

The York University Magazine

Summer 2023

Bad Trip

Why flying is suddenly such a downer



The
York University
Magazine

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THE PRESIDENT



RHONDA L. LENTON
PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR

WHEN YORK UNIVERSITY launched its five-year academic plan just over three years ago it included a university-wide challenge to elevate our contributions to the United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The goals are wide-ranging – from reduced inequalities and quality education, to zero hunger and climate action – and closely align with York's vision to drive positive change for our local and global communities, and with our teaching and research strengths.

An urgent response to these global issues requires stakeholders from all sectors and countries working together to advance peace and prosperity for all people and the planet. York's leadership is evident in the talent that we are producing, our research and creative activities, our contributions to the broader innovation ecosystem, and our role as a global facilitator.

We made bold commitments over the past year – promising to reduce indirect and direct emissions by 45 per cent by 2030 to achieve net-zero sooner. To support these ambitious goals, we announced \$1 million to support sustainable innovation and hired Chief Sustainability Officer Mike Layton. A former city councillor and York alum, Mike is a proven champion for climate-change action and equality, and an exemplar of what our alumni community is doing to make a positive impact.

Since announcing our commitment to the SDGs, we have significantly expanded our academic programs and scholarship in sustainability, grown our global partnerships and implemented changes to our campus operations. From decarbonizing our endowments and pension portfolios, to phasing out plastic water bottles, we continue to explore innovative ways to reduce our carbon footprint.

A great example of this is how York is leveraging our campuses as "Living Labs" through initiatives such as the Energy Management Information System (EMIS). EMIS is a state-of-the-art system that will enable cloud-based software with AI capabilities to analyze and optimize existing building energy in real time with the goal of controlling campus comfort and reducing unnecessary use of electricity and gas. This initiative contributes to the learning experiences of our students and researchers who benefit from real-time knowledge and data in their own work.

This winter, we proudly launched the Microlecture Series in Sustainable Living. The series is a first-of-its-kind, free, interdisciplinary, open access program that gives participants the opportunity to learn from six of York's world-renowned experts on topics of sustainability. It challenges users to commit to taking individual action in support of sustainable living. The series resonates with me personally because it is a reminder that we each play a role in reversing the impacts of climate change. As a proud ambassador for sustainable living, I encourage you to take the course and commit to your own individual action. You can learn more at yorku.ca/sustainableliving/.

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

EDITOR'S NOTES



Body and Soul

IN HIS POEM, "I Sing the Body Electric," Walt Whitman celebrates the physical in all its "sprawl and fulness." The poet inventories "the bent head, the curv'd neck ... the vigor, calmness, beauty of person," along with "the wildest largest passions," to bridge the gap between body and soul. Human frailty and infallibility are equally examined and revered as parts of the same lived whole. "All is a procession," Whitman writes, "a procession with measured and perfect motion." We couldn't agree more.

In the Summer 2023 issue of *The York University Magazine* we follow the American poet's enthralling lead to give shape and voice to the wealth and variety of corporeal experience as a conduit to positive change. We write about the pleasure of planned sex, the science of obesity, and the challenges faced by an aging population.

We take you inside the collective body of York's gospel choir, and back in time to when Canadian astronaut Steve MacLean first tumbled through space as a member of the University's award-winning men's gymnastics team. And we pull you into the crowds at Pearson International Airport, guided by York aviation experts who study the root causes of flight delays, and the traditional Indigenous community of Colombia's Wayuu people via a York grad who now works with them to sell their artisanal wares in Canada at fair market prices.

We investigate sustainable finance as a tool for creating a more equitable future and the accolades heaped on a York visual arts professor's ongoing investigations into the human condition. We also have articles about the disembodied – subatomic particles to predict the age

of the universe, overcoming the body paralysis that followed a catastrophic collision with a moose, the endowment of a new University Chair in dementia studies, and more.

Like Whitman's original 1855 poem, this issue is composed of many interwoven parts. Wonder is here reserved for University alumni and faculty, their achievements and aspirations for righting the future. There's energy in the exchange of ideas. We hope you feel it too, the spark arising from the body electric at York. ●

— Deirdre Kelly

The York University Magazine



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ON THE COVER



Bad Trip
Photography by
Chris Robinson



Weighing the Differences

When it comes to excessive fat accumulation, men have it worse than women

PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

WHY IS OBESITY more dangerous for men than women? According to a new study out of York University, it may be related to differences between males and females in the resilience of endothelial cells, which build blood vessels.

Researchers at the Faculty of Health's School of Kinesiology and Health Science observed "striking" variances in the endothelial cells in the fatty tissue of male versus female mice that were fed a high fat diet. The team used software to help sift through thousands of genes to zero in on the ones that would be associated with blood vessel growth. They discovered that processes associated with the proliferation of new blood vessels were high in the female mice, whereas the males had a high level of genes that promote inflammation. These differences indicated that the endothelial cells of females better resisted the negative effects of a long-term high fat diet.

The growth of new blood vessels is an essential feature of healthy fat tissue. These results, published in the journal *iScience*, are noteworthy because they help to account for why men are more likely than women to develop diseases

associated with obesity such as cardiovascular disease, insulin resistance and diabetes.

In Canada, almost two in three adults and one in three children and youth are overweight or living with obesity, with even higher rates in marginalized and equity-seeking populations, according to the latest health data from Statistics Canada. The proportion of adults who were obese or overweight was higher among men than women (69.4 per cent versus 56.7 per cent) and more men than women were obese in every age category from age 20 onward.

"This isn't just an obesity-related issue," says Faculty of Health Professor Tara Haas, the study's lead. "Aged female endothelial cells also appeared healthier than their male counterparts, suggesting that female cells are better at resisting the stress of biological aging."

One implication of the findings is that treatments for obesity-related diseases might need to be tailored differently for men compared to women, Haas explains. "Also, by gaining knowledge of the cellular differences that enable female endothelial cells to stay healthier, we can pinpoint new therapeutic approaches to improve the health of blood vessels in males." ●

— Deirdre Kelly

Transcendent

Tim Whiten, York visual arts department founding professor, receives two of Canada's top art awards

TIM WHITEN has now received two of the highest honours awarded to artists in Canada, the 2022 Gershon Iskowitz Prize and a 2023 Governor General's Award in Visual and Media Arts. Both awards cement Whiten's legacy as an outstanding and visionary Canadian visual artist and educator with strong ties to York University.

A founding member of York University's visual arts program and professor emeritus of York's School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design, Whiten will receive a \$75,000 cash award for the Iskowitz prize and a \$25,000 cash prize for the Governor General's Award. The Gershon Iskowitz Prize also provides Whiten with a solo exhibition at the AGO, scheduled for 2025.

At 81, Whiten can now look back at a lifetime of tremendous achievement.

His 50-year career teems with a wide range of work that includes drawing, sculpture, installation, performance and multimedia. He is a process-oriented artist who focuses on the transcendental. Says artist Max Dean, one of the members of the Iskowitz Prize jury, "One is at first taken in by the material, but the content of the work transcends."

Whiten began his studies in psychology under psychologist Oscar Oppenheimer, whose theories of time, perception and memory encouraged his own deeply personal investigations of consciousness and spirituality, eventually leading to his visual arts practice. His immersion in psychology and the

humanities, in addition to his proficiency in the plastic arts, led to him being invited to join the teaching faculty at York University in 1968. The job transplanted him from his native United States to Toronto, a short nine years after the University's official founding.

At York, Whiten essentially co-founded York's visual arts program. Working with art historian Ronald Bloore (Hon. DLitt '93) and printmaker Jules Heller (Hon. DLitt '85), who served as Faculty dean, Whiten was crucial in helping develop the uniquely interdisciplinary, performance- and media-oriented curriculum that defines the program today.

"York had a uniquely contemporary focus, and Whiten's practice and teaching were a huge contributor to that focus," says Joyce Zemans, former director of the Canada Council



Tim Whiten. *After Phaeton*, 2013.

Handcrafted glass, ionized glass, brass fittings. Overall: 167.6 × 243.8 × 58.4 cm. Art Gallery of Ontario. Gift of the artist in honour of Tom and Mary E. Whiten, 2022. © Tim Whiten. Photo: AGO. 2022/7.

for the Arts and former dean of the Faculty of Fine Arts (now the School of the Arts, Media, Performance & Design), who taught alongside Whiten before she became Chair of the Department of Visual Arts (1975-81). "He was very well loved by students for this reason."

Many students of the program built by Whiten have gone on to become prominent curators, performers and visual artists, among them noted curator Michelle Jacques (MA '95), Toronto gallerist Daniel Faria (MA '03) and up and coming visual artist Victoria Moreno (BFA '20). "My aim has always been to help students evolve and grow as people," Whiten says.

Teacher is an identity that sits easier with him than artist. In conversation, he bristles at many of the assumed or received

implications of the word, preferring instead to say he is an "image maker who also makes cultural artifacts."

His materials include clothing, furniture and common tools recontextualized in such a way as to transform their received or common meanings. Whiten also uses wood, bone, animal skin and glass for performance rituals informed by the occult, the esoteric and the arcane.

Even so, Whiten is uncomfortable with any neat metaphysical summation of his work, stating that his primary purpose is a process-oriented engagement with viewers. "The works are gifts that are given to people so that they may be able to experience and find something that they may find of value," he says. "They are a gesture of giving." ●

— David Jager

THE HEALING DANCE

A York neuroscientist finds that moving to music improves the mobility and mood of people with Parkinson's disease

PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

JOSEPH DESOUSA is the first to admit that he's not the most graceful person in the room. But that hasn't stopped him from taking classes with classically trained dancer Sarah Robichaud at her downtown Toronto studio.

For the last seven years, DeSouza has been a regular fixture at Dancing With Parkinson's, a Canadian charitable organization and evidence-based dance practice using movement therapy to help people with the neurological disorder better manage their symptoms. Robichaud founded it in 2008, some years after U.S. choreographer Mark Morris, of the Mark Morris Dance Group, first began teaching dance to Parkinson's patients, proving to the world that dance alleviates some of the slow and jerky movements associated with the disease.

It's this aspect of Robichaud's class that most fascinates DeSouza, a professor in systems neuroscience in the Department of Psychology at York University who has spent a good part of his career studying the impact of dance on individuals living with Parkinson's.

While research has previously established that dance helps people with movement challenges due to Parkinson's, DeSouza and his former graduate student Karolina Bearss (PhD '22) are the first to show it actually slows the advancement of the disease.

In 2021, the York scholars published a paper in the journal *Brain Sciences* that followed the progress of people with

Parkinson's who danced weekly over three years. For the study, DeSouza's lab partnered up with Rachel Bar, who is currently the director of the Research and Health department at Canada's National Ballet School, to provide the classes.

People with Parkinson's who danced had no significant motor decline three years in, based on independent assessments, while patients with Parkinson's in the control group showed motor-function decline. The dancers with Parkinson's also showed significant improvement in speech.



Joseph DeSouza

Now, DeSouza's lab is sharing another groundbreaking discovery, this one about the beneficial effect of dance on mood. In a not-yet-peer-reviewed study, research out of DeSouza's lab has shown that, over one year of dance, seven out of eight patients with Parkinson's saw steady improvement in depression scores (and the eighth had no signs of depression to begin

with). MRI scans of the patients show reduced activity in a small area of the brain that some call the depression centre (due to increased activity in this area of the brain in people with depression).

DeSouza is committed to compiling enough evidence to show that dance training, in the right form and frequency, can be a treatment for Parkinson's as well as for depression, which people with Parkinson's struggle with at much higher rates than the general population. "I want to show there's a formula where people can do this and have a better quality of life," he says. ●

— Wendy Glauser (MA '10)

SPONTANEOUS SEX is often considered the most thrilling. But planned sex can be just as passionate. This is the conclusion drawn by York University researchers who did a daily survey of more than 100 couples over three weeks and found that there was no difference in gratification. A parallel study involved 300 couples who answered questions online. The results, published in the *Journal of Sex Research*, showed that while spur-of-the-moment sex is pleasurable, planning for it in no way diminishes the experience.

"What our new study found was that while many people do endorse the ideal of spontaneous sex, there was no difference in the reported satisfaction of their last actual sexual encounter – whether it was planned or unplanned," says Katarina Kovacevic (BA '12), a PhD student who co-authored the study with psychology professor Amy Muise and their colleagues at York's Sexual Health and Relationship Laboratory. "It's just as hot."

While it makes sense for people to prioritize sex and approach it in much the same way as something else important in their lives, many balk at the suggestion. The ideal of spontaneous sex is a belief deeply entrenched in the popular Western imagination, making some couples reluctant to explore other ways to achieve intimacy.

"There can be a lot of resistance to asking patients to talk about and plan sex more, to work as a sexual team," notes Kovacevic, a registered psychotherapist who specializes in sex and relationship therapy. "I think it's because of what we see in movies, but the funny thing is that there is heavy planning in those scenes involving actors who've memorized their lines and large crews directing choices that are convenient and logical from a production standpoint. It's not real."

Despite what some might think, planning for sex doesn't need to be a chore. On the contrary, creating anticipation can spike desire. "We're not necessarily saying to put it on the calendar, such as 7 p.m. on a Tuesday, after putting dinner in the oven, and before folding socks," Kovacevic says.

"But the intentionality behind it can be transformative in the sense that we don't wait around for the right moment, because sometimes the mood just never comes for some people, and that might deter them from getting it on." ●
— Deirdre Kelly

PHOTOGRAPHY BY MIKE FORD



FORETHOUGHT AS FOREPLAY

Why planning ahead for sex is more titillating than you think

Katarina Kovacevic

Bad Trip

Air travel in Canada is experiencing a nosedive

BY RITA SIMONETTA (BA '99) ●
PHOTOGRAPHY BY CHRIS ROBINSON

SUMMERTIME IS A BOON for air travel as eager Canadians take to the skies, excited about their long-anticipated vacations. But it also brings back bad memories of last year's air travel fiasco at Toronto's Pearson International Airport: stranded passengers whose flights were delayed or cancelled slept on terminal floors, planes full of exhausted travellers sat on tarmacs for hours, frustrated holiday-goers aired grievances about insufficient and inept staff.

These problems and more were all duly noted and not just in Canada but around the world.

"Toronto Airport Is World's Worst For Delays," read a headline in the *Wall Street Journal*. "Toronto Pearson: 'I just need to get out of this airport,'" declared another by the BBC. The troubles didn't end there. Mountains of unclaimed luggage left over from the summer spilled into the airport's hallways come winter. People waited days and even weeks to collect their belongings.

What caused the problem? It's complicated.

"The air industry is an ecosystem," says Steven Tufts (PhD '03),





Many of the problems besetting airports like Pearson, such as travel delays, could be eased with more technological know-how

a professor in the Faculty of Environmental and Urban Change who studies the geographies of work, workers and organized labour. As a complex network of many parts, when one part is stressed the whole structure is impacted. The pandemic was a particularly nasty stressor. It exacerbated problems that were already there, creating the scenes of chaos witnessed at the airport last summer.

As the world went into lockdown, air travel came to a screeching halt, becoming one of the industries hit hardest by COVID-19. Employees who were part of the multifaceted aviation network – from pilots to baggage handlers – were laid off en masse. An estimated 4,000 workers exited the sector within two years; some never returned.

Efforts were eventually made to replace staff once air travel resumed following the lifting of most pandemic-related restrictions. But it was too little, too late. “They couldn’t hire fast enough,” says Tufts, adding that the sector has ceased being regarded as a long-term employment option as a result of stressful working conditions, lacklustre benefits, long hours and low starting wages.

According to Transport Canada, the number of commercial pilot licences issued has plummeted by more than 80 per cent as of 2022.

The Canadian Council of Aviation and Aerospace says that more than 7,000 pilots will be required by 2025 to meet demand.

With a dwindling supply of pilots, flight delays and cancellations could turn into an everyday occurrence.

It’s made the industry rethink how to get people moving again at the airports.

Just before the 2023 spring break, the Greater Toronto Airports Authority (GTAA), which operates Pearson, imposed a set of regulations for peak travelling times. The organization had no intention of replaying the frenzy of 2022.

The GTAA placed a limit on the number of international passengers arriving, and those departing to the U.S., through

each terminal at any particular hour. The organization also set a cap on arriving and departing commercial flights.

“The GTAA has been working for months to make every aspect of airport operations better than last summer,” GTAA spokesperson Guy Nicholson says. “This work has been taking place across the airport, and not just by the GTAA. We work in collaboration with airlines and our agency partners, which also contribute significantly to operations running smoothly at the airport.”

Beginning last August, the GTAA revamped slot scheduling in collaboration with the airlines to smooth hourly peaks and fill in valleys of demand to make passenger throughput more efficient. It also brought in an outside firm to do a baggage-system health check and assessment, and stocked up on parts to avoid supply-chain issues. As well, it installed AI technology that monitors the turnaround work done by the airlines and their ground handlers and sends alerts to relevant stakeholders to reduce delays and optimize the time planes spend at their gates.

“We are also optimistic that provisions outlined in the [March] federal budget announcement will lead to more efficient security and border screening, plus better data sharing by the airlines, which should improve planning and staffing for everyone,” Nicholson says.

York economist Fred Lazar is an aviation industry expert who believes adding more technology at the airport is a good thing. Many of the problems besetting airports like Pearson, such as travel delays, could be eased with more technological know-how, something that the industry is sorely lacking.

“They just aren’t technologically savvy,” Lazar says.

And that has to change.

For instance, the current use of luggage barcode tags is time consuming. A more reliable and efficient option would be to equip baggage with chips. “You’ll know in real-time where that bag is,” Lazar says. “All you would need is a scanner.”

Lazar is also a supporter of contactless technologies, such as



With a dwindling supply of pilots, flight delays and cancellations could turn into an everyday occurrence

facial recognition, to usher in a new era of efficiency, arguing it would reduce the various security checks that slow down passenger flow.

But Tufts says that's another complex issue: "These solutions take years to implement and require passenger know-how."

A frequent traveller, Tufts illustrates the point with a recollection of an elderly couple who randomly sought him out to help them navigate the airport check-in kiosk. The learning curve will only become steeper with the introduction of even more advanced technology such as facial recognition. Also, he says, "these technologies are expensive and controversial."

Activists have long argued that in the wrong hands, these tools could be used as a means of surveillance and infringe on an individual's democratic rights. Then there's the worry over misidentification, as well as the possibility that the algorithms behind facial recognition – which ultimately learn from human experience – can reinforce gender, race and class bias and discrimination.

In the meantime, there are other matters to confront. A slew of budget airlines has entered the already crowded playing field. Flair and Lynx are a few of the new arrivals that have banked on cost-conscious consumers hunting for savings. These discount airlines can offer super-low base prices, since passengers have to pay out of pocket for things such as checked bags and snacks.

Workers may be tempted by available work at the budget carriers, but retention rates are low.

Experts say that while the newcomers are a positive step in the spirit of competition, there simply isn't a viable market to support them for the long haul. In March, Flair had four of its aircraft seized, reportedly as a result of overdue payments.

Yet another looming issue is the growing shortage of pilots. The wave of pandemic-related retirements and layoffs, along with an aging workforce, has considerably reduced the pool of talent.

The GTAA says it's aware of this issue and has taken steps

to help airlines with the pilot shortage, including working on an airport-wide job portal. The organization points out that in January, 2,300 people registered for the job fair at Pearson.

But down on the ground there are other issues that need to be addressed, says Lazar, such as the need to increase security staffing levels and capacity.

"Most airports weren't built for the levels of security that came into place after 9/11. Space allocated to it is insufficient for the dramatic increase of passengers we've had in the past 20 or so years."

For Tufts, the way forward is a transformation when it comes to the individuals who are integral to the air travel ecosystem.

Responsibility isn't solely with individual entities, such as the airlines, Pearson or even the GTTA, Tufts says. "What's needed is a national aviation employment strategy," he says, and that means the federal government has to roll up its sleeves and get involved.

A greater sense of involvement and integration is also needed from Toronto's biggest airport, says Tufts. "The airport should be more than a hub, but part of the city."

The GTAA is working on it.

"In terms of Pearson's links to downtown Toronto, we are working with our partners at Metrolinx and all levels of government to continue the planned connection of the Eglinton Crosstown West Extension to Toronto Pearson," the GTAA's Nicholson says.

Tufts, who continues to advocate for living wages and a workers-centred airport (a grocery store and gym, along with other amenities for employees have been suggested), says that as it stands, the air travel industry is losing out on skilled talent.

Avoiding the travel mayhem Canadians experienced last year will require an overhaul at the most essential level. "We need to reinvest in people," he says. ●

York's gospel choir sings again as one voice

BY DEIRDRE KELLY
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HORST HERGET

BACK IN HARMONY



Nicole Sinclair-Anderson

IN THE PANDEMIC, being in a choir became a death sentence. People around the world were reported to have contracted COVID-19 simply by singing together side-by-side as they had always done. Choir practices subsequently were halted or redirected online. “But it just wasn’t the same,” says Nicole Sinclair-Anderson, assistant conductor with the Juno Award-winning Toronto Mass Choir, who now teaches at York. “When you’re in a choir, you need other people standing next to you. You need to hear their voices. At one point, I feared we’d never be able to come together again.”

She says this while perched on a piano bench in room 235 of Accolade East, where she’s just finished leading the York University Gospel Choir to a resounding finish before the end of term. Her very presence here is proof that singing as one voice is back. But it took three agonizingly long years

of suffering through the pandemic to get the YUGC back to normal. During the lockdowns, the YUGC, a full-credit course offered through the Department of Music, was conducted virtually for the first time since its founding in 2005. Then still under the direction of founder and current Chair of the Music Department, Karen Burke (BED '95), the choir managed to continue without pause. But as Sinclair-Anderson says, it wasn’t the same.

Pre-pandemic, the YUGC had on average 80 student members, making it by far the biggest university-level gospel choir in Canada. Some in-person practices resumed last year, but some students were reluctant to attend. Enrolment fell to just over 40 participants for the current 2022-23 academic year. But that’s no cause for concern.

While the numbers are smaller, the voices are just as mighty.



Everyone in the room, from newbies in their first year to seasoned singers nearing the end of their undergraduate studies, sings with flesh-tingling passion and commitment. The students stand as one, swaying and clapping, and tapping their toes as they belt out the spirituals at the core of the curriculum. Corey Butler, who directs the York University Gospel Ensemble, provides musical accompaniment on a studio grand piano, elevating the experience to the level of a concert hall performance.

The harmonies swell, guided by Sinclair-Anderson who exhorts the class to go louder, stronger, as if their lives depended on it. "Don't get sweet with me," she playfully chides. "I want your voice to scoop! I want them drawn out! I want you to sing with intention! I want you to be conscientious musicians!"

Galvanized, the students sing again, lifting their voices in adulation of Jesus – the unapologetic subject of YUGC's expansive repertoire of songs. Gospel is a form of religious





music. But you don't have to be a Christian to take part in the "sacrifice of praise," to quote from one of the hymns. The gospel choir is open to everyone, regardless of religious orientation, or cultural background. "It's my favourite class," says Mateo Usma-Cotillo, a fourth-year jazz piano student who initially came to the class in first year out of curiosity, and then never left. "It's one of the best experiences of music I've had at York." Several of his classmates agree, adding that it's not just the singing that's got them hooked, it's the shared sense of purpose. "It feels like family," says concurrent bachelor of education student Claudette Osias. "I am always happy to be here."

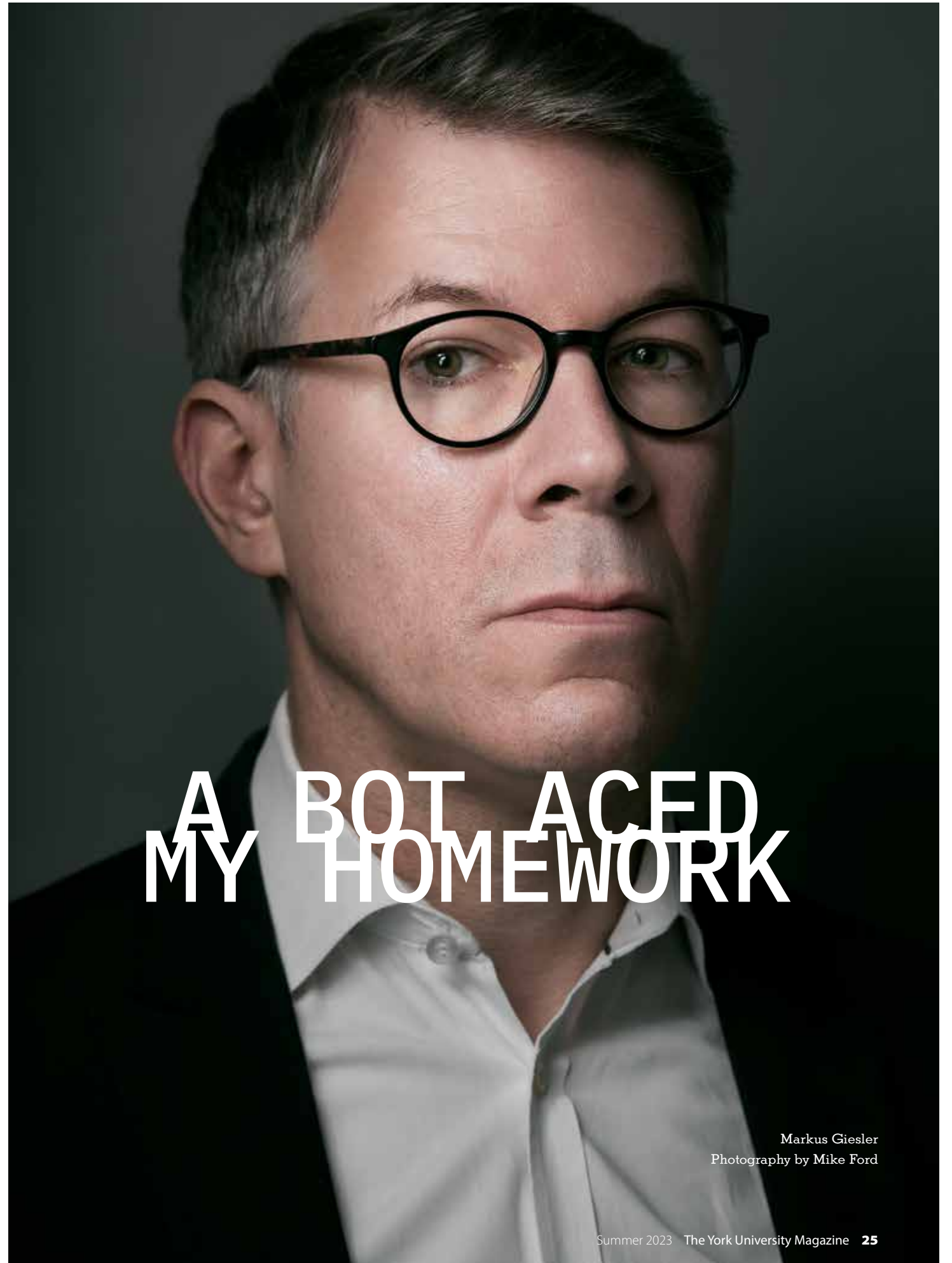
This is all music to the ears of Sinclair-Anderson, a married mother of three boys who has been singing in choirs since the age of nine. She got her start at church and has never looked back. Music is her life and she's grateful to be able to share her belief in singing as a balm for the soul with York students. "It's definitely restorative," she says. "The message of the gospels themselves provides confirmation, even if you don't believe. It's about having a relationship with a higher power. It's the music that connects." ●



How ChatGPT is impacting
the academic experience

BY SHARON ASCHAIK

Robin Sutherland-Harris
Photography by Mike Ford



A BOT ACED MY HOMEWORK

Markus Giesler
Photography by Mike Ford

RELASED LAST NOVEMBER, ChatGPT can compose essays and news releases, research subjects, suggest story ideas, even have philosophical conversations and debug computer code. Make a request, and it scans the web for relevant information and, using what it has learned from training data, almost instantly generates a response that is usually on topic and well-drafted.

But don't be alarmed.

While the artificial intelligence tool can write, research and "converse" in surprisingly human ways, it can't replace the "valuable components of a well-rounded education." That's what the bot says when pointedly asked if its very existence will threaten critical thinking and problem-solving at the university level. "I see myself," it continues, "as a complementary tool that can enhance learning, but not as a replacement for it."

But can we believe that?

Since ChatGPT lacks common sense and emotional intelligence (and also can't understand the subtleties of context and humour) the tool sometimes gives inaccurate answers. Even OpenAI CEO Sam Altman said as much in a tweet posted last December: "It's a mistake to be relying on it for anything important right now. It's a preview of progress; we have lots of work to do on robustness and truthfulness." Not the most encouraging of words, and yet here we are – with a chatbot that's got many in academe rethinking what they do.

As a tool that is incredibly helpful for students to use – and misuse – in their academic work, it's compelling university professors and administrators to consider how to both leverage its educational value and hedge against cheating. "People are stressed out about it ... and very concerned about what it might do for their assessment practices," says Robin Sutherland-Harris, an educational developer at York's Teaching Commons.

Within only two months of its launch, ChatGPT reached a record-setting 100 million monthly users; it took TikTok nine months to achieve that number. Because it can continuously learn from new queries it receives, ChatGPT is getting "smarter," meaning it's increasingly able to produce meaningful results. GPT-4, the tool's latest iteration, was touted by OpenAI as being 60 per cent less likely to give false information.

"We need to adapt and innovate, because the technology's not going to stop," says Osgoode Hall law Professor Pina D'Agostino (BA '96; LLB '99), who co-directs York's Centre for AI and Society. As a research and writing tool, ChatGPT "is a good start," adds D'Agostino, who was recently named

as vice-director of Connected Minds: Neural and Machine Systems for a Healthy, Just Society, a \$318-million research project focused on AI. "But it's not exhaustive, and it's never going to replace someone actually doing the work."

Creating and enforcing rules around students' use of ChatGPT is happening in real time as York navigates the current Wild West terrain of advanced AI. The University now has a webpage on AI technology and academic integrity that includes advice for instructors, including instructing students that unauthorized use of ChatGPT or similar platforms in assessments is a breach of academic honesty. It also touches on teaching and learning suggestions and the detecting of AI-generated content in student work, and shares links to relevant resources.

Recently, York went a step further in these efforts by holding a professional development event on ChatGPT's capabilities, limitations and educational uses. Organized by Sutherland-Harris with Angela Clark, academic integrity officer in the Office of the Vice-Provost Academic, the event was held in response to an influx of questions from faculty members across the institution.

It included a two-hour panel discussion involving computer science Professor Marcus A. Brubaker of the Lassonde School of Engineering and sava saheli singh, a professor of digital futures in the Faculty of Education. Ideas for how to use ChatGPT to improve student experience at York animated the session, yielding new approaches for giving assignments, for instance, and essay writing.

One suggestion was to ask students to develop thoughtful, well-informed prompts for ChatGPT that could yield a high-quality response, then assess it for accuracy and completeness. Another was to get students to generate alternate views to an essay argument, which would give them useful starting points for further exploration. University policy will need to keep evolving to provide clarity and align with the school's code of conduct.

"Because of the unevenness of the landscape ... people need to be very clear about what the expectations are for their students course by course, and not just put it in the syllabus and assume people will read it, but talk about it, you know, really drive it home," Sutherland-Harris says.

Markus Giesler, a professor of marketing at the Schulich School of Business, researches the impact of new technologies on consumer behaviour. He says it's important for the sector to consider the broader social implications of this innovation. "The product itself is not a technologically neutral or objective thing, but something that has built into it certain patterns of power relation," says Giesler, co-author



of the 2020 study "Consumers and Artificial Intelligence: An Experiential Perspective," which identified the need for guidelines around AI and ethics in marketing.

As consumer-facing AI continues to become better at performing tasks that were once viewed as distinctly human, Giesler says universities may face more complex issues of access and equality.

"It's actually not that far-fetched to assume that professions that are mainly about storytelling, truth seeking and articulation of language and fact could in the future be done by artificial intelligence," he adds. "My concern is that a higher education world within which only the privileged students get the real human educator, whereas the less privileged students get the chatbot, is a kind of world that I would not want."

To support students in producing original work, Professor D'Agostino recommends that course syllabi now include information on the strengths and weaknesses of ChatGPT, and how to properly cite the information it provides when used for academic assignments.

She also sees a need to balance writing assignments with oral presentations and exams, so that students can develop their public speaking skills at a time when technology is infiltrating other spheres of their lives.

"We have to become better at evaluating students, helping them produce authentic work, and training them to be critical thinkers," D'Agostino says. "But at the same time, there needs to be regulations and rules in place ... and our core values need to remain solid." ●

Giving

FRIENDS & PHILANTHROPY



BY NICHOLE JANKOWSKI
PHOTOGRAPHY BY SOFIE KIRK

CAREGIVER

Matthias Hoben

Professor Matthias Hoben inaugurates a new endowed Chair in Dementia Care

WHEN MATTHIAS HOBEN came across a job posting for the newly created Helen Carswell Chair in Dementia Care at York University last year, he couldn't believe his eyes. "It just seemed to be tailored to me," he says, "as if somebody saw my profile and my interests and wrote that position."

Awarded in July, York's newly endowed Chair in Dementia Care is based at the School of Health Policy and Management. It was created by Allan Carswell (Hon. DSC '14), and funded through the Carswell Family Foundation, in honour of his late wife, Helen, whose struggle with Alzheimer's disease dominated both of their lives for more than two decades. "My main goal over the past few years was a simple one, that Helen will never be forgotten," Carswell says.

Now a professor in the Faculty of Health, Hoben was trained as a registered nurse in Germany (a three-year vocational program) and entered the field with more questions than he had the answers for. He was dissatisfied with the "big gap" in his knowledge. "It was not enough for me, just doing clinical work," he says.

Hoben continued his education in Germany, receiving a diploma in nursing management from Esslingen University of Applied Sciences in 2007, and then an MSc in health and nursing sciences from Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg in 2010. Having always focused his practice and research on older adults, when he began searching for a dissertation topic for his PhD, he was connected with a Canadian research team that specialized in finding ways to improve quality of care for nursing home residents.

"I'm a nurse by training but my research has never just been about nursing," Hoben says. "It has always been a very interdisciplinary approach with a focus on improving the quality of care and quality of life of older adults in need of care, as well as their unpaid family-friendly caregivers and the professional paid caregivers."

It's something Allan Carswell knows too well. As his wife's capabilities were diminished by Alzheimer's, his day-to-day life as her primary caregiver became increasingly oriented toward her needs. "It's a continually changing set of circumstances," he says of the progressive disease. "On several

occasions, we sat down and tried to decide, 'OK, what are we going to do for our future?' We never really could come up with any magic answers."

It wasn't until Carswell's discovery of the Alzheimer Society of York Region's day program that he regained some of his own independence. "Every decision that I ever made had to answer the question, 'How would this interact with Helen?'" Carswell explains.

The program offers dementia-specific individualized care, such as recreational social programming and structured daily activities in addition to a daily hot meal. Participants also benefit from hair care and a foot care clinic. There is support for caregivers as well, something he came to appreciate. Because it was a supervised environment, Carswell – a professor emeritus in the Faculty of Science – could leave his wife for two or three hours, or even a full day without having to worry about her. Helen's case was complex, but once Carswell became familiar with the staff, he found "total confidence" in their abilities.

"In my lifetime, there was nothing that was more supportive than the day program," says Carswell. "That gave me a life that I would never have had, because if I was with Helen I had to do whatever she needed all the time."

But the question of whether older-adult day programs benefit participants and their caregivers in the way they're intended to is one that research has failed to examine. In his role as Chair, Hoben will evaluate programs providing care to older adults living with dementia, looking at whether they are effective in preventing or delaying a move into long-term care homes, and decrease the physical or cognitive decline of participants. He will also examine the question of whether the programs reduce the workload of caregivers. York's Faculty of Health is collaborating with the Alzheimer Society of York Region on the research program.

For those wishing to access such programs, Hoben noted that a lack of information can be a barrier. There is no public register, so finding local day-program settings for older adults can be a challenge in and of itself. To add to the confusion, many programs operate privately, calling themselves spas. Others, like the ones run by the Alzheimer Society, rely on donations. Funding and regulatory oversight could help

Giving



Allan Carswell

with access, in standardizing care and reducing risk factors, but more research is needed to secure provincial support.

Over the course of his five-year term, Hoben will be conducting research and collecting and analyzing data that, in answering these questions, will provide guidance on how to best improve the quality of care for people living with dementia. For its potential to impact policy and availability

of such programs, the findings of this research program could have immeasurable impact on those living with dementia and their caregivers.

Carswell says if there was one lesson he learned from his wife's diagnosis it is that you have to take every day on its own merits. "Life is an adventure," he says. "You have no idea what's around the corner." ●

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Hope In A Bag

Ethics meet aesthetics
in a cross-cultural collaboration
crafted by a York grad
BY DEIRDRE KELLY

ON A FAMILY TRIP to Colombia in 2019, Aline Nalbandian (BA/BEEd '99) visited a rural marketplace in the north of the country, where she spied a stall overflowing with colourful, handwoven totes. She drew closer, attracted by a bag of jungle-green and parrot-blue called a *mochila*. Speaking through a translator, she learned that the bags are made by the Wayuu, an Indigenous matrilineal society whose weaving traditions have been passed down from woman to woman for generations.

Featuring embroidered straps and drawstring closures with pom-pom tassels, each bag is a one-of-a-kind creation with tribal wisdom hand loomed into the geometric patterning. Popular with the Coachella music festival set, along with devotees of sustainable fashion and the editors of *Vogue*, the designs are derived from nature and stories about the mythical Walekeri, a spider deity said to have taught the Wayuu how to crochet.

The Wayuu's homeland of La Guajira, a desert peninsula located in the north of the country, on the Caribbean coast, isn't just harsh; it's home to one of the poorest regions in all of Colombia. More than half the population lives below the poverty line and suffers from malnutrition, according to official figures released by Colombia's National Administrative Department of Statistics.

To secure much needed pesos for food, the women sell their *mochilas* in La Guajira's marketplaces, often through a third-party vendor who pockets most of the profits. "As soon as I heard that," Nalbandian says, "something clicked. I just had to get involved."

She bought one bag. Then three and eventually several hundred – bypassing the exploitative middlemen to buy directly from the women at fair market prices. She now sells the bags

herself in partnership with the Wayuu at pop-up shops in her home city of Toronto and elsewhere across southern Ontario under the brand name A-Line Wayuu Love.

A portion of all proceeds is re-invested into the artisans' communities, where the bags are more than a chic accessory. "Girls learn the craft from their elders around the age 12," says Nalbandian, "and they continue weaving well into adulthood as members of their community's female collective of artisans. It's not fashion to them. It's a way of life."

Besides helping to sell the Wayuu's weaving arts in Canada, the married mother of three daughters works to support the community on home turf. Travelling to La Guajira up to four times a year, she donates education kits along with other much needed supplies such as shoes for the community's children, who have to walk more than two kilometres each way to reach the nearest school.

When in the community, she also volunteers in the classroom, teaching the math skills acquired when she was a York University Con Ed student. Last year, she contributed to the building of a small, two-room school in Alta Guajira, located in the far north of the Guajira desert. It opened last September, and is now serving 80 kids who otherwise couldn't access a classroom because of the vast distances.

"That's how I'm making a difference," Nalbandian says. "The bags are beautiful and I'm paying forward by giving back to a community whose devotion to nature, family and a simpler way of life is truly inspiring to me. I want to help them preserve their traditions and I'm honoured the Wayuu are letting me do it. I don't take it for granted." ●

BY KIRA VERMOND
PHOTOGRAPHY BY HORST HERGET

A New Age Dawns

Brad Meisner wonders, if age is just a number, why does it get such a bad rap?

IF THERE IS ANYONE who can put a more optimistic spin on aging, it's Brad Meisner (MSc '07; PhD '11). The professor in the School of Kinesiology & Health Science has spent more than a decade studying society's views on older people and how it impacts everything from well-being to whether older adults feel jazzed to pick up a new hobby after retirement.

Growing older, Meisner is convinced, is not to be maligned or feared. After all – if we're lucky – aging happens to all of us. Why not embrace the journey?

"How do we make aging more desirable? How do we look forward to it?" he says. "There's so much growth that happens later in life, but that's not usually part of the conversations we have about aging."

Meisner is trying to change the conversation with research that recently earned him a coveted Mid-Career Award from the Canadian Association on Gerontology. He focuses on what's called "positive ageism," subtle ways we reinforce negative aging stereotypes often without realizing we're doing it.

"An example would be, 'Oh, you look good for your age,'" he explains. "This is intended as a compliment, but the subtext

there is the expectation of unattractiveness in older people – and when you're not unattractive, that's exceptional."

The problem with positive ageism, and the general assumption that aging goes hand in hand with decline, is it's easy to internalize negative stereotypes and decide we're too old to swim, learn a new language or even make new friends.

Meisner says it can lead to lower self-esteem, self-worth and even less will to live. Call it "stereotype embodiment theory" or self-fulfilling prophecy, these subtle forms of discrimination have an effect on how we treat others and whether we see ourselves as people who have plenty to give back.

Chris Ardern (BSc '00; MSc '02), associate dean of Research and Innovation in the Faculty of Health, is convinced Meisner is advancing knowledge and innovation aimed at aging. A fellow member of the York University Centre for Aging Research and Education (YU-CARE) where researchers stretch across silos to tackle complex questions, he sees how Meisner's work makes a difference. Not only can it contribute to training new health and health-care professionals, it also moves the needle on dialogue in the media and beyond.

"He's a really passionate advocate for health-care access for older adults," Ardern says.

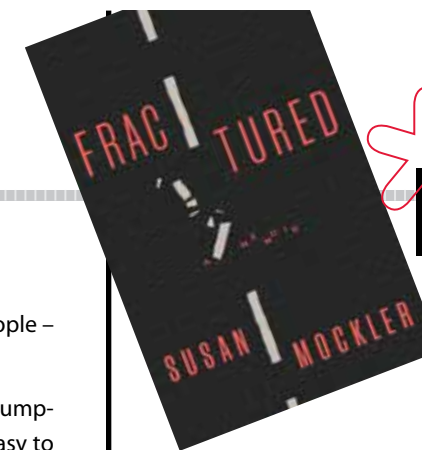
So it's no wonder Meisner got angry when, in the panicked early days of the pandemic, there was serious talk about who should get access to limited resources. Would it be the 30-year-old or the 80-year-old? Whose life was worth more? Then came the awful social media digs that called the virus a "boomer remover" and worse.

"So I literally rage-wrote two articles," he says. "I was just like, this is a violation of human rights. We've been through this before. Reality check, people."

Positive ageism reared its head in many ways during the pandemic too, with younger people stepping in to "protect" their parents and grandparents. The intentions were good, but many older adults – with 60 or 70 years of experience taking care of themselves – suddenly felt infantilized.

It's time to rethink age entirely, says Meisner. Some 80-year-olds are as healthy on a functional level as a 55-year-old, and vice versa.

"Long story short, you cannot rely on someone's chronological age," he says. "That's merely how long we've been alive. It's a measure of time." ●



Noteworthy



Reclamation of Self

For Susan Mockler, tragedy becomes triumph in a new disability memoir

A COLLISION WITH A MOOSE on a dark Canadian highway irrevocably altered the life of Susan Mockler (MA '91; PhD '98), just a few short years after taking her first graduate degree in psychology at York University. A severe spinal cord injury impacted her ability to walk and take care of herself. She was only 21. As Mockler writes in *Fractured*, her memoir about the 1995 accident, "being disabled meant I had crossed an invisible line and become 'other' to the world at large and even, in some ways, to myself."

"Something terrible had happened. I couldn't move. I was only mind. My body had disappeared."

In and out of a rehabilitation facility, she learned how to adjust to her new reality. She healed her body, progressing from paralysis to wheelchair to eventually walking with a cane. Aching to succeed further, she then returned to York to get a doctorate degree and regain her independence. Today, she is a clinical psychologist, published writer and disability rights advocate in Kingston, Ont. *Fractured* is her first book. "Recovery," Mockler says, is "a reclamation of self." It's a healing journey that reconstructs and reaffirms what it is to be human and alive. ●

— Deirdre Kelly

Classes



TEJAL SOLANKI

1972

HARVEY, ROLF E.
(BA '72, ENGLISH)
Rolf began his career in poetry before becoming an art director and production designer. *The Fly* (1986), *Spasms* (1983) and *The Man Who Lost Himself* (2005) are among his most notable works. In 2002, he won a Directors Guild of Canada Team Award for the television series *Twice in a Lifetime* (1999).

1974

CHITTICK, CONNIE
(BA '74, SOCIOLOGY)
A retired registered nurse from Vancouver, Connie worked at the British Columbia Women's Hospital for 26 years. She has written two books entitled *The John Street House* and *Hello My Name is Jill*.

1982

STEVEN, LAURIE E.
(BFA '82, THEATRE)
Laurie is an award-winning director, writer and dramaturge, with a love of comedy and social satire. She is currently the artistic director of Odyssey Theatre, and has directed many productions including Molière's *Scapin*, Giraudoux's *Ondine*, Marivaux's *False Confessions*, Gozzi's *The Raven*, and her adaptation of an Indonesian shadow puppet play, *The Wedding*, for which she won the Capital Critics Circle Award for Best Director.

1984

FREEDLANDER, STANLEY L.
(BA '84, GEOGRAPHY)
Since 1991, Stanley has worked for Toronto Community Housing as a community services coordinator. He is focused on developing adult education programs for tenants of Toronto Community Housing. He resides with his wife Elissa (BA '82) and son Graham.

1989

POOLE, WENDY D.
(BA '89, PSYCHOLOGY)
Inspired by her mother and father, Wendy wrote her debut novel *Remembering – A Time of Great Purpose*. Based on actual events in history, this fictional memoir was published in 2021 and depicts how men

and women, on both sides, lived during the First and Second World Wars.

2001

COULSON, JENNIFER L.
(MES '01, ENVIRONMENTAL & URBAN CHANGE)
The British Columbia Investment Management Corporation has recently appointed Jennifer to serve as its first global head of environmental, social and governance (ESG) investing. She has been recognized as one of British Columbia's most influential women in finance by *BCBusiness* magazine.

2005

ASTUVILCA-ROJAS, ROSARIO
(BA '05, MHRM '07, LIBERAL STUDIES)
Rosario is the CEO and founder of Inclusive Mining, a purpose-driven boutique firm established to assist the mining industry in its journey to become more diverse, equitable and inclusive. She was named one of the 10 most influential Hispanic Canadians in 2022 by the Canadian Hispanic Business Alliance.

GRAHAM, JACQUELINE
(BA '05, COMPUTER SCIENCE)
A writer and mother of two, Jacqueline recently won Reader Views' Gold Award in the Memoir/Autobiography/Biography category for her book *Almost Full Circle*. Her desire to share her story has led her to write a second book, expected to be released soon.

2006

DEBONO, TONY
(BSC '06, PhD '13, PSYCHOLOGY)
Tony has been recently inaugurated as registrar and executive director of the College of Psychologists of Ontario. He served on the board of directors of the Ontario Psychological Association in 2022 and was the recipient of the Association's Dr. Ruth Berman Award for Leadership as an Early Career Psychologist in 2018.

2007

CLARK, STEPHANIE
(BA '07, ANTHROPOLOGY)
Stephanie was recently appointed as the director of community services for the Town of Smiths Falls. She is currently pursuing a master of business and public sector management with York University.

2008

O'SULLIVAN, JOHN KIEL F.
(BBA '08, SCHULICH)
A seasoned investment professional, John has worked in the real estate sector for several years. He was recently appointed president of Great Gulf, leading the U.S. single-family build-to-rent business.

SOLANKI, TEJAL
(BA '08, PSYCHOLOGY)
Co-founder of Jalvini Coaching, Tejal is a transformation and empowerment coach, hypnotherapist, and energy and sound healer. She currently works for COSTI as the regional coordinator of the

netWORKS program. In recognition of her innovative work, she received the prestigious Bhayana Family Foundation Award for Innovation and Creativity in 2022.

2014

HASHEMI, HATICE
(BSW '14, MSW '15, SOCIAL WORK)
Wife and mother of two boys, Hatice is a caseworker for Ontario Public Service. She owns a private psychotherapy practice, and is an active member of the Lawrence Heights Ontario Disability Support Program team.

LEAN, VICTORIA B.
(MBA/MFA '14, FILM & VIDEO)
Throughout her career, Victoria has produced and directed several short films, as well as a feature documentary entitled *After the Last River*, which has been screened in Indigenous communities, schools and festivals across Canada. The work she produced earned her a nomination for a 2017 Canadian Screen Award. Her latest project, *The Climate Baby Dilemma*, can be seen on CBC.

RICHINGS, ROSEMARY M.
(BA '14, DRAMA STUDIES)
In her latest book, *Stumbling through Space and Time: Living Life with Dyspraxia*, Rosemary shares her experience of growing up with dyspraxia and how it impacts her sense of space, time and coordination. In addition to writing and editing on neurodiversity and disabilities, she speaks publicly.

2016

RADCLIFFE, SHLOMO
(BA '16, PSYCHOLOGY)
A doctoral student at Yorkville University, Shlomo currently runs a psychotherapy clinic in North York. His research is focused on exploring how the psychotherapy process needs to be adapted and optimized for clients with ADHD. He has also been a panellist twice for York U's UPSA Pathways to Psychology program.

2018

MEHRA, VRATI M.
(BSC '18, MSC '20 KINESIOLOGY AND HEALTH SCIENCES)
A medical student at the University of Toronto who is passionate about women's health, Vрати recently published a study in the *Journal of The North American Menopause Society*, finding a link between early diagnosis of diabetes and early onset of menopause. She's presented this research internationally, and has been covered in major media outlets, including Yahoo.

2020

BHALLA, MARC
(LLM '20, DISPUTE RESOLUTION)
Alongside fellow Osgoode grad Colm Brannigan (LLM '03), Marc has written *ODR: Yesterday. Today. Tomorrow*. The book looks back at 20 years of research, writing, and even podcasts about online dispute resolution, which uses technology to settle legal disputes.

MCALMONT, DARREN A.
(BA '20, ENGLISH PROFESSIONAL WRITING)
Darren is an award-winning writer who focuses his work on matters of diversity, equity and inclusion. In recognition of his contributions toward promoting theatre arts in Guyana and its Caribbean diasporas, he was honoured with a proclamation by New York State Senator Kevin S. Parker, through the Guyana Cultural Association of New York.

2021

SEMBAKUTTIGE, KALANA
(BHS '21, HEALTH STUDIES)
Kalana is the founder and CEO of ACT First Aid, a training company for first aid and CPR. His company currently partners with the Toronto Catholic District School Board, University of Toronto, Canadian Tire, Miller Group and many more. Having enjoyed recent success, he has expanded his business ventures into a franchise in Toronto.

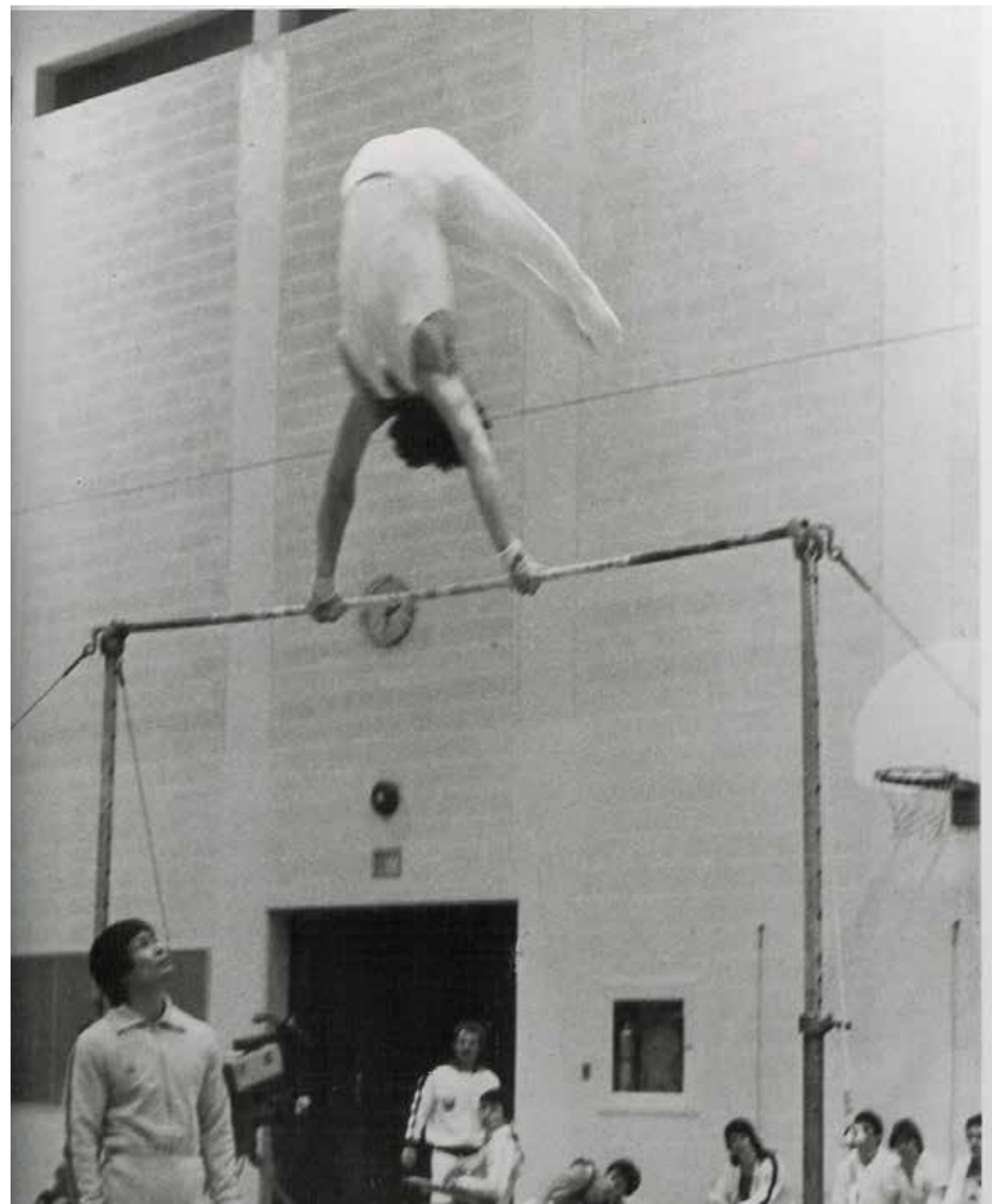
IN MEMORIAM

RODGER, NELDA M.
(BA '77, ENGLISH)
Nelda and her life partner Sergio founded *AZURE* magazine in 1985. Over the course of 38 years, she was able to transform the publication into a successful brand, expanding the company into *AZURE* Media. After a lengthy illness, she died on January 4, at the age of 70, leaving behind her legacy, as well as a pivotal component of the Canadian design community.

KELLNER, PETER A.
(MES '74, ENVIRONMENTAL & URBAN CHANGE)
The early stages of Peter's career were spent as an urban planner, as well as undertaking small renovations. Dedicated to his trade, he developed Kellner Fine Homes, a company that constructs custom-built homes for its clients. On January 25, Peter passed due to corticobasal degenerative syndrome. He is survived by his wife Irene, and children Jenna, Becca and Andrew.

DE REUS, MARY J.
(MA '79, GEOGRAPHY)
A former executive with the Toronto Board of Trade, Mary was a two-time cancer survivor and lover of painting and landscape design. Throughout her life, she pursued joyful adventures in France, Italy, China, Mongolia and beyond. Her achievements in library management have been recognized by the National Association of Special Libraries. Mary died at the age of 68 on September 24, 2022, leaving behind her husband, Donald, and her sisters, Joanne and Debbie.

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Flashback

Have a great
photo from
your days at
York?

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BEFORE HE BECAME A CELEBRATED ASTRONAUT, Steve MacLean (BSc '77; PhD '83; D.Sc '93) experienced the exhilaration of hurtling through space while a member of York's award-winning men's gymnastics team. A star athlete, MacLean took air on the high bars, and the pommel horse, ascending to the height of Canadian Interuniversity Athletic Union all-round national champion in 1976. He soared in his studies as well, receiving in 1977 the Murray G. Ross Award for academic distinction, York's highest honour for undergraduate achievement. Post-graduation, MacLean joined the Canadian Astronaut Corps, later becoming the second Canadian to walk in space. MacLean credits his university for levelling him up. "York's approach was interdisciplinary, and that allowed me to have several irons in the fire at once – including training for the gym team and studying physics. Anywhere else it would've been difficult to do, so I am eternally grateful for that," he says. "It was just an amazing balanced environment, and it created the potential for the future." ●

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