

AREA STUDIES ARCHITECTURE
ART HISTORY COMPUTER STUDIES
CREATIVE WRITING CULTURAL STUDIES CURRENT EVENTS
ECONOMICS FILM STUDIES HEALTH CARE STUDIES
LITERATURE MUSIC
PHILOSOPHY POLITICS
SOCIETY & SCIENCE



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SOCIETY & SCIENCE WOMEN'S STUDIES

AREA STUDIES ARCHITECTURE



FROM THE EDITOR



Beware! The MILR 20th anniversary spirit is contagious! For this special anniversary issue, I had the pleasure of working with a dedicated Editorial Committee, a 'think tank' of sorts, where strategies developed in our past

professional lives such as planning, organizing and team work have resurfaced to lead us in the pursuit of our final outcome. My sincere thanks and appreciation go to this admirable team for devoting their time and energy to reviewing and providing insight into this project.

We have named this publication **VIVA MILR!**, a title chosen to demonstrate our **VIVAcity** and **VIVAciousness** in the pursuit of MILR's 20th anniversary celebrations. The logo was specially created by a local calligrapher to illustrate this feeling of joy! Who is where doing what is a question universally agreed upon for defining any organization. The cover pages of this souvenir publication aim to depict the three Ws that best describe us: **what** learning activities are carried out **where**, and **who** are some of the members that have indelibly marked 20 years of MILR development and expansion. The names mentioned on the back cover have been taken from past newsletters and the mosaic of head shots was made from archival pictures; neither claim to be comprehensive.

Resource-constrained, we had to restrict our publication to a minimal-page document, thus imploring our contributing authors to limit their flowing pens to a maximum of one page each. Harold Entwistle submitted an article with a philosophical perspective on learning; Michèle Barbeau-Monfette goes back some way into the cultural history of MILR's European origins, while Fiona Clark extends the picture a little further, indicating its incremental development into the present with the use of technology. Carolyn Rafman refers to the development of learning in retirement, and David Schurman's forward thinking leads us into a futuristic vision, promising virtualization changes that will benefit us. A sentiment shared by many is well expressed by Peter Nash's comment as to how MILR was a turning point in his life. The Committee extends a warm thank you to these authors for their invaluable

collaboration and for taking us through a continuum of 20 years of MILR's development, success and participant satisfaction.

We want to honour the past-presidents that chaired the Council in the past 20 years by giving them pride of place in VIVA MILR! Limiting ourselves to a few words to epitomize such wonderful careers and profiles was a challenge. Interviews with many made us realize that their nomination to this position was no simple coincidence. The outstanding leadership and achievement they demonstrated on the MILR scene stemmed from an impressive combination of education, experience and wisdom. With their Councils, they have solidly contributed to the development and maintenance of the objectives of this venerable Institute.

As a final word, we credit Nicole de Rochemont and Astri Thorvik for all the creativity, energy and goodwill they have invested in making this 20th anniversary a special and memorable occasion.

Catch the spirit and join us in the celebrations!

Charlotte French

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Editorial Committee Members

Charlotte French
Thelma Cohen
George Lapa

Meribah Aikens
Dorothy Dunkley
Agnes Kent

GREETINGS FROM THE DEAN



Twenty years of the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement at the Centre for Continuing Education (CCE)! And what a celebratory year we are going to enjoy. Your leadership team has done a magnificent job in preparing

a wide range of activities that will benefit members as well as many others in the Montreal and wider communities with a passion for learning.

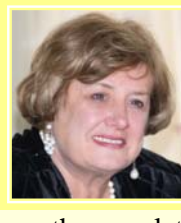
My first ten months at McGill have been filled with discovery on many levels—Montreal, McGill, CCE. I hold in very high regard the work that MILR accomplishes through its many volunteers and slim staff resources. CCE is currently in the process of establishing its Strategic Priorities for the 3 to 4 years ahead, and MILR will certainly be a vital part of our growth and development moving forward.

MILR is a shining example among a growing number of programs for older adults that are part of University Continuing Education endeavours. With increased evidence of connections between intellectual and social stimulation and health, as well as with the realities of our demographics in this country, these programs can only become more significant.

My personal thanks to the 2008-09 and 2009-10 MILR leadership teams, and my warmest congratulations, on behalf of your CCE friends and colleagues, on the accomplishments of MILR. I look forward to joining you at many of the celebratory events planned for this 20th anniversary.

Dr. Judith Potter, Dean
Continuing Education

PAST-PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



When the idea of celebrating our 20th anniversary was first brought to Council, I did not immediately jump on the idea of taking a part in it. The idea of organizing the celebrations had to be nurtured. A

month or so later I came to the conclusion that it had to reflect what our members say about MILR: "It is the people I meet there... new people who share the same interests. It is the peer learning. It's the unique way we are learning from each other's experiences. It gives meaning to my life!"

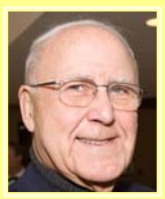
To this end, the 20th Anniversary Committee was established to pursue our goal: to celebrate the Joy of Peer Learning and to mirror to the community what MILR is all about. Over a two-year period, more than twenty enthusiastic people came forth to contribute their experiences and creativity and to make these celebrations a memorable occasion in the history of MILR, to be shared by the whole community. Astri Thorvik, Committee Chair, is leading the committee with enthusiasm, pizzazz, energy and, most of all, dedication.

We hope you will all take part in the festivities. Most of all, it is our wish that you join us at MILR, where you will be introduced to a world of dedicated people whose interests in lifelong learning shines in the way they transmit their knowledge.

Come and meet the gardeners of our minds and reap the immeasurable benefits we enjoy every day. Join MILR and celebrate with us twenty years of sharing knowledge and friendship!

Nicole de Rochemont

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: TWENTY YEARS OF NEW BEGINNINGS



As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement, we are conscious of the tremendous contribution it has made to many of our lives. We have all seen the

amused glances from younger people still in the job market when they ask us: "How are you enjoying retirement?" and we reply: "Don't know how I ever had time to go to work." Well, for our members, it happens to be true.

An anniversary is a good time to reflect on the past and to think of the future. When we think of our past, we have to thank those who in 1989 gave form and body to the idea of creating a

volunteer-run institution devoted to peer learning by retired individuals. The idea was not original, Harvard already had one. But as we all know, putting an idea into practice is always hard work. The support of McGill University was sought and obtained, and it has been constant ever since. We are now proud to be a unit of McGill University's Centre for Continuing Education.

All of us who have become members over the last twenty years have demonstrated to ourselves that the idea of peer learning is a good one. We "seniors" have had interesting lives, and the benefits of our effort to continue to learn, understand and appreciate the history, challenges and beauty of the world we live in are made exponentially productive when we share our learning experiences.

So that's the past. What of the future? You will see evidence in this Anniversary Newsletter that our members are seriously committed to the idea that the peer learning experience is wonderful and should be shared as widely as possible. Not

only do we want our membership to continue to grow, but we firmly believe that spreading the word of our success will encourage other communities to follow our example.

George Latimer

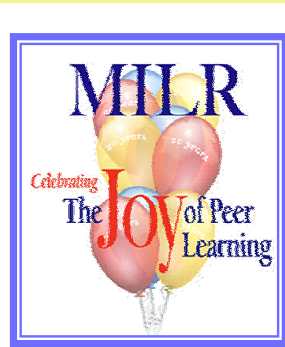
MESSAGE FROM THE 20th ANNIVERSARY COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON



In 2007, Nicole de Rochemont, the then Chair of the 20th Anniversary Committee, approached me to help develop a grant proposal to promote community development activities around peer learning as a way to celebrate our twenty productive years. The success of our peer learning model in Montreal suggested that it might benefit other areas in Quebec that were looking for ways to break the isolation of their senior adults, as well as providing important participatory learning opportunities.

Based on this, the Department of Canadian Heritage granted us funds to carry out specific activities toward the accomplishment of these goals: 1) *to make English-speaking seniors of Quebec aware of peer learning and how to organize these programs*; 2) *to increase access to lifelong learning*; and 3) *to break down the negative stereotypes of aging*. Facing these challenges head-on and with the assistance of a committed group of MILR volunteers, we set out to formulate an approach that would best fulfill these objectives. The Curriculum Committee found seven moderators willing to present a series of lectures. A PowerPoint presentation was created to introduce the concept of peer learning.

The next step was to promote the project to several host organizations that could work in partnership with MILR to attract their English-speaking seniors. Four organizations became our partners. In the Eastern Townships: The Canadian Federation of University Women of Sherbrooke and District and the Townshippers' Association teamed up



to sponsor three lectures, in Sherbrooke and Lennoxville. The Voice of English-Speaking Quebec chose two lectures for Quebec City and The Chateaugay English Community Centre with St-Willibrord Community Learning Centre organized three lectures, as well as a brain-storming session on how to set up their own peer learning groups.

We are pleased that lectures and the peer learning workshop at the St-Willibrord Community Learning Centre have yielded a most productive outreach result. The Community Learning Centre mandate is to provide learning opportunities through video-conferencing to twenty-three English-speaking communities across Quebec. They have approached MILR to help train their coordinators on how to set up peer learning groups in these twenty-three areas.

To support the concept of lifelong learning, we now have a 20th anniversary website <http://milr20.mcgill.ca> and promotional "Joy of Learning" calendars. A pan digital photo montage and a photo exhibit of "Who We Are" are new tools that can be used at conferences, or other occasions to demonstrate what peer learning means to our seniors. Our **VIVA MILR!** 20th anniversary souvenir publication is available as further promotional material.

This 20th Anniversary of MILR is a momentous year for me, and with the invaluable assistance of a terrific committee, I am enjoying each and every challenge. My wish for MILR is for a future that will reach out to other senior communities to share the "Joy of Peer Learning."

Astri Thorvik

SPREADING THE WORD OUTSIDE OUR WALLS

Our first venture to meet with people outside the Montreal area was to Lennoxville, where Clare McFarlane gave a lecture on Stem Cells and I did a PowerPoint presentation on MILR's Peer Learning. Our audience was very attentive and asked many questions and expressed interest in further meetings. Since Lennoxville is now part of Sherbrooke, with few road signs indicating Lennoxville, we got hopelessly lost, so Charlotte French, who was driving, went into the SAQ store and they did a map quest for us. One of the people who attended the session shepherded us back to the highway when we left. It was a great start to our further adventures.

There were four trips to the Chateaugay area, where we held meetings in three different locations. Each session had more people in attendance as word spread and the interest in what we were presenting increased. Clare McFarlane, Rory O'Sullivan, Andrew MacDougall were the three who gave talks on Stem Cells, the Assassination of D'Arcy McGee, and the History of the Railroad in that area. I gave our Peer Learning talk at the first and second meetings, but by the third meeting, everyone was aware of our approach. The fourth meeting was with Nicole de Rochemont, Charlotte French and myself, and we held a brain storming session that came up with several pertinent ideas as to how they could begin their own lifelong learning program. There will be follow-up with the leaders of that group to ensure that they are on track.

Two more trips were made to the Sherbrooke area. One, on a bitter cold, windy day, with Andrew MacDougall, and the second with Henry Tottenham who, having lived for many years in the Middle East, talked of the Suni, Shia and Kurd situation. There were so many in attendance that we had to move to a larger hall after the program ended, and the questions continued in the hallway. It was a real highlight to have such an interested, animated audience.



First outreach presentation in Lennoxville. Left, Heather Keith, from the Canadian Federation of University Women of Sherbrooke and District. Right, Mebbie Aikens

The farthest we travelled was to Quebec City; since it was March and the weather uncertain, we took the train and stayed overnight. Andrew McDougall talked of the history and importance of the railroad in the development of that area of Quebec, and Paul Terni also had a very interesting presentation on the Galapagos Islands. The meeting was held in a very up-to-date school that had excellent video conferencing equipment. The intention had been to hold the two sessions concurrently, but the people attending wanted to hear both so we combined them - and I only had to give the peer leaning presentation once instead of twice.

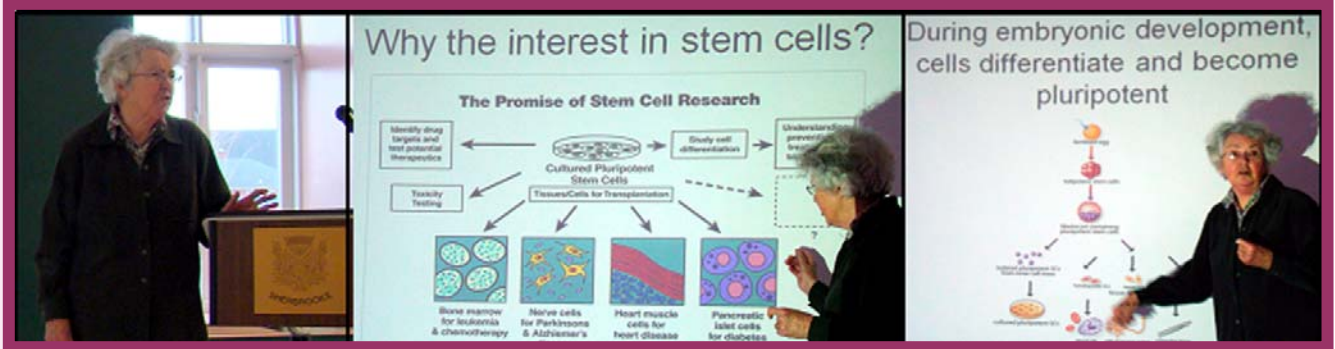
As the person who accompanied all the lecturers, I personally gained a great

insight into areas of the province that I knew little about and had the opportunity to meet many people who are interested in enriching the lives of the seniors in their communities. It was a great start to our 20th Anniversary celebrations.

Meribah (Mebbie) Aikens

P.S. As a post-script to our series of lecture tours, a Memoir Writing Study Group is to begin September 15 with our own Jan McConnell as Moderator. We congratulate the Chateaugay group and anticipate that further study groups will be offered in the near future.

Clare McFarlane lecturing on stem cells in Lennoxville and Chateaugay



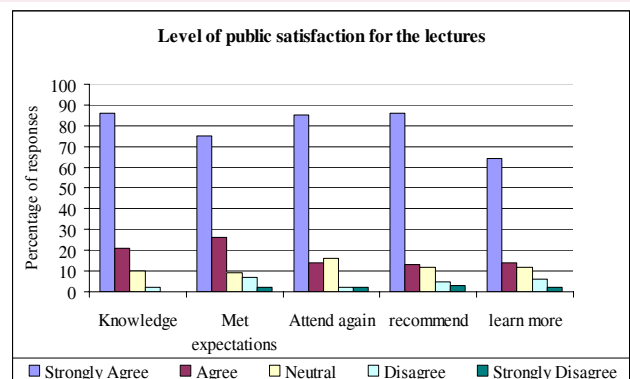
Below: Meeting with Chateaugay leaders: Left to right, Pauline Wiedow, Chair of the Chateaugay English Community Network, Rolf Wiedow, Nicole de Rochemont, Eunice de Gruchy, Mebbie Aikens and Charles (Chuck) Halliday



A survey was distributed to audiences at the different lecture halls

Questions and results:

- 1- This lecture expanded my knowledge of the subject.
- 2- The lecture met my expectations.
- 3- I would attend another lecture if offered.
- 4- I would recommend this lecture to a friend.
- 5- The idea of a volunteer peer learning study group in my community.



LEISURE AS THE BASIS OF CULTURE



In 1952, Joseph Pieper published an influential book titled *Leisure as the Basis of Culture*. Simplified, the thesis of Pieper's book was that neither the creation nor the appreciation of culture is possible in a life which is dominated by work. His reference

to culture was not to its general anthropological sense, as when we now frequently use the word in regional, social or ethnic conceptions like Quebec or Canadian culture, native culture, African or Latin American, minority or mass culture and so on. Such an anthropological conception of culture consists of everything which figures in the life of a particular group. But Pieper's reference was to what is sometimes called "high culture"; what Matthew Arnold called "the best that has been thought and said in the world," which most of us encounter in the school subjects of the arts and sciences.

Although most of us acquire some familiarity with these school disciplines, many (perhaps a majority) come to reject their relevance to their lives and would never dream of continuing to learn or value them once the compulsion of the school no longer exists. Some would argue that a majority have neither the interest nor the intellectual capacity to appreciate these liberal arts and sciences which require a contemplative cast of mind for their enjoyment and understanding; they prefer to engage in practical, "useful" activities of one kind or another. From time to time there are suggestions that the school curriculum should be reformed to exclude the liberal disciplines for the majority of young people and be focused instead upon activities which seem more relevant to daily life at home, at work and in the marketplace.

Other educationists of a conservative cast of mind have argued that not only does the compulsory culture-based curriculum increase the dropout rate of schools but also that it is a threat to the quality of culture itself, because in order to make the arts and the sciences comprehensible to ordinary people, we have necessarily to resort to a dumbing down of the learning process which has the inevitable result of corrupting the culture itself.

Pieper's own argument was that following the Second World War, industrial societies had become trapped in "a world of total labour," where workers (both blue and white-collar) are "fettered to the process of work." And although for a period in the seventies and eighties we were said to be on the verge of a Golden Age of Leisure, current discussions of the world of work suggest that its tyranny is as totalitarian as it ever was. So, if Pieper and others are correct that cultural creation and appreciation needs leisure, cultured human beings are a dying breed.

Leisure is not merely identical with "spare time" or having nothing to do all day. But spare time is a necessary, if not a sufficient condition for the pursuit of culture.

The point of this analysis for those of us at MILR is that even if we have not had a life sufficiently free from the pressures of work to pursue culture as we would have wished, now in retirement we are indeed a leisured class. For twenty years, MILR has provided study groups and lectures primarily focused on themes from the arts (music, literature, painting and sculpture, as well as philosophy) and social and natural sciences. From time to time it is suggested that we should consider providing more "practical" studies. But so far as these have any place in a university at all, they belong in other departments of the Faculty of Continuing Education.

In fact, paradoxically, although Pieper saw the culture of leisure as "useless" for practical purposes, he also saw that it has a higher use in the formation of the cultured person by inducing "the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation." This cannot but be useful in the improvement of both individual and social life.

Harold Entwistle*

* *Harold is the editor of the MILR Newsletter and is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Concordia University. He was recently honoured at the Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) Conference at Carleton University for his contributions to the philosophy of education.*

L'ART DE BIEN VIEILLIR



De nos jours, il n'est pas rare de rencontrer des 70 ou 80 ans qui voyagent, vont au concert, lisent, et même veulent faire ou continuer des études quand, il n'y a pas si longtemps, ils seraient pratiquement sur leur lit de mort. Vers les années 1970 quand ce changement démographique sans précédent a eu lieu, c'est à Toulouse, une ville du sud de la France, qu'on a senti l'urgence de créer la première université du « 3^e âge », une U3A.


Le succès fut instantané et se répandit comme une traînée de poudre, aux villes voisines puis à quelques pays européens, pour ensuite traverser la Manche et intéresser vivement les gérontologues de Cambridge. Ceux-ci trouvèrent la méthode française trop académique et décidèrent de la démocratiser en introduisant « le peer learning » où enseignants et élèves échangent leurs connaissances, une sorte de coopérative du savoir où chacun profite du travail des autres.

De Cambridge à Harvard il n'y avait qu'un pas et c'est de cette université qu'un groupe de personnes passionnées, avec la collaboration du département de l'Éducation continue de l'université McGill, entreprirent de fonder MILR (McGill Institute of Learning in Retirement). Des comités furent formés et après un an, grâce à la persévérance des Clark, Crooks, Gaboury, Heller, Paisner, Stewart, Verschuren et Wright, pour n'en nommer que quelques uns, la première session de MILR a vu le jour en 1989 avec succès. Nous devons reconnaissance à tous les autres bénévoles qui, depuis ce jour, n'ont cessé de travailler au développement et à la renommée de l'institut qui répond aux besoins du jour. À toutes ces personnes merci. Et joyeux vingtième anniversaire et longue vie à MILR.


Michèle Barbeau-Monfette

The History of Seniors' Peer Learning

Université du Troisième Âge
Toulouse - France - 1972



The University of the Third Age
1980s - Great Britain



"...it should be possible to form a local U3A anywhere there was a sufficient number of like-minded people; that the curriculum should be as broad as possible and that it should be managed by the people themselves." (History of U3A)

Peer Learning comes to North America!
Harvard Institute for Learning in Retirement
McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement



Peer Learning is now spreading world-wide!



8/5/2009

MILR AT 20 YEARS



Before MILR existed there was a mailing to all McGill graduates about a general meeting on the subject. I didn't get a copy, Cambridge being my alma mater. But a good friend who taught history at McGill gave me his. This meeting was a turning point in my life – a real revelation. Of course I joined at once – 20 years ago now – thinking it would give me a retirement occupation when the time came.

MILR has been a delight since the first day. I was asked to join the Council and so met two other founding members who were very active, Anita Heller and Fiona Clark. During my second term on Council I was a committee chairman (By-Laws) and for several years had fun giving a study group on antiques. I have made many delightful friends and several of these are Past Presidents, though there is not enough space to list all their names.

MILR has been pure enjoyment and has given me an occupation during retirement as I had hoped. Twenty years is a long time. Let's all congratulate one another on this splendid anniversary!

Peter Nash

MILR MOVES WITH THE TIMES



MILR hasn't always had a home of its own. In the beginning classes were held all over campus. I spoke recently with a number of people who joined MILR in its first year and are still members today. They all had fond

memories of getting to class in the early years. Anita Heller and Peter Nash told me they enjoyed walking through the campus because it made them feel they were back at university. But they also appreciate our current home where members can mingle between classes, and Herb Shapiro pointed out that he and other older members can continue to attend only because MILR is now so accessible.

When MILR began in 1989, an immediate problem was to find space. With only a few weeks' notice classrooms had to be found for 15 study groups. So for the first four years MILR had to make do with whatever rooms Continuing Education could get. Members climbed up the hill to Thompson House and squeezed into small chairs in windowless rooms in the basement of the Samuel Bronfman Building.

Then, in 1993, Continuing Education succeeded in getting space in 550 Sherbrooke St. W. This was a real breakthrough, and MILR was able to capitalize on the move. We were allocated three classrooms, an office and a lounge in a self-contained area on the second floor. MILR purchased its own tables and chairs for the classrooms and furniture for the lounge. Everyone was thrilled that MILR now had a home of its own.

Five years later, in 1998, when the Centre for Continuing Education moved to its current premises at 688 Sherbrooke St. W., it was taken for granted that MILR would have its own space; we were allocated a fourth classroom as well as a larger office and storage space for equipment. With easy access to the second floor, its location opposite the main McGill campus and internal access to the Metro, it is an ideal location. We even have a copy centre handy on the ground floor. Although not on the central campus, Saretta Levitan points out that our members enjoy the ambience of students coming and going to classes in the same building. In fact, she says she sees more students than she did in the early days.

Location is not the only thing that has changed over the years. In the 20 years of MILR's existence technology has changed the world. But we have kept up with the times. Slide projectors have been replaced by computers and PowerPoint, and overhead projectors by document readers. Moderators can keep in touch with group members by e-mail. We now have state-of-the-art sound and TV systems; Ron Godfrey marvels at the improvement for the music classes since the days when Al Toffi brought in his own stereo equipment each week.

The early members told me that, irrespective of what equipment is used, in general the groups function much as they did in the beginning, with everyone participating. Their greatest satisfaction is from presentations that stimulate discussion. They appreciate when projected images enhance discussion; although several may feel intimidated by the use of PowerPoint, many others express interest in acquiring this new skill. Peter Nash fondly remembers the slide projector: he showed slides at the many study groups he moderated on antiques. Ann Weinstein loves the way Peter Pearson dialogues with his group on the Internet between classes.

We have been able to maintain the small group atmosphere so key to our peer learning program. The round-table format continues to provide an ambience for dialogue and shared experience. Of course, the downside of small groups is that not everyone is able to take the study group they want. This happened even at the beginning. Les Curry remembers that in 1990 he could not get into a study group on Carl Jung. Knowing there was a waiting list, he offered to moderate a second group himself, and it became the first of many study groups he led.

I'm always reminded of the principles of adult learning when I reflect on MILR. They are:

Adults learn best when they:

- *Study a subject of their own choosing*
- *Take control of their own learning activities*
- *Perceive the material to be relevant to their own interests*
- *Exchange ideas and experiences in thoughtful discussion*

Irrespective of where we meet and what technology we use, these are the elements fundamental to MILR's success. The great location and resources we have acquired are the icing on the cake.

Fiona Clark*



**Fiona has been involved with MILR since its inception. In MILR's history, much of the credit for its establishment, growth and success is due to her. Thank you, Fiona, for 20 years of dedication which has left an indelible mark on MILR.*



LEARNING MATTERS



Education in early life combined with opportunities for lifelong learning gives people the cognitive skills and confidence to stay independent and healthy as they age. (Report of the World Health Organization) In Canada,

notably in Quebec, our population is ageing more rapidly than other industrialized countries. This demographic may in part explain why 450 educational organizations devoted to the learning needs of older adults have been established in North America during the past 25 years.

Learning in retirement programs that are sponsored by a host campus, like McGill, are uniquely designed to meet the interests of highly motivated learners. Across Canada these organizations are linked through the Network for Third Age Learning (CATALIST) managed out of the Seniors Education Centre in Regina and by the Elderhostel Institute Network and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes in the U.S. These peer programs share a common purpose to serve the learning needs of its student membership with suitable delivery formats, such as study groups, lectures or field trips. And looking ahead, on-line internet learning. Within this vibrant social milieu, people feel at home to discuss what is on their minds. Subjects are as diverse as the membership, such as art history, magical opera moments, hop scotching the world, theatre and literature, science and society and writing your memoirs, just a few of the more than 50 topics offered for fall 2009. The vitality of the curriculum reflects MILR's success story.

Located as we are, a small planet within McGill's universe, provides both advantages and challenges. As an arms-length self-financing Institute, MILR has grown and prospered under the umbrella of

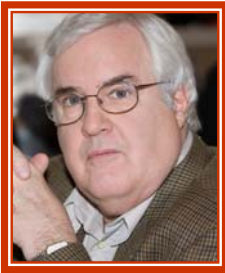
Continuing Education with dedicated volunteer leadership. I too have grown with you and feel privileged to work alongside presidents past, present and future. Thank you: Al, Anita, Charlotte, Ethel, George, Herb, Mebbie, Jan, Joan, John, Mike, Moshe, Nancy, Nicole, Otto, Rory, Sandra, Timmy. In particular, Fiona who hired me as a mature graduate student way back in 1993. You remain my mentors and my dear friends. MILR is more than an organization of volunteers; it is people who make a choice to build an association together. My challenge remains to coordinate the creative talents of the committees and to keep pace with each of you.

It is very gratifying for me to represent MILR's achievements and to make presentations to diverse groups, whether at a local conference on ageing and learning in Montreal, a community centre in Calgary or an elder college in China. Please be assured that MILR is widely known and respected as a pioneer in the specialized field of peer teaching and learning and that we are sought after by fledgling seniors' organizations as a voice of experience.

I am astounded that 16 years have flown, witnessed by my hair turning grey and now back to brown. Although my time available to MILR is reduced, my commitment remains the same to members and to Council. I will continue to seek imaginative ways for members and volunteers to exceed their expectations for personal development. In August, the office will have a new staff person who will provide assistance and continuity. Please welcome her. Thank you for the precious gift of friendship. I remember with fondness our multitudes of meetings in the office, the equipment rooms, the classrooms, the kitchen, around my table and even the corridors. You are always welcome on the 10th floor for a cup of tea to continue the dialogue.

Carolynn Rafman
MILR Program Coordinator

A WALK INTO THE FUTURE AT MILR



Imagine...You have just completed your on-line registration for your two selected study groups in the comfort of your home. Minutes later an e-mailed confirmation arrives with a downloadable receipt for the fees you have paid with your

PayPal account. There only remains for you to click on the “group package” icon on the MILR web site for your selected study groups, and within seconds you are reviewing the outlines, timetables and suggested materials that will be required for the groups. You also browse the lecture menu and choose two that you will attend – one on Tuesday evening and the other on the regular Friday morning time slot.

Your plan is to get down to McGill once a week for that 9:30 a.m. group on Bio-Medical Ethics. It is a great topic and should engender much lively discussion. Your friend, living out in Chambly, can't get to the class, but has also signed up and will be participating “at a distance” in real time. So you are quite excited about getting to that vital first meeting. As you walk into 688 Sherbrooke you move up to the 2nd floor and say hello to the helpful volunteers in the newly refurbished office. You are introduced to the new office manager who is working on the many tasks centered there, in addition to coordinating the work and schedule of these ever-present and vitally important volunteers. You confirm that you are indeed registered in the groups and lectures you chose. The moderators are in the class with their updated class lists, ready to get started.

The recently revamped classroom you enter is all you (and the moderators) could hope for. It has comfortable chairs and tables and is fully equipped with a digital classroom sound system, as well as all the equipment needed to give presentations – video monitors, smart screens and a special communications screen that connects external group members (like your Chambly friend) directly to the classroom via the Internet. You will hear everyone clearly and will be able to communicate with those “distant learners.” Because a “remote” learner can participate, you feel that even if you are a bit “under the weather” one day, or that the actual weather is a bit too risky for

your aging limbs, you can still be a participant in the discussions.

The second group that you signed up for is, in fact, an intensive one that will be run in the afternoons for five consecutive days during the 4th week of the term. Let us say it will be an intensive history of art group that will review modern art and artists, and will have two sessions held at local museums in the Montreal downtown core. It will wrap up with a nice lunch or dinner party on the last day of the session.

You are very happy that your friend in Chambly is also able to take a second study group at the newly established satellite location on the South Shore in the St. Lambert Senior Citizens Centre. It is much closer for her and she can then participate directly with other retirees much like what is happening at the now very active West Island “campus” in Ste. Anne de Bellevue.

One of your favourite activities is attending musical concerts. Every second week there is an MILR-sponsored event in the auditorium of the next-door McCord Museum, and you are happy to pay a small additional fee to attend these. Jazz and chamber groups alternate during the fall and winter terms and these groups are brought into the MILR environment by way of active members and their many network contacts. Other special, one-time events are also organized by MILR in the summer.

Meanwhile, you are also a volunteer and help out on occasion at those special events. You have been contemplating becoming a moderator and offering a study group, but are a bit shy to do so. Fortunately, a new short program that is offered between terms and that helps initiate moderators is in place and you will likely try it next term.

You are most impressed by the fact that MILR has a solid independent source of funding and this has come via active fund-raising, as well as from bequests to the Institute from the estates of former members. You have, in fact, decided to give a bit of money to this splendid Institute from your own newly revised will. “Let's face it,” you say to yourself, “this has been an important part of my life and must continue to grow, expand and prosper, and to inspire and educate us all in our retirement years.”

David G. Schurman

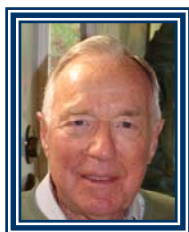
BIOGRAPHICAL NOTES ON PAST PRESIDENTS

Geoffrey Wright, 1989-1990



Geoff was part of the wonderful team that got MILR up and running, and he provided the leadership which put the organization on a sound footing for the future. He played a key role in developing a proposal that was approved by the Senate Committee on Continuing Education, and he became MILR's first President. Fond of classical music, Geoff moderated music study groups at MILR with Ron Godfrey and Lew Lutter. Moving to London in 1990, with this Montreal experience, he approached the University of Western Ontario and in 1994, a Society for Learning in Retirement was established.

Fred Miles, 1990-1992



Born in Bristol, England, and after serving in the British Royal Navy during WWII, Fred joined BOAC. In 1960 he was assigned to Montreal where he lived for the next 30 years. Upon retirement he joined the group that started MILR. He moderated study groups on British, European and North American History and Creative Writing. Moving to Kelowna in 1992, he contributed to the development of the Seniors Learning in Retirement - SLIR. He also became the president of the Okanagan Symphony. His motto: "We all have to get older, but we don't have to get old".

Anita Fochs Heller, 1992-1993



Born in Germany, Anita finished her education in Montreal, obtaining from McGill a BSc in Zoology, an MSc in Parasitology and later an MA in Sociology. She worked in histology research at both McGill and Harvard medical schools and did research for the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women. In 1989, Anita was the first Chair of the Curriculum Committee. She became chair of the Seniors Independence Program Committee and, with Fiona Clark, she prepared a self-assessment project for MILR to formulate guidelines for meeting the learning needs of its members, and as a model for similar organizations.

Al Toffi, 1993-1994



A native Montrealer, Al had a 35-year career in education. He obtained many degrees, among which a B.A. in pedagogy from Université de Montreal, an M.A. from St. Michael's College, Vermont, and a Diploma in Education from McGill. He became president of the board of the Association of Catholic Principals and a member of the board of the Catholic School Commission. He initiated programs for children with special needs in the poorer sectors of Montreal. Having played classical music since his youth, Al moderated music study groups. His collection of CDs rivals McGill's. He was also Chair of the Planning Committee, Member of Curriculum Committee and vice-president.

Neill E. Currie, 1994

Neill, a Manitoba Rhodes Scholar, held degrees from Oxford, Toronto, Queens and Manitoba Universities. During WWII, he served as a bomber pilot, receiving the Distinguished Flying Cross. He later served in the Department of External Affairs as Consul in Columbia, became Vice-President of the Bank of Montreal and Economic Advisor to the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. A conservationist and wildlife enthusiast, he moderated groups on tropical ecosystems. He was also President of Contactivity Centre for Seniors, founding member and President of Seniors of Westmount Action Group and Board Member of Senior Citizens Forum of Greater Montreal.

Charlotte Sonshine, 1994-1996



Charlotte was a member of MILR from its inception and significantly participated in its growth. Serving for seven years on Council in different functions, she was member and Chair of the Curriculum Committee, vice-president and acting-president prior to her presidency. She also moderated several literary groups mainly focusing on 19th and 20th century literature such as *The Changing Face of the Tragic Hero in Drama*, *Waiting for Godot* and *James Joyce - a Demystification*, where she explained why James Joyce was such a literary giant. To this day, she is still remembered as a well-prepared moderator.

Herbert Bercovitz, 1996-1997



A Université de Montréal graduate in Pharmacy, Herb had his own pharmacy until, after obtaining Master's in Health Administration from Université de Montréal, he became a senior manager at the Montreal General Hospital. He sat on the Boards of several health and

social service institutions. Joining MILR in 1989, he moderated Creative Writing study groups for eight years. From 1991 to 1999, Herb also served as a Municipal Councillor for the City of Westmount. A renowned Montreal sculptor, his "Phantom Owl" is on Permanent Exhibition in the Westmount Public Library. Herb continues his artistic work at his St. Laurent street studio.

Joan Walker, 1997-1998



A retiree from human resources in the business world, she was also an active golfer. Her brain child and legacy was the successful establishment of the Sunday-Get-Togethers for senior music lovers. These were renamed the Joan Walker Musical Afternoons in her memory. Chair of the Long-Range

Planning Committee she was responsible for organizing such focus groups as the "Maintaining Momentum Workshops". She represented MILR at an International Conference in Regina in 1996. Joan was a strong advocate for the development of an MILR program for the West Island where she resided, foreseeing the potential for success there.

Moshe Bar-Urian, 1998-1999



Born in Russia, growing up in Palestine, working as a technician in movies and as an officer in the Israeli army, Moshe arrived in Montreal in 1949. A McGill graduate in Engineering, he worked at Canadian Marconi as chief

engineer. Retiring in 1991, Moshe volunteered for the Jewish Vocational Services and joined MILR, moderating and lecturing "Readings from the Bible" for the next 14 years, and was chair of the Curriculum Committee. He modified and supervised the plans for MILR's new quarters at 688 Sherbrooke St. Moshe proposes an 11th commandment: "Thou shall not waste good energy and knowledge."

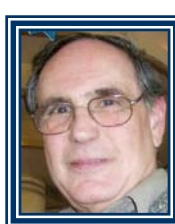
Ethel Kesler, 1999-2000



Native of Ottawa, Ethel obtained a Masters in Social Work from University of Toronto. In Montreal, she became a leader in many spheres of community volunteering, and Vice-President of the YM-YWHA.

Joining the Nuclear Disarmament movement in the 1960's, she started the Montreal Baby Tooth Survey, instrumental in the cessation of nuclear testing in the U.S. Her lifelong love of learning brought her to MILR. Never missing a learning opportunity, she is a member of the Academy of Senior Professionals at Eckerd College, Florida, where she attends sessions every winter. As a member of the Jane Austen Society, she has travelled widely to attend meetings.

John Felvinci, 2000-2001



John came to Canada after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution. With a doctoral degree in nuclear physics from McGill, John was a teacher and researcher at Columbia University, N.Y. He became involved with computers and later worked in

industry, installing radiation monitoring systems at nuclear power plants. He joined MILR in 1994, becoming a moderator, lecturer, and chairman of the Curriculum Committee. Besides science, his hobby is the study of social and cultural history, particularly of Western and Eastern Europe. His study groups are so popular that he frequently duplicates his sessions. John also lectures at the Cummings Centre.

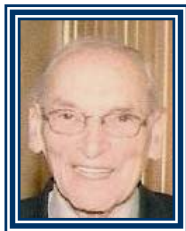
Meribah Aikens, 2001-2002



Mebbie studied voice at Westminster Choir College, Princeton N.J., before coming to Canada. She obtained a B.A. in English Literature from McGill where she worked in Student Services. Upon retirement, she

studied Creative Writing at Concordia and joined MILR, moderating *Write the Story of Your Life* for many years, lecturing, as well as chairing many Committees. Devoted volunteer, elder at St. Andrew & Paul Church, finalist in Montreal's Golden Age Association Awards, Volunteer of the Year for Community Support Services and for Senior Services in Mount Royal, Citizen of the Year and recipient of the Queen's Jubilee Medal for Community Services, her devotion to helping others ignores boundaries.

Otto Sand, 2002-2003



A long and arduous journey led Otto to MILR. Born in Czechoslovakia, Otto miraculously survived the devastating trials of the Holocaust. To escape the Communist regime he relocated to Israel where he joined the defence forces and attended Hebrew

University in Jerusalem. He came to Montreal to work in the family clothing business, managing the Quebec-Eastern Canada branch. In 1994, he joined MILR when it was still in its infancy and became a council member, assisting in the creation of the by-laws and working with the finance committees. His early experiences inspired him to moderate classes dealing with politics and current events.

Jan Meyers, 2003-2004



Soon after graduating as a Civil Engineer in Holland. Jan came to Canada. His first career was in the pulp and paper industry, working for CIP, and later becoming Senior Vice-President of Domtar. Having taken early retirement, his second

career began as Executive in Residence at Concordia University, teaching in the MBA program for eight years. Moderator and lecturer on Dutch Trade and Art and 17th Century History at MILR, he also served as Curriculum Committee Chair. He says his main challenge at MILR is finding subjects of interest for study groups. His motto: "Develop yourself to the ability that you can."

Nancy Grayson, 2004-2005



A transplanted North Carolinian, Nancy obtained a Master's in Social Work at McGill and spent her working career at the Royal Victoria Hospital. Throughout her professional and volunteer career Nancy held leadership roles on several boards - the Queen

Elizabeth Health Centre, L'abri en Ville and AMI Quebec. In 2005 she was a finalist for the YWCA Women of Distinction Grand Prize. A moderator and lecturer, she implemented new outreach projects such as SPEAK and lectures at senior residences during her tenure as President of MILR.

Rory O'Sullivan, 2005-2006



Born in Dun Laoghaire, Ireland, following studies in architecture Rory joined the Irish Office of Public Works. Subsequently he became manager of the Irish division of an International Building Company. On immigrating to

Canada, he started his own company designing and building houses in Montreal's West Island. Later, he was a sales manager of the real estate division of Royal Trust, now Royal LePage. Rory was a founding member and is Past President of the Irish Canadian Heritage Society. At MILR he was Chair of the Curriculum Committee and continues moderating and lecturing on opera and music, duplicating most sessions.

Thelma Cohen, 2006-2007



Familiarly called Timmy, she was born and grew up in Montreal. She received a BA degree in studio art and art history from McGill and a further BFA from Concordia, also acquiring several diplomas in wallpaper and textile design. Her

interests, centering around music and art, she taught recorder classes in elementary schools, was a textile designer with major companies and ran her own cottage industry. Since discovering MILR, Timmy has not looked back. She became a moderator and lecturer in the field of art history and a member of Council as Volunteer Coordinator, encouraging membership involvement.

Michael McCusker, 2007-2008



After graduating in medicine from McGill, Michael specialized in ophthalmology, interning at Miami Dade County Hospital and did his residency at the Cornell-affiliated New York Hospital. He practised medicine in the United States until he went to Africa in the 1990s. After

joining MILR on retirement, he became Chair of the Curriculum Committee. At the helm, he formed and headed an audiovisual committee and secured financial stability at MILR. He moderates groups on medical topics. His favourite quote is, "If you don't make mistakes, then you aren't really trying."

Nicole de Rochemont, 2008-2009



Nicole spent her professional life in the media, film and television industry. She learned her craft as a member of a movie production company based in New York City and Hollywood. Returning to Canada, she worked as a writer, director, producer and executive producer in the public and private sectors in such fields as documentaries, films and television. She was the associate producer of acclaimed film, *The Boys of St. Vincent*. At MILR, moderating such novelty themes as “L’amour, toujours l’amour,” Nicole has brought us “un petit je ne sais quoi” of French chic. As President, she was the instigator of MILR’s 20th Anniversary celebrations.

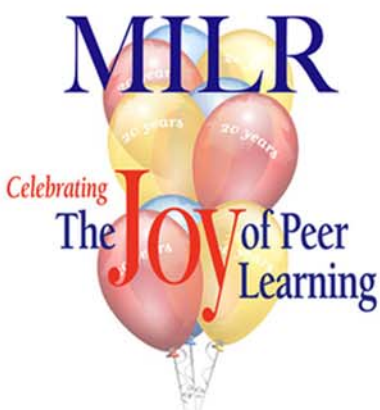
COMING SOON:

Artworks by MILR members



Montreal Premiere of Oscar-nominated *Late Bloomers*

Twentieth anniversary events



Art works by MILR members September 3 - 5, 2009

McClure Gallery, Visual Arts Centre, 350 Victoria Ave, Westmount
Hours: Tuesday - Friday 12 - 6, Saturday 10 - 5
Vernissage: Thursday, September 3 from 6 to 8 p.m

Montreal Premiere of Oscar-nominated Swiss film *Late Bloomers*

Thursday October 15, 2009 at 7 p.m.

Maxwell Cummings Auditorium, Montreal Museum of Fine Arts, South Pavilion
1379 Sherbrooke St. West
Tickets must be purchased in advance from MILR office - \$5 each

Arts Festival February 11 - 20, 2010

Tudor Hall, La Maison Ogilvy, 5th Floor, 1307 Ste. Catherine St. West
Vernissage: Thursday, February 11 from 4 to 6 p.m.

Victorian Tea Thursday June 17, 2010

Two sittings: 2 to 4 p.m. and 4 to 6 p.m.
Stewart Hall, 176 Lakeshore Boulevard, Pte. Claire
Tickets must be purchased in advance from MILR office - \$5 each

For further information about our anniversary and the special events listed above, consult our website at:
<http://milr20.mcgill.ca>

CONSIDERING A PHILANTHROPIC GIFT?

Since its founding in 1989, the McGill Institute for Learning in Retirement – a vital and dynamic group operating within the Centre for Continuing Education -- has grown by leaps and bounds. The number of study groups has more than tripled in the past twenty years. With seniors expected to comprise twenty-five per cent of Canada's population by 2031, there will be a growing demand for intellectually stimulating activities, putting pressure on already limited resources.

To ensure that MILR continues to enrich lives and meet the personal, intellectual and social interests of mature learners, we encourage our members to consider making a tribute gift to MILR in honour of a family member, friend or moderator. You can also make a gift to commemorate our 20th anniversary and help MILR to continue its fine work and pursue its goals: *enhancing accessibility and community outreach, expanding its programs and improving its learning environment*

20th Anniversary Committee Members

Ex-officio Chair	Nicole de Rochemont
Chair	Astri Thorvik
Vice Chair	Mebbie Aikens
Liaison	Carolynn Rafman
Recording Secretary	Nola Brunelle
Public Relations Committee	Pauline Ann Phelps
Publicity	Sharen McDonald
20th Anniversary Publication	Charlotte French
Arts Festival and Exhibits	Thèa Pawlikowska, Pauline Ann Phelps, Alexandra Morrison
Lecture Tour	Allan Sherwin, George Latimer
Legal Advisor	Frank Brodie

Acknowledgments

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- Thelma Cohen for preparing the cover page design
- Gordon Campey for the photograph of MILR's building. His website is www.pbase.com/gcampey
- Luc Saucier for designing the 20th anniversary logo. Mr Saucier is a noted calligrapher and can be reached at www.lucscribe.com
- Charlotte French for the mosaic of head shots
- Patricia Billing for proofreading
- George Lapa for preparing the newsletter layout

Members of the Editorial Committee wish to thank their Chairman, Charlotte French, for her unwavering, tireless dedication and creativity to ensure the success of this publication.
She inspired us all.



WHO WE ARE

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