

## **Spartans Winter Newsletter 2014-15**

Moving to an earlier date for our festive or Christmas luncheon at the Restaurant Linguini venue encouraged a good showing of local and out of town members, and included those who delayed their departure for warmer climates to attend. Subject to committee approval, the earlier date for future festive luncheons will be confirmed.

We were pleased to have **Walter Hrycyna** as a first time visitor and new member, and hope he becomes a regular luncheon attendee. It was a delight to have **Joanna Boshowers** as first time visitor and MDA senior management representative, in her relatively new position as General Manager of the Ste. Anne facility. **Marc Donato** and **Don Osborne** will always be welcome to attend and update us on the business status at MDA, but recognize that distance and frequent travel may often preclude their attendance.

Although there is an encouraging migration of information and notices to the immediacy of our web site <http://clubspartans.weebly.com> , I will continue to gather and offer comment on news items of interest to members, noting that some still rely on regular mail including faithful contributor and my former boss, **Greg Baylis**.

I want to thank our committee members for their continuing efforts in maintaining our group.

**Al Lawson:** Picture taker, list maintainer, communications director, and currently recovering from the loss of his computer

**George Larder:** Diligent Treasure, jam maker, raffle master, and understudy for Al Lawson during his trials

**Gil Kerr:** Luncheon organizer

**Nicole Bourdeau:** Chief recruiter

**Margaret Gross:** Web master

### **News Items**

I reported happily at the October 30<sup>th</sup> luncheon that there had been no member deaths since the spring luncheon, but mere days later we were shocked and saddened to learn of the death of good friend and former colleague **Joe McNally**. Joe was widely known and respected in the space community for his personal and professional character that was reflected in tributes penned by colleagues including Mac Evans, former president of the space agency, and Luc Brûlé, current acting president. I was able to attend the funeral in Ottawa where I met family members and was able to share fond memories with Carmen whom I have known since the late 50s and almost as long as I have known Joe. I also met Colin Franklin and Edryd Shaw who had worked with Joe and who held the same respect and affection for him as I had developed over the years. We each had our repertoire of favourite stories involving his endearing characteristics that included his plain speaking, disarming but genuine honesty, and freedom from guile, a trait along with insincerity that he instantly detected and despised in others. Why am I reminded of the scene in the movie of the Tennessee Williams play, *Cat On a Hot Tin Roof*, in which an annoyed Big Daddy played brilliantly by Burl Ives utters the line “I detect an odour of mendacity in this room”. Joe would have understood. He had a marvelous sense of humour that I am sure defused many tense occasions, and I easily related to his salty metaphors, as we shared a rural upbringing, as well as many fundamental values. Strangely enough we never worked together on the same program at the same time, although as a government employee he did

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become program manager of the Communications Technology Satellite that I had worked on in the planning phase for almost two years. We shared a love of flying that led Joe and I along with **Henry Hore** to take our training and to obtain our private pilots licenses in 1964. We often recalled our first major cross country flight together as licensed pilots that took us over Niagara Falls for a leisurely look, almost unthinkable in today's environment. As I was pilot in command on this leg of the flight, I was a little concerned as the weekend warriors from the reserve jet squadron in Buffalo seemed to be using us as an intercept target.

We should all be as lucky as I was to have a friend like Joe where mutual respect, simple affection, and open and honest communications was the basis of a lifelong friendship. I will miss him keenly.

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/ottawacitizen/obituary.aspx?n=joseph-mcnally&pid=173095296>



Ella never joined her husband, **Rae Hall** for one of our luncheons but we noted her death on Nov 10 in Montreal. This information was posted on our web site but is repeated here.

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/montrealgazette/obituary.aspx?n=ella-adele-hall-barkwell&pid=173227987>



**Jack Sutherland**, one time engineering manager at RCA, was a Spartans member for many years and joined us for our retiree's luncheon on one or more occasions. He died in Toronto on December 16. One of his lesser sins was to hire George Larder and me in late 1953. He always had difficulty with personal relations outside his immediate circle of friends and family unless he could find some common interest. In my case it was an interest in high fidelity sound reproduction and classical music. Once this connection had been made during my job interview there was little discussion of academic achievement or other interests and I accepted a job offer and appeared for work in early June 1954, where I found George already at work. Jack was respected as a good engineering manager and piloted the organization through a challenging period of radio communications equipment development and large system installations, including the Grand Prairie to Alaska system, Montreal-Vancouver CN/CP system, and the Cento system from Ankara Turkey to Karachi Pakistan, all based on the MM600 equipment designed in Montreal. Although this equipment performed to the highest international standards and worked as expected, the Cento system was a particular challenge not only for the difficult logistics of installation in several foreign countries, but the original system planning was done by RCA International and proved to be inadequate. Montreal was well experienced in large system design and installation with complex logistics but the rescue operation to take over the system installation and complete the contract, absorbed an inordinate amount of our limited engineering resources in Montreal. Even Jack became a country manager and was away from Montreal, and the development of new equipment, and domestic markets in Canada suffered as a result. His reputation for success must have been noted in the industry as he subsequently left RCA to become Vice President, CP Telecommunications where he remained until his retirement.

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<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/montrealgazette/obituary.aspx?pid=173535840>



I contacted **Saul Koblin** for a comment as he had known and worked for Jack probably longer than anyone I know:

Thank you for your message and greetings. Best wishes to you for the coming year. It is interesting that Jack interviewed you and hired you in 1954. He interviewed me and hired me in 1953. Although I had already decided to take another job in Winnipeg, he talked me in to foregoing the other job. At that time I was writing a thesis on antenna design. He convinced me that the best thing for my career was to move to Montreal and work in the Antenna Group under Bruce Mackimmie. This was a decision I never regretted.

Twenty four years later, he again was instrumental in my decision to move. This time it was to Canadian Pacific where he had been appointed Vice President, CPT, after his return to Canada, having been President RCA Iran for a number of years.

Jackie and I attended a “Celebration of Life of JG(Jack) Sutherland” last Saturday at a church in Toronto. It was very touching as it gave us an opportunity to renew acquaintances with his wife, Mary Louise, and their two daughters and son and extended families whom I had not seen for many years, Mary Louise is still a very warm and gracious lady. The children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren are a wonderful legacy that Jack has left to the world.

In late December **Nicole Bourdeau** notified us that her aunt **Corinne Poitras** had just died. Corinne did not appear for our October luncheon and we knew from Nicole, who had provided long term support for her aunt, that her health was in decline. Although Corinne worked mainly in the research department, I knew her as a gentle lady, possibly a little shy, with a warm personality and smile. At one of our social gatherings she met my wife Riggie, who she related to immediately as they had both grown up in the same general area of New Brunswick. I attended the funeral where Joe Soul and Ed Sorochan had also come to honour Corinne’s memory.

Nicole provided this excerpt from her obituary “It is with great sadness that we announce the passing of **Corinne Poitras** on December 30, 2014. Predeceased by most of her siblings, she is survived by her brother, Dr. Vincent Poitras (Therese Jette), as well as many nieces, nephews, and friends.

<http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/montrealgazette/obituary-search.aspx?affiliateId=3123&firstname=c&lastname=poitras&stateid=51>



Although Ko, daughter of Alcide Poitras and Elizabeth Levesque, was born in Grand Falls, NB, she spent most of her life in Montreal, where she worked for RCA for over 35 years, followed by a significant stint at Spar. Despite her small stature, she was a huge presence in the

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lives of those who were lucky enough to know her. Her heart of gold, strength, sense of humour, and love of life were and will continue to be an inspiration for her family and friends.”

Nicole also provided us with an update from **Barbara Walker** as follows:

“At my age one has to accept that some things have to go! We don’t go far and fortunately Vicki is very near, Mike and Jennie too so we see lots of them - they have to do our shopping for us as they have our car! I get my hair done once a week (my treat to me!) and either Jennie or Mike do my grocery shopping while the hair is being done, then we pick up hamburgers and French fries for supper and head home.

Our son Richard who lives in England, came over in October and stayed for about ten days, so he will not be here for Christmas. Vicki is hosting Christmas dinner this year so it will be lovely to have most of the family together.

Fred joins me in wishing you a very Merry Christmas and heaps of good wishes for yet another new year.”

**Dean Collis** corresponded with George Larder and commented on the summer newsletter: “Thanks George, Enjoyed the news and the item with Greg Baylis. I miss your luncheons. My best to those involved in MM600 and Telesat’s satellite system. It was fun as was the CW20 system for AMC”. To which George replied “Thanks Dean for your comments, I will forward them to Lorne Keyes as an item for the next newsletter. I certainly fondly remember the MM600 and CW20 microwave radio relay systems but refresh my memory, what does AMC stand for? It can’t be for American Motor Corporation. (Not sure if George got an answer). I don’t know if I ever mentioned to you that I met you first in 1956 in North Bay during the installation of a CW20 system for the RCAF. You were in charge of the field installation and I was part of the engineering crew doing the line-up and testing. We only met briefly but I do remember once delivering your pay cheque to your wife at some place you were living at. This goes back to more years than I care to remember.

**Dan Mercik** also provided us with a status update in correspondence with George: “Dear Old Friend: Thank you so much for the letter and the, as always, interesting Newsletter. (If I could somehow connect the faces to the names !!) Come November it will be five years since I had moved, at the advice of some Polish friends, to Manoir Westmount. Initially the idea was simply preposterous: move from Hudson to Westmount ?? You just got to be kidding !! Well--I was wrong. The Manoir ( operated as a non profit --and vey well too- by Rotary Club of Westmount ) is adjacent to the Victoria Hall, Library and of course the beautiful Westmount Park which allows for long walks almost regardless of the seasons. My main health problem is *spinal stenosis* ,which means slow but gradual loss of control of ones legs. So the logical question now is: which item will I need first ? The coffin or the wheelchair ! Early in my retirement I enjoyed travelling to my beloved Rockies or Europe or Far SouthEast. Two years ago went to Spain--that was the last one, flying is just unbearable!”

Ed. I am pleased to see that Dan’s sardonic humour is still intact even if his back is not. Even though my health is good, I can relate to his comment on flying as I flew to Copenhagen via Frankfurt recently, an airport that I used to consider a model of efficiency but I now believe should be avoided if possible. Not only did I miss the connecting flight and had to join a standby line three times, they lost my luggage, but it miraculously appeared on board the Baltic cruise ship two days later.

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Faithful member and attendee **Carl Gaul** brought this interesting link to my attention under the subject heading “The Bowling Ball and the Feather”.

<http://www.iflscience.com/physics/dropping-bowling-ball-and-feather-vacuum>

To which I replied:

The feather and bowling ball experiment is truly interesting, and I shudder to think of the cost of doing the test in the world’s largest vacuum chamber. A somewhat similar but very necessary experiment took place during the development of the secondary propulsion system for the RCA Satcom spacecraft in the early 70s. RCA Montreal was of course only involved in the payload, but my highly esteemed colleague, Dr. Jack Keigler, who was responsible for the overall spacecraft design, knew that I would be interested, and showed me a movie made of the critical test.

I should explain that prior art for secondary propulsion systems operating without gravity or centrifugal forces, as in the RCA 3 axis stabilized spacecraft, used a flexible membrane in the tanks, with pressurized nitrogen on the dry side to produce a positive expulsion of the liquid hydrazine. The membranes were notoriously unreliable so the experts at RCA Hightstown proposed to use a surface tension design without membranes. It is difficult to describe it without a drawing but think in terms of several perforated radial petals inside a tank, that have their broad ends centred over the exit hole, and tapering slowly toward the opposite side of the tank. To test the effectiveness of the proposed design it was necessary to create zero G conditions for long enough to show that under these conditions, the fluid did indeed settle over the exit hole. The experiment used a transparent tank, probably with water rather than the highly toxic hydrazine, as the hydraulic properties of hydrazine are essentially the same as water. A movie camera falling with the tank recorded the behavior of the fluid. As in a classic feather and ball experiment, an evacuated tube large enough to accommodate the test specimen and camera was required. A little mental arithmetic will show that a vertical tube several hundred feet long would be required to give several seconds of zero G .

I was astonished to see how quickly the sloshing of the fluid stopped after release, and equally astonished to see how quickly it stabilized over the exit hole. The system functioned flawlessly in space.

In discussing this extraordinary experiment with Jack some years later he explained that the concept was not an RCA original but had been used by his former employer MacDonald Douglas in the second stage of their Delta rocket. The application there required a restart of the second stage after a zero G drift phase. There was a backup safety feature in the design using an auxiliary low level thruster to produce an acceleration or artificial gravity if you will, to ensure that the liquid fuel was over the exit hole before a restart was attempted.

Lorne

Our faithful attendee and contributor **Paul Weijers** offers the following puzzling account:

### **The mystery of the Brazilian padlock.**

In the early '60s I was happily ensconced in the Instrument department at RCA. I loved instrumentation of any kind, rather than fixing airborne radios and radar sets, which I did in my previous life. To work in a place that had literally thousands of instruments was the equivalent of working in your favorite toyshop.

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I had no intention of going anywhere else. But fate intervened in the person of Dr. F. Osborne, Ozzie among his friends. Until then I had given little thought to the research department. They were on the Lenoir side of the building across from the bus depot and we were in the engineering section on Lacasse street. A whole city block apart and a different world.

Anyway, Osborne walked in one day, had a word with Gillanders who sent him over to me to answer some questions about instruments. Somehow this ended up in a half hour conversation. Maybe because of my accent, he asked where are you from, what did you do there, etc. I did not see an ulterior motive because I had been asked this before. At the end he said: "Why aren't you working for me?" I was not sure how to answer that, so I said: " Because you did not ask me". He replied, "I am asking you now". Looking back now I realize I had just been interviewed with the connivance of Gillanders. Two weeks later I walked into Plasma Physics and was told that henceforth I would be a research assistant. I had no problem with that because it also meant I got a raise.

For the aficionados of the TV program, The Big Bang, rest assured the people in Plasma Physics were closer to normal. There were differences though. On the Lacasse side of the building, coffee breaks were for discussing the latest hockey game and taking bets on the next game. In Plasma Physics they were betting on the number of citations of Dr. Izzy Shkarofsky's next paper. The arbitrator was the secretary Mary Gore since she typed out all the papers. The maximum I believe was around 140 to a half page paper. The other thing on my first day that was puzzling was the sudden change in traffic noise around nine o'clock. There was screeching of brakes and horns blasting angrily. I assumed there had been an accident on the Glen but someone said it was only Wyatt coming to work.

That was Dr. Wyatt Johnston who lived within walking distance of the plant. He stayed home until after his favorite CBC program had finished but on his walk he had his head in a book or a magazine. As he never looked up to cross the street, he was the cause of the bedlam. To his credit, he stayed in the office late and may possibly be credited with the invention of flex time.

I was not sure what my job was until I was told it was quite simple. Physicist decided on an experiment. Assistants then build the experiment, designed the control and measurement circuitry and made the measurements which the physicists then used to write a paper with long words. Sounded simple enough until I realized it also included plumbing and glass blowing. Brian Gibbs was kind enough to give me a ten minute lecture on plumbing and another ten minutes on glass blowing and told me I was good to go. However, I had to wait for my special, personal toolkit to arrive. Meanwhile, Fred Smith would be kind enough to let me use his tools. Fred was a most amiable fellow but was concerned about the safety and security of his tools. At all times I was to make sure that the kit was locked. I assured him that I was most reliable in such matters so he told me the three numbers for the padlock.

The next day I needed some tools so I located the tool box and spun the dial while reciting the numbers to make sure I had it right. Nothing happened so after a couple of attempts I went in search of Fred and told him there was something wrong with the padlock. Fred came over and spun the dial mumbling something under his breath. The lock opened up. He then closed it again and said made me try it again. And again, nothing happened. Fred then said, "You have to do it in Portuguese" and told me the numbers in Portuguese. I followed his lead and the lock worked. Fred went off and I used the tools. When I put the tools back and closed the lock I tried to open it again and failed. I tried it again, this time in Dutch, also to no avail. I then tried it in German and French. No go.

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Tried it once more reciting the numbers in Portuguese and it worked! Later I confronted Fred and asked for an explanation. He told me that he grew up in Brazil. His father was a Canadian railroad engineer who worked for many years in Brazil. Fred had acquired the lock in Brazil and convinced me that trying it in four other languages would never work because the lock was Brazilian and therefore only understood Portuguese. All this with a straight face. For a week I needed to have access to his tools. The lock and I reached an understanding, i.e. I would recite the Portuguese numbers and it would open up. I received my own kit, bought a padlock that was either multilingual or could not care less how it was addressed. To this day, I do not know how that Brazilian lock worked. If someone knows where Fred is, tell him to give me a call. I still would like to know the secret.

### **Regrets**

From **Bruce Aikenhead**: Hello Lorne, Once again I'm not going to be "down East" in time to attend the SPARTan's annual get-together. Maybe next year? My greetings to those who can remember the "ISIS-1" and ISIS-2 in the old RCA factory. I wonder how many there are. I had my 91'th birthday last month. All the best, Bruce

From **Marc Donato** Sorry, I can't make it, I will be in Vancouver, resulting in the following invitation:

Dear Joanna:

We would be pleased if you would join us for the Spartans retiree lunch on Oct 30 as our guest. As you may know, we always invite a representative of MDA senior management to brief us on how the company is doing. In the past Don or Marc has joined us and the retirees have appreciated their briefings, and I believe the executives have enjoyed the encounter with the retirees. The gathering is at Linguinis just down the road from MDA with the retirees arriving at 12:00 for reminiscences, and sitting down for a leisurely luncheon at 13:00 Hrs. If you join us for lunch, we instruct the restaurant to serve workers first to minimize disruption to their schedule. If you can only join us for a short briefing and introduction sometime during this event, I am sure your presence will be appreciated.

If you are able to join us, you might also consider speaking briefly on the challenges and rewards to a woman in the workforce who has progressed through the ranks to your present level as a senior executive of a major corporation.

Sensing the informality of the occasion Joanna replied: Hi Lorne, Sorry I didn't get back to you sooner. I was unsure about being able to make it. I think I can fit it in, but I don't think I can afford the time for the leisurely part (that'll have to wait until I get to retire).

From **Nicolle Bourdeau** I am not lucky again! I just came back from the doctor's office because I haven't been feeling well for the past two days. I lost completely my voice 2 days ago. I have strep throat and the virus is contagious. Also, I am not even allowed to murmur! Sorry, but I have to stay home. I am so sorry to miss the luncheon again. Wanda & Joe can replace me for the raffle. Enjoy the luncheon!

**Doug Paul** reported in with this decline: Hi George, Unrelated to my work I have two issues to deal with tomorrow that came up unexpectedly. I am sorry to say that I am best to not attend tomorrow's luncheon. I was really looking forward to it but I have to deal with my two

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bosses in my life... my Wife and my Daughter and you must know that I had to re-prioritize my activities of tomorrow accordingly. Please give my best regards to the Spartan folks

Thanks for the invitation but it is no go. However please convey my greetings, salutations and best wishes to all attendees----regards--**Adam Mercik** (aka Dan)

Old friend **Andy Sztyk** declined as follows: Hi George, Susan and I are in our little paradise in Panama and will not make it to the luncheon; please extend our hello to all present.

And this graceful decline from **Letty Cox** : Thank you for the invitation to the luncheon. It is time for me to say good bye and wish you all the best. Although I am well and still have my driver's license with no restrictions, I no longer take my car to Montreal. With the Champlain Bridge and general construction all around me, I find it stressful, especially when I can get to Montreal in an hour via the Express bus. Also, at 84 there are not many people I know anymore. It is time for the youngsters (I mean the 60 and 70 year olds) to meet and enjoy their time together. I have many good memories of past lunches.

To which George replied: Thanks Letty for your response, it's glad to hear you are alive and doing well. We will continue to send you the newsletter unless you tell us otherwise, but not to expect you at the luncheons for very good reasons. I know that Lorne will pass on your best wishes to our fellow survivors at the luncheon. All the best, George

**Bronwen Williams** writes: Hi George, Please convey my regrets to everyone as I cannot attend the 2014 Fall Luncheon due to a commitment to help seniors with activities on that date. Best wishes to everyone and I hope that Al, Lorne, you George and the other members are all fine. I hope Al is doing well and has resolved his flooded basement and damaged computer issue.

From old friend **Lloyd Martin**: Hi George, I will not be able to attend the 2014 Fall Luncheon. I have been on a six-month Chemo Therapy program for my Prostate Cancer, which has been recently stopped, and they are just now preparing me for another round of treatments using a new pill, so my life is more or less dictated by the doctors, at least for the foreseeable future. Betty and I are thinking of you, especially with the loss of your good wife Dorothy. Please pass on my best regards to the Spartans.

**Hazel Osborne** called as she has done previously saying she would like to come but can't. She is in the Cambridge residence in the assisted care wing. She would have to bring along her attendant because she has to use a wheelchair. I told her the attendant would be welcome. She is presently waiting to get subsidized transportation and that's why she can't come this time. As she always says, she hopes to come for the Spring luncheon.

**Elsa Hore** sent this message to our Yahoo Mail;

Dear Friends, I considered coming to the luncheon one more time, since it will be held at an earlier date, but alas, my last volunteer day at the hospital is on the same day; therefore, my "Aux Revoir" will have to wait till the spring event if my move closer to my family is after that date. Rockwood is a stone-throw away from Guelph & will be my new home no later than July 15. Thanks for your friendship & the memories we have built up over the years.

(Let us hope that we will see Elsa at our next spring luncheon. George)



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### Also Sending Regrets

Colette Besner	Mary Buchanan	Ravi Chhabra	Peter Garland
Ian Grier	Pam Hillier	Peter Landovskis	Louis Laroche
Richard Lubelsky	Jane Robinson	Wolf Rohde	George Rout
John Runeckles	Heather Tanguay	George Vaillancourt	Dave Whitton

### Raffle

Another successful raffle was held thanks to Wanda Daniel and Joe Delsole, (the latter taking the place of Nicole Bourdeau) for handling the sale of the raffle tickets. They reported an excellent response and judging by the proceeds I would have to agree. The money collected goes a long way towards maintaining our modest membership fee and paying for our two year website subscription which is due on this May 29<sup>th</sup>.

The prizes offered and the winners were as follows:

- \$50.00 food voucher donated by Ristorante Linguini, won by Al Evers
- Mantle clock donated by Claude Richard<sup>1</sup>, won by Greg Baylis.
- SPAR coffee mugs donated by Nancy Renz, (daughter of Curt Ingerville), won by Walter Hrycyna
- Set of 4 jams and jellies donated by George and won by Lorne Keyes<sup>2</sup>

Note 1: The mantle clock is an exact replica of clocks previously donated by Curt Ingerville and now crafted by Claude Richard.

Note 2: Lorne when leaving the luncheon stopped by for a quick visit to the men's room and left not realizing he had left the jams there. He made quick return to the restaurant to retrieve them only to find they had vanished. We can only hope who ever took them is now enjoying their loot.

### Membership

We would like to welcome two new members, Peter Oliver and Les Meszaros. We hope to see Peter at our next luncheon. Since Les lives in Abbotsford BC we will not be expecting him to attend unless he happens to be visiting Montreal at that time.

### Honorary Members

Mary Buchanan	Bill Corless	Letty Cox	Jean Gondos
Elsa Hore	Pam Leahy	Carmen McNally	Hazel Osborne
Barbara Pastuszko	Hazel Redhead	Nancy Renz	Claude Richard
Ella Tallon	Mary Zacharatos		

Note: Please continue to send status updates and memorabilia, as member contributions sharing of our common background is the core of these newsletters.

Your reporter  
Lorne Keyes