant to marry. There are many reasons why marriages fail, some are not easy to pinpoint, while others are. Some marriages fail simply because of the factors under which the marriage took place. Some individuals enter a marriage because of a pregnancy or because they want to get out of their family home. These reasons are simply not enough to sustain a marriage.

When the pregnancy is over and the child is born, the reason you entered the marriage is nonexistent. Likewise, if you got married to get out of the house, what happens afterwards? Are you prepared to live with this person for the rest of your life? For a marriage to last, there has to be a commitment from both people that they will do whatever is necessary to make their marriage a success.

While love is an important ingredient in a successful marriage, there are other factors that can be equally important. Both parties have to be committed to the marriage relationship and to each other. Undoubtedly, there is risk involved, for when we enter marriage we have no guarantee that our partner will remain as committed to the marriage as we are.

Marriage breakdown is a part of our changing society. Statistics show that 50 per cent of marriages fail, but if you look at the other side 50 per cent are successful. Granted, the odds are not that good, but Krista, consider that your marriage may be one that is successful.

It may be helpful for you and your partner to go for premarital counselling. Premarital counselling helps to bring out some of the important characteristics of married life that perhaps you and your partner have not yet discussed. Through counselling, you can determine if you are both entering the marriage with the same expectations. As well, perhaps you may benefit from some one-on-one counselling to work through your personal fears and insecurities about entering marriage.

As with most things in life, there are no guarantees in marriage. But, if you don't take the risk, you may spend your life wondering if you made the right decision. Hope this helps.

Is something bothering you? Would you like a second opinion? If so, send in your questions. Confidentiality is guaranteed!

E-mail your questions to advice.voice@ausu.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality: your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.



An Old Man's Thoughts

*Laughter not time destroyed my voice
And put that crack in it*

- W.B. Yeats, *The Friends of His Youth*

I have an old man's knees and his crooked wrinkled hands. When the rains approach, my joints begin to ache. I find myself complaining about all the minor physical ailments, just as I remember the backyard men and laundromat women doing when I was a child darting quick as a ferret between their tree stump legs. I check my blood pressure at Shopper's Drug Mart and check the obituaries at the back of the newspaper. I don't like to take short cuts through the graveyard, as I once might have done. I have superstitions now, and sometimes I can see black dogs hiding amongst the moonlit trees outside my bedroom window. One night last week, I dreamed about an owl white as paper floating above me -- in some cultures an omen of death.

I have an old man's brain. Yesterday, I found my car keys sitting in the freezer. Poems I memorized at boarding school spring readily to mind. I have resigned myself to the fact that I will never solve the Rubik's cube, and the instructions for screwing together the Ikea

bookshelves may as well be written in Hittite.

I have an old man's pleasures. On Friday night there is red wine and Louis Armstrong, on Sunday roast chicken from time to time. With my old man's eyes, I can see the beauty of my wife's curved back, the constellation of freckles on her shoulder blade, as she bends over in her gardening dress to plant bulbs in the sun warmed soil.

I have an old man's dreams. Hungry, half frozen, blinded by driving snow, I stumble through a dark and evil forest. Just when I'm out of strength and ready to fall down, I come upon a moonlit road. A little way down the road, there is a tavern with lights blazing in its windows. Inside the tavern, there are dozens of people laughing, talking and singing. There is an alder log burning in the fireplace. There is a pint of strong ale and a comfortable chair waiting for me beside the hearth. There are faces turned expectantly toward me. They are faces that I feel I've known for a very long time, but somehow their names don't come readily to mind. Somehow it doesn't matter. They are waiting for me to take my place amongst them. They are waiting for the secrets, for the stories I have to tell. When I wake up in the morning, I know that everything will be all right.

AU E-LETTERS UPDATE

AU launched the e-letters project on December 15 to enable undergrads to view registration, withdrawal, extension, exam and final grade letters online. The response to the program has been monitored by AU staff in these initial weeks.

The response rate so far has been high. Business Analyst Patricia Soluk reports that so far 6120 students have opted to receive e-letters, while 3080 have chosen to continue receiving their letters by postal mail. AU staff are also impressed with the new program as they note that this allows them to send out letters much more quickly and alert students to important changes immediately. However, AUSU notes that students must make certain they log in to MyAU regularly to check for letters if they wish to receive new information as soon as it is released. A primary benefit of this new program is that e-letters will be retained online so you can retrieve the information any time you need it without waiting to call the university during business hours.

AU hopes to convert more letters to e-letter format and to bring the graduate centers on board as well.

SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Contributed by Zil-E-Huma Lodhi

LEA ROBACK FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

Value: \$500 - \$3,000

Application Deadline: May 15

Description: For Canadian citizens, permanent residents or convention refugees who reside in Quebec, and women pursuing studies at any level from literacy up to the completion of an undergraduate degree. Must not have a university degree acknowledged in Quebec, and must be socially committed and require financial assistance.

Instructions: Submit resume, letters of reference, letter or audiocassette describing choice of programme and description of financial situation.

Contact Information: Lea Roback Foundation / Fondation Léa-Roback

Web Site: www.fondationlearoback.org/bourse.htm

SOCIETY FOR THE HISTORY OF DISCOVERIES PRIZE ESSAY CONTEST

Value: \$600

Application Deadline: June 15

Description: Open to students of all nations, college or university students who have not received a doctoral degree. Submit unpublished essay of a maximum of 6,000 words on voyages, travels, biography, history, cartography, techniques and technology, or other aspects of discovery.

Contact Information: Society for the History of Discoveries (SHD)

Web Site: www.sochistdisc.org

APEGGA MILLENNIUM SCHOLARSHIP (2)

Administrator: APEGGA Education Foundation, The

Award Amount: \$2,000.00

Award Deadline: Saturday, July 15, 2006

Scholarship Criteria: Alberta resident. Intended to assist the children of APEGGA members to pursue a post-secondary education. Based on academic achievement with significant weight placed on accomplishments in other areas. Must be Canadian citizens or landed immigrants. Contact for more information.

Contact Information: 1500 Scotia One, 10060 Jasper Avenue, Edmonton, Alberta, T5J 4A2

Phone: (780) 426-3990

Fax: (780) 426-1877

Toll Free: (800) 661-7020

Web Site: <http://www.apegga.org/Members/ScholarshipsAwards/schlist.html>

Voice Events Listings

On and off campus events worldwide

To list events in your area, e-mail voice@ausu.org with the word "events" in the subject line.

alberta

PHIL(ANTHROPY)

Thursday, February 23, 2006

Time: doors at 6:30, show at 7:30

Location: Red's, WEM - \$6 at the door

Bands: Forever After; My Perfect Enemy; OK Cadet; From The Ground Up

All ages show - Net proceeds are going to Grey Nun's Palliative Care Unit. The last three bands can be found on <http://www.thesoundradio.com/artist> All are local bands and incredibly talented.

british columbia

SPRING THEATRE CLASSES

February 06 to May 01, 2006 - Kelowna, BC

Kelowna Actors Studio

Ticket Prices very reasonable

Kelowna Actors Studio - 250-862-2867

info@kelownaactorsstudio.com

<http://www.KelownaActorsStudio.com>

21st CENTURY ANTIQUES FAIR

February 19, 2006 - 10:00 AM - 3:00 PM

Vancouver, BC - Croatian Cultural Centre

General Admission 10am-3pm - \$3 at Door

Early Bird Admission 8am-10am - \$20 at Door

Children Under 13 Free with Adult Admission

Free Parking - <http://www.21cpromotions.com>

175 tables and booths of 19th & 20th Century Antiques & Collectibles! Decorative arts, vintage & estate jewellery, country collectibles, ephemera, mid-century Modernist decor, old dolls & toys, Christmas items, tins, art pottery & glass, native crafts, hand-painted china, textiles & linens, depression-era kitchenware, primitives, records & memorabilia, chintz, period lighting & fixtures, nautical, old books, and much, much more.

ontario

SCIENCE SATURDAYS WITH MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

January 22 to May 28, 2006 - Hamilton, ON

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM - Hamilton Children's Museum

Adults - \$1.00 - Children - \$3.00

905-546-4848 - childrensmuseum@hamilton.ca

McMaster University science students provide hands-on science activities for children and families. Venture

Physics and Let's Talk Science Team bring along "the punky physics roller coaster" and other creative science demonstrations and activities. DATES: Saturdays, March 12, 19 & 26; April 16 & 30; May 21 & 28. 6 yrs and up

maritimes

ST. JOHN'S CIRCUS: GROUP PRACTICE

St Johns, NF - Tuesdays - Mun Athletics building - FREE

<http://nick.wirelesszero.net/cgi-bin/juggling/YaBB.cgi>

Everyone's a Star! Juggling, Unicycling, Magic, Clowning, Poi, Diabolo, Fire, and whatever YOUR skill(s) is!

Tues At 7:00 PM - Thurs At 7:00 PM - Sat At 2:00 PM

Sessions usually run about 3 hrs...

123 SENSE

St Johns, NF - Saturdays - 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Eastern Edge Gallery, 72 Harbour Drive

free - 709-739-1882 - <http://www.easternedge.ca>

Jean Klimack (Winnipeg); Dave Yonge (B.C); Tania Lewis (NY/Newfoundland)

These three artists present in different mediums (video, drawing and photography) odd senses of the everyday, urban myths and gentrification.

international

MARDI GRAS OF SOUTHEAST TEXAS

Port Arthur, Texas, USA - Feb 23 - 26, 2006

<http://mardigras.portarthur.com/>

This year's theme is Floral Fantasy. Port Arthur hosts Mardi Gras Southeast Texas fun all. From arts and crafts to Zydeco music and Parades, there is an attraction to peak everyone's interest. Advance discount tickets are available. Admission is \$5 to \$10, and kids under 12 are free. There is free parking on the street, \$5 on lots.

BRAZILIAN CARNAVAL 2006

Long Beach, California, USA - February 25, 2006

<http://www.braziliannites.com/>

8:00 pm to 2:00 am - Admission \$35 (\$40 at the door)

Reserved Table seats \$45 (\$50 at the door)

The largest Carnival Party in Southern California. Large dance floor, costume contest with a trip to Rio de Janeiro for the winner, booths of arts and crafts, food. Samba show, and lot's of batucada (brazilian drumming).

To list events in your area, e-mail voice@ausu.org with "events" in the subject line.

Conference Connections

GEOLOGY FOR NON-GEOLOGISTS - HOUSTON

March 6, 2006 - March 9, 2006 - Houston, Texas, USA

<http://www.peice.com/eventdetails.aspx?event=102400&ref=Allconferences&frfi=16734>

This popular four-day course will provide non-geologists with a practical understanding of the principles used by petroleum geologists in the search for oil and gas. The session will include both the scientific background and the practical applications of geology. The tools, techniques, and vocabulary of the petroleum geologist will be emphasized throughout the course. A complete set of course materials and lunches are included.

Delivery Method: Classroom Training

Fee: \$ 1995 USD

CEU: 3.2 Continuing Education Units

PDH: 32 Professional Development Hours

NASS SPRING BREAK: BACK TO THE EVIDENCE

March 8, 2006 - March 11, 2006 - San Diego, CA, USA

<http://www.spine.org/06SprgBrk.cfm>

NASS Spring Break will be a high-energy interactive meeting focusing on controversial and non-traditional topics. Look forward to interactive symposia and debate sessions. NASS Spring Break will provide physicians an opportunity to share current information and concepts relating to spinal problems in an open, interactive relaxed atmosphere.

ON-LINE METHODS IN CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE PROCESSING

March 21, 2006 - March 22, 2006 - New York

Understanding how children process language, in real time, is necessary for building comprehensive theories about language acquisition. This workshop is the first scientific gathering specifically dedicated to a new field of research that explores such issues, experimental developmental psycholinguistics. This workshop provides a forum in which scholars from different areas of expertise (psycholinguistics, language acquisition, and cognitive neuroscience), particularly those interested in applying on-line methods to study children's language processing, will discuss how current and developing empirical approaches can inform about language processing mechanisms in children.

RISK MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2006

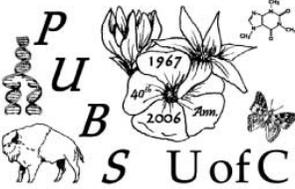
March 24, 2006 - March 26, 2006 - Mont Tremblant, Quebec

<http://www.mfrc.mcgill.ca/?section=Conferences>

A conference fee will be charged to cover expenses (C\$250 for academics, C\$500 for practitioners and C\$100 for students). Presenters, discussants and chairs will be provided with free accommodation. Conference participants are responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses. Conference participants are eligible to pay discounted hotel rates starting at C\$199 per night, for arrival on Thursday March 23rd and departure Sunday March 26th.

The conference will be held at the Fairmont Resort Hotel situated at the foot of Mont Tremblant in Quebec's Laurentians.

Know of a conference that is not on this list? Contact voice@asu.org with the details and we'll list it in Conference Connections.



**Prairie
Universities
Biological
Symposium**

40th Anniversary Conference
BY students FOR students

University of Calgary
Feb 23-25, 2006
Registration \$22, Banquet \$20



Banquet at the Calgary Zoo
Guest speaker: Dr. Robert Barclay

SUBMIT YOUR ABSTRACTS NOW!
Deadline: Jan 10, 2006

Registration & information:
<http://homepages.ucalgary.ca/~pubs/>

classifieds

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

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