

RAQ *news*



WHEN RAQ was formed, the founding group hoped that it would attract more or less a cross section of retired Queen's people – academics, administrators, manual workers and the huge variety of other support staff who keep

the place going. Not much thought was given the precise former "trade" of the members. The important factor, so it seemed, was that we had all worked on the campus which provided the context of much of our life. Our shared Queen's experience created a bond among us, a bond worth continuing.

Now, four years later, we find that this may have been utopian and naive. The appeal of RAQ (and presumably Queen's) is much stronger among academic and administrative types than among the others.

This compels us to ask to what extent the character and size of RAQ membership are linked to perceptions people have of Queen's (and how they identify with it) and to what extent they relate to the occupational and probably educational background of potential members. The latter, of course, affects the former.

The foregoing is a fancy way of leading up to a practical question: to become more diverse, should RAQ try to mount programs which would bring in a more varied group of retirees

or should we continue on our present path? Is it futile to try to involve a wider spectrum of our members in our activities and/or to seek a more inclusive RAQ?

A message from the President

There is support in the Executive Committee for adding quite different sorts of activities (trips to sports events, for example) but this has presented a big problem. Although we have tried, we have so far failed to elicit suggestions accompanied by the essential offers of organizational help which would substantially broaden the scope of our activities.

The practical course may be to accept a lopsided, non representative RAQ which largely embraces former employees of a particular kind, and not others. Different groups have diverse interests and there is no point in fighting that. But I believe that a more inclusive group would offer richer experiences and would better meet our purpose. Our mission statement, after all, includes the admonition "to enhance and promote the sense of continuing membership in the 'Queen's Family.'"

So, once again, I make a plea to our members (or potential members): If you have any ideas about the dilemma sketched here, do let me/us know. Better still, if you are interested - alone or with others - in mounting a new activity that will appeal to heretofore passive members, get in touch.

JOHN MEISEL, *President*

Coming up in January

Saturday, 15 January

The Whirligig of Time

with Fred Euringer and

Carolyn Heatherington

Vogt Theatre, Carruthers Hall

Wednesday, 26 January

Tour

The Integrated Learning Centre

in Queen's newest building,

Beamish-Monro Hall

For details see page 4 and enclosed Overview of coming events.

Meeting the New Principal

13 October

Close to 100 RAQ members gathered at the University Club to meet Dr. Karen Hitchcock on the afternoon of 13 October. Many took the opportunity to speak with her informally both before and after her brief remarks to the whole assembly. In those, she spoke of learning much about Canada while she acquired her first degree at St. Lawrence University in Canton, New York, which had enjoyed a continuous connection with Queen's for many decades. And after attending hockey games during her undergraduate years she knew "O Canada" by heart. Obviously well advanced already along what she referred to as her "learning curve" about Queen's, she spoke confidently about



its role in the constellation of Ontario and Canadian universities, and the general challenges facing higher education in North America and elsewhere. While referring to the importance of the Rae Commission now investigating the redesign and funding of postsecondary education in Ontario, she emphasized, at the same time, her conviction that

Report from the Chairman of the Pensions and Benefits Committee

THE UNIVERSITY has advised us all that the Queen's Pension Plan earned 11.69% in the plan year ending 31 August, 2004. In the financial markets of 2003-2004, this is an excellent return. Comparisons between the Queen's results and those of other pension plans across Canada are made regularly. The 11.69% is in the top quartile of all plans.

Retirees will *not* be receiving an increase in their pensions this year. In accordance with the Plan's provisions, all retirees have their pensions adjusted on the basis of the average of this year's return, plus those of the three previous years. For the 2004 calculation, the four applicable numbers are the above noted 11.69%, plus the returns for the three previous years: +9.06% in 2003, -1.95% in 2002 and -5.42% in 2001. The 4 year average is therefore 3.35%. An increase in our pensions will only result if this amount exceeds 6%. 6% was the assumed amount that would be earned, and was incorporated into the calculations used to determine each of our original pensions. A year from now in 2005, the -5.42% from 2001 will be dropped and replaced by the August 31, 2005 results. Any positive return in excess of 5.19% will result in an increase for the vast majority of retirees.

The advantage of the plan provision, which has been in existence for roughly 35 years, is that pensions can only increase, and will *never decrease*, regardless of how poorly the financial markets have performed. Unlike the pension horror stories that one can read in

the press, our pensions are protected. This is the Queen's Plan, and not Enron's!

Discussions in the Pension Committee are currently being held on possible plan changes. The only one under consideration that might affect retirees involves whether the current four year rolling average calculation remains appropriate, and in particular the mathematical compound interest calculation method that should be used. This was briefly discussed at the December 8 Pension Plan annual meeting. Although complex, the matter is of very minor significance, and how, if at all, it might affect current retirees remains to be determined. A meeting involving representatives from the Pension Committee and RAQ will be held to discuss this issue in the very near future. We will keep you posted.

The Pension Committee, which is a committee of the Board of Trustees, oversees all aspects of the Queen's Pension Plan. Membership on this committee includes members representing retired staff. The Principal recently appointed RAQ's John Gordon to fill that role. Hugh Fullerton previously served diligently in that capacity. Jessie Deslauriers is also on the Committee as a retired support staff member.

Many questions have arisen as to why retirees at Queen's, and indeed at most other universities or private employers, do not have dental insurance. All of us would like to be free of the seemingly ever-increasing annual costs of dental expenses. There are many reasons why we are all faced with this however, and in the next issue we will attempt to provide you with some of the detailed considerations.

M.W. WRIGHT

Queen's, while responding to change, must sustain its focus on students with a teaching and research program which nourishes strength in the humanities and social sciences in balance with the physical and applied sciences. These, together with strengthening community ties have since been recurring themes in her public appearances and in her installation address on Thursday, 28 October. With particular reference to our RAQ President's suggestion (in the last *RAQnews*), she agreed that it would be profitable to explore ways of enlisting in the service of the university some of the learning and experience of Queen's retirees. In her general remarks as well as in her talk with individual RAQ members, it is safe to say that the new Principal made a delightful impression!

Visit to Special Collections

15 October

RAQ members numbering an even baker's dozen made exactly the right sized group to fit around a very big square table and examine "hands on" many of the most notable treasures cared for in the Queen's W.D. Jordan Special Collections and Music Library on the second floor of the Douglas library. Barbara Teatero, Associate University Librarian, introduced the meeting with an overview of the latest developments in the library system at Queen's including the installation of wireless systems in all the Queen's University Library facilities which allow students and other lap-top users to access online resources anywhere in the libraries – no "plug-in" required. From there it was a smooth transition to an earlier and, in its day, even more revolutionary technology – works in print. Ms. Teatero had been in charge of Special Collections for a number of years and her dedication to these wonderful materials was clear as she introduced each volume and passed them around the table for perusal. Some of them, like one eighteenth century celestial atlas and a French Encyclopaedia of Science, were large and heavy. The smallest was a Thumbnail book printed around 1892. Many of the most valuable volumes have been given to Queen's, among them the extensive John Buchan Library and Edith and Lorne Pierce Collection of Canadiana. Visitors are welcome at any time and a comfortable room is available for studying. Note-taking in pencil only. No Pens allowed! *For open hours and other information telephone 533-2839. More information about the W.D. Jordan Special Collections and Music Library is available at <http://library.queensu.ca/webmus/sc/>*



Visit to Queen's Theatre Presentation of VOLPONE

13 November

Forty plus RAQ members attended a Queen's Drama Department performance of *Volpone* by Ben Johnson. It was the most spectacular production we have seen so far. Our members were all very impressed by the students' performance as well as by the stage set and costumes. In a lively half-hour session afterwards, Professor Greg Wanless, who directed the play, discussed it with us and answered our questions about several aspects of the presentation. – We are looking forward to many more events in conjunction with the Drama Department in years to come.



Silver Bells Dinner and Carols

21 November

The Silver Bells dinner and carol service, sponsored each year by the AMS, was again a great success. About 200 seniors attended, some seventy of whom were RAQ members. The music was "fantastic". Thanks to Mary Balanchuk for taking phone orders and issuing tickets.

Message from the Events Committee

Coming events for the winter term are described in detail in the attached Overview. They include:

Saturday 15 January

2 pm and again at 8 pm

A Show Time Alert! *The Whirligig of Time*.

Admission: \$10 for the matinee and \$12 for the evening. This premier performance by Fred Euringer and Carolyn Hetherington is an anthology of poems, prose, quotations, aphorisms, and songs about time.

PLACE: Vogt theatre in Carruthers Hall.

Reserve tickets in advance by calling 542-2339 mornings from 9 am to noon.

Wednesday 26 January

3 pm

Tour the Integrated Learning Centre in Beamish-Munro Hall. This unique facility is designed to support new and exciting initiatives in undergraduate engineering and incorporates green features, such as a living wall of plants for environmental and teaching reasons. The building is located at the north east corner of Division and Union Streets. Meet in front lobby. Please let us know if you plan to come by email to Morgana@post.queensu.ca or phone Alison Morgan at 544-9854.

Friday 29 April

Partners in Crime. Gather a group of friends for a different and entertaining evening out: an interactive murder mystery dinner theatre event at the University Club. In order to run this event, we must have 36 people or more registered one month in advance. See enclosed Registration Form.

Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)

If enough RAQ members are interested in learning this life-saving procedure, we would organize a one-day workshop in May. The March mailing will include full details. Meanwhile, let Alison Morgan know if you are interested or have questions at 544-9854.

Sometime in the future

It has been suggested that RAQ members might like to meet informally on a regular basis, for example monthly, to chat and socialize. If we meet on campus, parking restrictions dictate a late afternoon meeting time unless we choose the West campus. If people prefer a breakfast or lunch meeting, perhaps an off campus venue would work best. Please contact Events Committee members or RAQ Executive members with indications of interest and suggestions for time and place.

RAQ Annual General Meeting *and* Lunch

DATE Monday 25 April 2005

PLACE University Club

Bar: 11.30. Lunch: 12.30 with meeting to follow.

A reminder and registration form will be mailed in March.

Please mark your Calendar now!

Tips for Trips

Various websites have assembled lists of hints for travelers, many of them designed to help ease us through the complexities of tightened security. A link to one list, compiled by *DAY-TIMER INC.* can be found on RAQ's own website www.queensu.ca/retirees. One new suggestion is to wear slip ons when flying since shoe removal is now often required at airport security stations.

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