



The Hmong After 40 Years in Canada

Robert Shalka

Robert (Bob) Shalka is a member of the CIHS Board and a retired immigration foreign service officer. From 1974 to 2010 he served in eight overseas missions (Stuttgart, Bangkok, Moscow, Singapore, Kyiv, Riyadh, Bonn and Berlin) and three headquarters assignments.

Canada resettled 60,000 Indochinese refugees between 1978 and 1980. These included some 900 Hmong from camps in Thailand, principally sponsored by church groups and often under the umbrella of the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC). Because many of the sponsors were located in the Kitchener-Waterloo area, that region came to hold the main concentration of Hmong in Canada. The community recently celebrated 40 years in Canada.

The Hmong are the largest of various "Hill Tribe" minorities who originated in southern China and migrated over the centuries into northern Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand. Traditionally, they practised subsistence agriculture and largely kept their distance from their ethnic Vietnamese, Lao, and Thai neighbours. The Indochinese Wars brought traumatic change for the Hmong in Laos. Under their charismatic leader, General Vang Pao, they were recruited to fight against the Communist Pathet Lao in the "Secret War" funded by the American Central Intelligence Agency. With the Communist victories throughout Indochina in 1975, the Hmong found

themselves on the losing side and suffered severe repression under the new Laotian regime. Thousands of Hmong fled overland to Thailand under very difficult conditions and were placed in squalid camps near the border. Although Thailand already had a significant Hmong population, the authorities had no intention of allowing the newcomers to remain and made it clear that Hmong refugees had to be resettled in third countries or repatriated to Laos. The latter option was not enforced due to intervention from the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) and the U.S.



Nan Hill Tribe refugee camp, Thailand, 1979 (Courtesy of Robert Shalka)

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Initially the Hmong were mostly resettled in the U.S., and to a much lesser extent, France. Many Hmong leaders, including General Vang Pao, were evacuated to the U.S. soon after the Pathet Lao victory. Significant numbers of Hmong followed, in large part due to the efforts of a vocal and active lobby of “old Indochina hands” who had worked and fought with the Hmong during the war and who had come to admire their determination, resilience, and support for the Americans. Large U.S. Hmong communities may be found today in Minnesota, the Carolinas, Montana, and California. Acknowledging its own past in Indochina, France also resettled some 2,000 Hmong on a “one off” basis in French Guiana. Once the large resettlement programs started in the summer of 1979, more Hmong went to metropolitan France. Countries such as Australia and Argentina resettled smaller numbers.

Canada’s involvement in Hmong resettlement came only in late 1978 after Murray Oppertshauser and I were sent to open an immigration section at the Canadian embassy in Bangkok. Our main task was to deliver a new and modest program in Thailand for “overland” Indochinese refugees from Cambodia and Laos. Upon arrival in Bangkok, Murray and I found that the new program had received considerable publicity. The Thai, Lao and Cambodian language services of Radio Free Asia, BBC, and Voice of America had covered announcements of the program, and the embassy had been inundated with hundreds of letters from refugees wishing to resettle in Canada. These included many letters written on behalf of Hmong from refugee camps in Northern Thailand near the border with Laos. This interest from the refugees themselves as well as requests from the UNHCR prompted Murray and me to include the Hmong camps in our itinerary, along with the camps holding Lao, Cambodians, and Vietnamese.

My first visit to a Hmong camp was at Ban Vinai in Thailand’s Loei Province in December 1978. The camp was some 700 kilometres from Bangkok. It required a long day of travel from Bangkok by embassy vehicle to reach Loei, the provincial capital and nearest large town with a hotel and other facilities. Another hour’s travel was needed to get to the camp itself. I was accompanied by Victoria Butler, an American journalist who was living in Bangkok and reporting for a number of newspapers and similar publications, including *The Globe and Mail*. Her articles about the plight of refugees in Thailand made a significant contribution to Canadians’ understanding of the situation. I spent two days interviewing, working from a list of refugees who had sent letters, as well as others put forward by the UNHCR. Mindful of headquarters’ directive that persons selected had to be “likely to successfully establish in Canada”, I made certain that at least one person in each family group could communicate in English. I do not recall encountering any French speakers among the Hmong, but I did interview a number of Lao, also resident in the camp, who did. In the end, I approved about 150 Hmong and Lao for Canada. Most from this initial group travelled to Canada in the first six months of 1979.



Nan Hill Tribe refugee camp, Thailand, 1979 (Courtesy of Robert Shalka)

With the expansion of Canada’s Indochinese Refugee Program in 1979, we made further trips to Ban Vinai and other, more remote northern camps. One of the most memorable was an arduous week-long journey by embassy vehicle and driver with visa officer Leo Verboven and an RCMP liaison officer to the isolated Sob Tuang and Nam Yao camps in remote Nan Province, in close proximity to the famous “Golden Triangle”, where the borders of Burma, Laos, and Thailand intersect. Sob Tuang was in rugged country at the end of an unpaved road, and our driver found it only by asking for directions at a rural police station. Three hours of interviews allowed us to approve about 75 refugees for Canada. Apart from the Americans, we were the only resettlement team to visit the camp.

The Nam Yao Camp, which was set on a ridge overlooking surrounding hill country and reminiscent of Hmong villages in Laos. There we interviewed and selected more refugees. At least one more interviewing trip was made to Nam Yao by visa officer Gary MacDonald, Aileen Birch (the spouse of a political officer at the embassy and our first immigration program officer), and me. These trips were lengthy and arduous and were in marked contrast to camps holding Lao, Cambodians, and Vietnamese. Interestingly enough, we were always able to find interpreters with adequate English, mostly young men between 16 and 20 years of age.

Road travel in “up country” Thailand presented challenges. As a general rule, we never travelled at night because of the risk of colliding with wandering villagers and stray animals or encountering bandits. Daytime travel could also present the unexpected. On one occasion, visa officer Bill Lundy and I were travelling by road along the Mekong River between the Hmong camp at Ban Vinai and the Lao camp at Nongkai. The scenery was picturesque, but the highlight of the trip came



Bangkok Airport, awaiting departure, spring 1990 (Courtesy of Robert Shalka)

when our driver had to make a sudden stop coming over a small hill to avoid crashing into a group of five or six working elephants and their mahouts. Evidently the pachyderms were moving from one logging site to another.

For any Canada-destined refugee, selection in the camp was only the first step in the process. After the interview, the refugees were moved to transit centres in Bangkok for medical examination and assignment to charter flights destined to reception centres at Griesbach and Longueuil. With the huge, multi-national expansion of the refugee program in the second half of 1979, the Bangkok transit centres became increasingly overcrowded and squalid until measures were taken to improve conditions. Thankfully, most refugees stayed in the transit centres only a short time. Sadly, a significant number of applications were medically “furthered” for tuberculosis or other conditions, with the result that many, including Hmong, languished for months before being cleared for travel.

Those of us who interviewed and selected Hmong were very much impressed by their resilience and determination, but it was clear that their successful establishment in Canada would require extra help upon arrival. It was here that the newly established Refugee Sponsorship Program came into play. Sponsorships under the umbrella of the MCC and other church communities proved instrumental in providing the extra help and counselling the Hmong needed to settle in a Canadian society markedly different from what they had known. MCC representatives were assigned to Bangkok to liaise with the embassy in identifying refugee families who would benefit from sponsorships.

In the end, about 900 Hmong were admitted to Canada under the Indochinese Refugee Program. Notwithstanding the assistance of their sponsors, adapting to a totally different way of life and society was difficult, especially for the first generation. That said, the Hmong did adapt, and active and vibrant communities are found today in the Kitchener-Waterloo area and the lower B.C. mainland. Over 40 years, the Hmong community has become part of the Canadian mosaic and continues to keep in close contact with former sponsors. As a tribute to their Mennonite sponsors, much of Hmong community life is centred on the Hmong Mennonite Church in Kitchener, which conducts worship in English and Hmong, preserving the culture and language and assisting new refugees to the area.

On 2 November 2019, Mike Molloy, Leo Verboven, Chris and Peter Duschinsky, and I were pleased to be guests at festivities organized by the Hmong Association of Canada to celebrate the Hmong New Year and the community’s 40th anniversary in Canada. The event took place at the Optimist Hall in Shakespeare, Ontario, a small town between Stratford and Kitchener. Lasting from 8 a.m. until midnight, the all-day festivities included traditional and modern dance, music, songs, speeches, and a sumptuous and tasty banquet. All Hmong in attendance wore traditional costume and signature silver jewelry. It was obvious that the community was proud of its origins, but also proud and committed to Canada. Several hundred people attended. Special guests included Chi Neng Vang from California, the son of the late General Vang; Minnesota State Senator Fong Heu; a delegation from the Hmong community in B.C.; members of the Mennonite Central Committee; and local sponsors.

For Leo and me, it was an opportunity to see how the people we interviewed so many years ago had fared. By and large, it has been a success story, and that point was well made by Hmong Association of Canada’s President Peter Vang. All have jobs, houses and cars. Children have been educated and have moved up in the world. The Hmong have overcome difficulties and are grateful that Canada has given them the chance to live their lives in peace. Mike, Leo, Peter, Chris, and I were honoured to be included in the celebration. (Photographs are published with the subjects’ consent.)



(L-R) Thomas Vang, with grandson Dante Yang, daughter Bai Yang, grandson Henrik Yang, and son-in-law Lee Pao Yang. (Courtesy of Leopold Verboven)



Bai Yang in traditional Hmong attire with Thomas Vang (Courtesy of Leopold Verboven)

Memorable AGM and Dinner

Roy Christensen

Ed. Note: photographs for this article were taken by Roy Christensen, who holds their copyright.

The Annual General Meeting of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society was held on 17 October 2019 at the Saint Anthony Soccer Club, Ottawa. Forty-one members attended, including Valerie Mascarennas and Nicolas Orvoine-Couvrette, two new immigration foreign service development program officers. A very successful meeting, it included an inspiring presentation by guest speaker Yasir Naqvi. It has been a busy year, and the Annual Report below lists a host of impressive achievements.

Before the dinner, CIHS President Michael Molloy called the meeting to order and asked the assembled participants for a minute of silence to recall friends and colleagues who had passed away since the last AGM. They included Murray Vines, Remo Caldato, Stan Noble, Garnet Quigley, Raymond Yelle, and Hercule Raymond. Molloy said a few words about each of them.

After the Italian buffet dinner, President Molloy introduced the guest speaker, Yasir Naqvi, Chief Executive Officer, Institute for Canadian Citizenship. In introducing the speaker, Molloy said that for much of our history, the Government of Canada has chosen to house the immigration and citizenship functions and programs in the same department. During his career, he thought that the main function of immigration was to recruit future citizens. In a time when immigration and the nature of membership in Canadian society are being examined, debated, and frequently challenged, the Board thought it would be useful to hear from someone whose job it is to think about membership in the Canadian family.



CIHS President Michael Molloy: calling the meeting to order



Guest speaker Yasir Naqvi receives a copy of *Running on Empty* from CIHS President Michael Molloy

Naqvi has had a distinguished career as a lawyer, academic, and politician, serving at one point as Ontario's attorney general, Government house leader, minister of Labour, and minister of Community Safety and Corrections. He was voted one of the "Top 50 People in the Capital" by *Ottawa Life* magazine. In 2018, he was named in *Canadian Lawyer's* "Top 25 Most Influential" list for advancing technological modernization in Ontario's justice system. Most recently, the Law Society of Ontario presented him with the Lincoln Alexander Award.

The upbeat Naqvi quickly took the floor with a smile and told the meeting about himself, his family, and his current job as chief executive officer of the Institute for Canadian Citizenship (ICC), a leading voice in Canada on citizenship and inclusion. He recounted why his family had come to Canada, his history of involvement with the local community, and his desire to give back the positive opportunities that Canada had given him and his family. Prior to joining the ICC, Naqvi served as an Ontario member of provincial parliament (MPP) for almost 11 years, representing Ottawa Centre, a diverse, urban riding. He talked of his experience in working with The Rt. Hon. Adrienne Clarkson and John Ralston Saul's Institute for Canadian Citizenship and more specifically about his involvement in making citizenship ceremonies into vibrant celebrations. His presentation was well

received, and he took many questions from the floor.

President's Report

President Molloy began his annual report to the membership by saying that the *Bulletin* remains our most visible manifestation. Under the leadership of our new editor, Diane Burrows, the Society continues to produce high-quality material on aspects of our immigration history that have been overlooked or forgotten. Valerie de Montigny, the *Bulletin's* former editor, and Burrows, the incoming editor, with the support of Gerry Maffre and Anne Arnott, produced an extraordinary special edition (B88) marking the 30th anniversary of the Immigration and Refugee Board. That edition

included original articles by the people involved, including Peter Harder, Peter Showler, David Vinokur, and Susan Brown as well as our own Raph Girard, Gail Devlin, and Anne Arnott.

The subsequent issue (B89) celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Private Sponsorship Program, the moving musical theatre production about Pier 21, and the Global Compact on Migration. Molloy said his favorite bulletin, for sheer diversity and punch, was B90, which began with Holly Edwards's powerful account of how the Immigration department responded to the Rwanda crisis; Kurt Jensen and Joseph Zakour's article on the hostage incident at the embassy in Beirut; and Charlene Elgee's wistful recollection of our Society's relations with the late, lamented Citizenship and Immigration Canada library.

Molloy mentioned a number of ongoing projects, including research led by Kurt Jensen on the Lebanese Special Movement. Jensen spoke to IRCC employees about the project during Public Service Week. The Board hopes that Carleton's History Department will assign a graduate student in the new year to help the Society sort through the collected documentation. CIHS has been exchanging information with Caroline Guimond and the staff of the visa section in Paris as they research the movement of "Pagoda People" through the office in 1980. Susan Burrows will research and write an article on the Karen refugee movement in the coming year, filling in the gaps in the historical record. Finally, Randy Orr is leading an initiative that could lead to a future "Immigration History" day or week at IRCC.



CIHS members listen to the AGM proceedings at St. Anthony's Soccer Club, Ottawa

Empty.

The major website development in 2019 was the launch of a more comprehensive bulletin search tool. Webmaster Winnerjit Rathor was able to convert the thorough *Bulletin* indexing document prepared by staff of the former CIC Library and the IRCC's Knowledge Management–Research and Evaluation team, to a format that is appropriate to our site. The department has undertaken to continue this indexing work for us. This work is very much appreciated, as it gives us an excellent *Bulletin* research tool.

Over the past year, of the approximately 2,880 people who visited the website the most traffic came from Canada, the U.S., France, China, and the United Kingdom. More people accessed our site by conducting an online search using a search engine than those who went directly to the site by entering the exact website address. The *Bulletin* generates the most visits, although the Indochinese Movement and book, and information about the British Home Children also figured in most-visited pages. Visitor traffic peaked between March and June 2019, when several articles and a *Bulletin* were posted. Thanks to Winnerjit for his website work. Et à Michel Sleiman qui se charge de la traduction d'une partie du contenu du site, merci!

Running on Empty

Promotion of our book, *Running on Empty*, absorbed a great deal of time this past year with book promotion events in Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia, thanks to the support of Ambassador Donica Pottie. Authors Michael Molloy, Kurt Jensen, Peter Duschinsky, and Robert Shalka, promoted the book at events in Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Saskatoon, and Ottawa. The Board promoted our book and our participation in the Hearts of Freedom project at several venues: IRCC through a "Research Matters" talk; the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) Personal Development Day (organized by our own Randy Orr); a World Refugee Day event involving all four of the Ottawa and Gatineau universities that was called "Humanizing Migration"; and at the Pathways to Prosperity and International Metropolis conferences in Ottawa. These events reached out to Canadian and international academics, students, and advocates, and helped to raise the profile of the Society. Details of these events were reported in recent bulletins, as was

the moving story of Captain Bryan Brown, which was told in B89. In sum, McGill-Queen's University Press estimates that over 1,400 copies of *Running on Empty* have been sold. The Board is now working with Vietnamese partners to publish an abridged version of the book in Vietnamese.

Carleton University Archives

The Society has an excellent relationship with the Carleton University Archives which has done wonders with our Ugandan document collection. The research that underpinned *Running on Empty* left us with a collection of more than 1,000 documents and artifacts, and in June we donated this collection to Carleton. Cataloguing will start in November 2019.

Hearts of Freedom

As reported last year, CIHS is part of Hearts of Freedom, a project that includes retired professors from the Carleton Social Work Faculty; Menno Simons College in Winnipeg; the Canadian Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian Communities; Pier 21; and the Canadian Museum of History. With funding from Canadian Heritage, IRCC, and a private donor in Winnipeg, the Board has overseen interview teams from the three communities who have now collected 125 oral histories from Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian, ethnic Chinese, and Hmong refugees who came to Canada between 1975 and 1985. Some of the interviews are already online at heartsoffreedom.org. In the coming year, material from the interviews will feed into a documentary, a book and a collection of curriculum materials. This is a big project and we are looking for volunteers to help us review and correct the transcripts of the interviews. Please contact Michael Molloy if you are interested in helping (or email the CIHS at info@cihs-shic.ca).

Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Raph Girard gave a brief report of the Society's finances for the year 2018/2019. The Treasurer's report was part of the information package on the tables and included a narrative and a table presenting income and expenditure. It is provided in the September issue of the *Bulletin*. CIHS has \$10,050 in our investment account and \$12,000 in operating funds. Details of \$17,255.18 in revenue and \$14,899.83 in expenditures as of September 24, 2019 were published in B90.

Raph Girard emphasized that, with over 1,400 copies sold, *Running on Empty* is and will remain a monument to the Society and its authors. The publication is now into its fourth printing. Unfortunately, royalties paid to the Society continue to remain low, as is the case with many academic publications.

Membership Report

Our secretary, Gail Devlin, is currently recovering from a health challenge. We wish her a speedy recovery. Molloy reported that the 2019 membership report will appear in the next bulletin. (However, our secretary's health challenges continue, and so the membership report will be compiled when she has recovered.)

The Gunn Prize

Kurt Jensen reported that the Gunn Prize panel received ten submissions for the 2019 prize. The panel consisted of Rob Vineberg (Chair), Dr. Laura Madokoro, Dr. Christopher Anderson, Dr. Robert Shalka, Dr. Kurt Jensen, and Dr. Sean Lockwood. The winner of the 2019 Gunn Prize was Lianne Robin Koren, an MA student in history at McGill University, for her paper "Europeanized Moroccans: North African Jewish Immigration to Canada 1955-1960". The author is currently in Australia, and we are looking for an opportunity to present the prize to her. Her paper on a little-remembered refugee movement fills an important gap in the historical record. The prize's runner-up was Nick Scott, University of Prince Edward Island, for his undergraduate history honours program paper, "Radicalism and state surveillance in the interactions between Taraknath Das and William Charles Hopkinson, 1908-1914". Nick Scott graduated in May 2019.

Election of Officers



Gerry Maffre and Michael Molloy announcing a lucky door prize winner

Vice-President Anne Arnott conducted the election. This year the Society instituted proxy voting for the election. Two members exercised this option. Elected by acclamation for the coming year were the following people:

Executive:

Michael Molloy, President; Anne Arnott, Vice President; Raphael Girard, Treasurer; Gail Devlin Secretary; and Diane Burrows, Editor.

Members at Large:

Brian Casey, Roy Christensen, Valerie de Montigny, Peter Duschinsky, Dawn Edlund, Charlene Elgee, Kurt Jensen, Gerry Maffre, Randy Orr, Robert Orr, Ian Rankin, Robert Shalka, and Member Emeritus Joe Bissett.

From Limassol Back to Beirut

Kurt F. Jensen

This article is part of a series being prepared on the Lebanese Special Movement, 1975-1990 [see Bulletins 90 and 87], and is based on A Very Fortunate Life, the memoirs of L. Roger St. Vincent. His self-published memoir records the complex career and life of a respected and long-serving senior immigration officer.

A senior officer with a broad background of mastering complex assignments, including the Uganda refugee mission, Roger St. Vincent arrived as the new officer-in-charge in Limassol, Cyprus, in early January 1977. He replaced Gerry Schroh, who had evacuated the immigration section from Beirut to Limassol as the Lebanon crisis collapsed into warring chaos. For St. Vincent, it was a return to familiar territory. He had been stationed on Cyprus with the Royal Air Force during World War II and had served as an immigration officer in Beirut from 1970 to 1973.

By the time St. Vincent arrived, the pace of operations in Limassol was much reduced from its hectic first six months. While he was still in Canada, St. Vincent had discussed with headquarters the possibility of relocating back to Beirut, where the situation appeared to be calming down, but no decision had been reached by the time he reached Limassol. He waited two months before requesting approval to go to Beirut to assess the possibility of returning. Headquarters approved the request almost immediately.

Throughout the Limassol exile, locally engaged staff (LES) still worked in the Beirut embassy, with Canadian diplomats (political officers) covering this mission by making visits from Amman, Jordan. St. Vincent returned to Beirut in early March 1977 on a Cyprus Air flight. Security was tight at the airport, and the city showed the ravages of the civil war. The office infrastructure was in good shape, although the local staff had been largely left to fend for themselves. St. Vincent thought that he could restart Beirut's immigration operations, even though the civil war had not ended and crossing the Green Line that divided the city remained treacherous.

The embassy was in good shape, with telephones, electricity, and air-conditioning working well. The secure section of the embassy, on a separate floor, seemed to be intact, but entry was barred by the security steel grill for which St. Vincent did not have the keys. The embassy's vehicles in the basement garage appeared untouched.



Map from the time of the events recounted, courtesy of L. Roger St. Vincent, *A Very Fortunate Life*, p. 274. St Vincent's caption for the map reads: "This postcard was sent to me at the Apollonia Hotel, Limassol, Cyprus, by George Menassa, senior locally-engaged employee of the Embassy. It was a reminder that he was still on the staff payroll and was to returning [sic] to Beirut soon."

Back in Limassol, St. Vincent instructed the staff to prepare for a return to Beirut. It would be a staged move, with at least one LES leaving first to help prepare the mission to receive all the files and other office items from Limassol. The LES designated for this task was very reluctant to depart and implored St. Vincent to let him remain in Limassol a little longer. The process of returning to Beirut was protracted, with St. Vincent needing to make additional visits there over several months. One such visit also brought External Affairs technicians, who opened the secure gates and assessed security upgrades to protect the staff. Efforts to reorganize the office and secure post living allowances for the Canadians in Limassol (provided to other evacuees elsewhere) took time, and there was some tension between the departments of Immigration and External Affairs. A bullet-proof glass booth was installed at the embassy's reception, where visitors would be checked for weapons by the Provost Corps of the Department of National Defence (DND).

St. Vincent made his final flight from Cyprus to Beirut on 30 June 1977, and the Beirut visa office opened by 6 August. He and his wife looked back on their half-year stay in Limassol as the longest all-expenses-paid holiday of his career. At first, work at the Limassol office was very hectic and demanded long hours, but by the time St. Vincent arrived, staff were able to enjoy the excellent food, the swimming pool at the hotel, and opportunities to wander in the hills and explore Phoenician archeological sites. It was an exceptional posting considering that it was the consequence of civil war.

Staff at the mission in Beirut on re-opening day were H. Singleton (Chargé), Rollande Vezinda (Consul and Administrator), Thérèse Daignault (Assistant Administrator), R. Judd (Communications Centre), Marc Pelletier (Industry, Trade and Commerce), Col. G.W. Duguid (DND) with six DND Provost Corps members, Ken Perkins (RCMP), and the following locally engaged staff: G. Minassa, R. Zahlan, Fadi Kastoum, and A. Melhem. The immigration section consisted of St. Vincent, Peter Lilius, and Terry Fox supported by Eva Grodde, Michel Kabbas, Mona el Kadi, Fadi Battish, Roger Daou, K. Shitilian, and J. Cogne and O. Tremblay (both Quebec immigration officers).

After having no supplies shipped to them in Limassol, on their return to Beirut, Canadian staff and families had to deal with more scarcity—in housing, cooking ware, dishes, tablecloths and other household items. St. Vincent had to ask Bud Muise, one of the administration's "fixers" at headquarters, for funding and authority to purchase necessary items locally. The fighting and unrest also made it difficult to find fresh food. The only accessible supermarket mostly stocked canned goods that did not perish if shopping was interrupted by a few days of fighting.

Because of the telephone system's episodic functioning, all Canadian staff received portable walkie-talkies (a World War II era version of a cell phone, and 20 times as big) for communication and security. The effort to provide walkie-talkies to staff quarters was accelerated after St. Vincent's wife fell getting out of the bath one day and was unable to reach anyone for help because the telephone system was down.

Visa applicants in Beirut were met at the secure reception on the first floor. The DND Provost Corps searched visitors for weapons and then escorted them to the third floor, where the visa section was located. It was not uncommon in those tumultuous days for civilians to carry guns. Indeed, it was commonly assumed that all taxi drivers in Beirut were armed. Some visitors to the embassy displayed their guns in an attempt to jump the long queues awaiting entry. The recent attack and hostage crisis perpetrated by the Lebanese Canadian Eddy Haymour (see Bulletins 87 and 90) added to the tension. The Provost Corps' presence was very reassuring to all embassy staff.

Not all visa applicants would be processed under the relaxed Lebanon Special Movement provision, although there was a popular impression among Lebanese that the program was accessible to everyone. The special program had carefully defined provisions, and as such it was not accessible to every applicant. One irate rejected person threatened Terry Fox, the officer who had refused him a visa. In the violent climate which existed in Beirut and with the fresh memory of Eddy Haymour, it could not be assumed that such threats were mere bluster. St. Vincent immediately had Fox evacuated. Colleen Cupples came temporarily from Nairobi to help the office while it awaited Fox's replacement.

Eva Grodde, a Canadian LES, remained in Limassol after the visa office returned to Beirut in order to finalize closure of the operation. After she arrived in Beirut, Grodde stayed with the St. Vincents until she resigned her position to return to Canada to take the Foreign Service examination. She was successful and was soon a member of the immigration foreign service. The chargé d'affaires left soon thereafter, and St. Vincent was briefly appointed in his place. A new ambassador-designate, André Couvrette, arrived at the end of August.

Gradually the shooting and violence diminished to manageable levels, though the Green Line remained dangerous. Everyday goods became reasonably accessible. Many luxury items were readily available at competitive prices, as they had been pilfered from warehouses during the civil war. But not all was back to normal. When Couvrette went to present his diplomatic credentials, St. Vincent and trade officer Pelletier were required to accompany him to the ceremony. St. Vincent had to borrow the necessary protocol vestments from the Mexican chargé d'affaires, who was roughly the same size, since there were no longer shops catering to such exotic needs. Pelletier borrowed clothing from someone else, and

it was much too large for him. The peace was largely maintained with Syrian troops separating the militias, which continued to range through the sectors they controlled, always demanding bribes, and free food and drinks from the hotels and upper-scale restaurants.

Following the shelling of the official residence in July 1978, Ambassador Couvrette was recalled and St. Vincent was reappointed chargé d'affaires. (Couvrette was almost certainly not the target but decided to depart after a shell blew up his study. Protocol required that he be formally recalled to allow his departure.) Sometime earlier, his bodyguard had been killed crossing the Green Line, and the body had lain exposed for three days before arrangements could be negotiated to retrieve it. Staff often remained at home when fighting got out of hand. In the fall of 1978, fighting worsened, and non-essential staff and dependants were evacuated or cross-posted. Dependants of Canada-based immigration staff initially went to Athens, but St. Vincent relocated them to the Hotel Apollonia Beach in Limassol, which had been home to the Beirut immigration office for a year. It was a cheaper and more comfortable option for the exiled evacuees than Athens.

The dire situation continued to deteriorate after the Israelis invaded south Lebanon. Warring factions constantly sought to extract bribes, and random shootings were always a risk. The embassy would be swamped periodically by visa seekers responding to rumours of refugee acceptances. Mission supplies became depleted and the Canadian immigration staff became edgy from the stress of the situation. St. Vincent (still chargé) seeing the stress in his staff and aware of the difficulty and dangers of daily life in a war zone, requested authorization from External Affairs for payment of five-day special leave to Cyprus for the staff every two months. This proposal was authorized.

One of St. Vincent's final acts as chargé was to arrange a meeting in mid-January 1979 between Joe Clark, then Leader of the Opposition, and King Hussein of Jordan. The visit, part of a regional tour by Clark, went well.

On the evening of his return to Beirut, St. Vincent read a message from Ottawa, advising him that he was to be posted to Yugoslavia at the end of the month and that a new ambassador would arrive a few days following his departure.

St. Vincent was tired by the time he left Beirut. His assignment had been demanding. He had managed an immigration program in the midst of a civil war while also acting as chargé d'affaires for seven months. He had kept his team together, evacuating non-essential staff when it became necessary, and arranged periods of rest on Cyprus for the staff who lived under threat of being shot. His reward was an assignment to Belgrade, which he knew well and where his wife had family.

Progress Report on Hearts of Freedom

Peter Duschinsky

Peter Duschinsky is a retired visa officer with postings in Europe, the Middle East and the U.S.A. He is a CIHS Board member and a participant in the Hearts of Freedom project.

Since the last report on the South East Asian Refugee Historical Research Project: Hearts of Freedom (Bulletin 86), the project has been very active. In late September 2018, the four Ottawa-based members of the research team, including Mike Molloy and me, interviewed applicants for the job necessary to implement the project. Two project administrators, three ethnic community coordinators tasked with finding interviewees, and three two-person interviewing teams were hired and given a basic apprenticeship for their difficult tasks during three days of intensive training. Through the efforts of two research team members (Carleton professors emeriti Colleen Lundy and Allan Moscovitch), we obtained the services of a prominent oral historian from Montreal and a well-known documentary filmmaker to provide some of the training. The latter also assisted in purchasing high-quality equipment to record the interviews and will lead the preparation and direction of a documentary film about the project in Year Three (2020-2021).

Interviews started in early 2019 and continued through the year. As outlined in our previous report, budgetary restraints limited the number of interviews to 110 from the initially projected 200 and interview locations were restricted to Central Canada (Ottawa/Gatineau, Montreal and Toronto with a short side trip to Kitchener). Largely through networking by CIHS (kudos to Molloy), IRCC provided a much-appreciated cash grant and interviewing facilities in Toronto. To date, 40 interviews have been done in Ottawa, 32 in Montreal, and 40 in Toronto (including 2 in Kitchener), for a total of 112. In Winnipeg, the research team's fifth member, Stephanie Stobbe, professor at Menno Simons College of the Canadian Mennonite University, was able to arrange for an important contribution by a



generous private donor. This donation funded the hiring of a community coordinator in Winnipeg and allowed an interviewing team from Ottawa to complete 15 more interviews in Winnipeg during six days of intense work.

Strenuous efforts were made to balance the interview numbers among the ethnic groups in accordance with their population ratios in Canada. This effort was largely successful: 55 Vietnamese, 27 Cambodian, and 23 Laotian (including two Hmong) interviews have been conducted so far. An additional 22 interviews have been recorded with Canadian government officials, administrators, and private sponsors. Thus, the total number of interviews to date is 127. One more interview is being set up in early 2020, with former Prime Minister Joe Clark. In 1979, his government was responsible for initiating this major Canadian refugee resettlement movement.

The project has also tried to balance the interviews by gender and between Canada's official languages. The latter goal was reached, with 25 of the interviews conducted in French, which largely corresponds to the percentage of French-speaking ethnic Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian populations in Canada. Unfortunately, with 35 percent of the interviewees being female, we could not attain gender balance. This variance may reflect persistent social patterns in the three immigrant groups and will be further examined in the project's Year Three analysis of interview results.

High-quality academic analyses with annotated bibliographies were researched and written by Carleton graduate students on the settlement of Laotians and Cambodians and appear on the Hearts of Freedom web site. Similar reports are forthcoming on the settlement of the Vietnamese and on the media coverage during this time. These analyses will be useful material for researchers and as background material for Year Three of the project (book, video and educational materials).

Some of the most challenging aspects of the past year's work were arranging all the interviews and travel, controlling all the records of the interviews, ensuring that procedures were followed and records kept by all players and creating a professional website and Facebook page. Here, the excellent work of project coordinator Ginette Thomas and Media Coordinator/Web Designer Mondy Lim must be highlighted. The Hearts of Freedom website at www.heartsoffreedom.org contains many of the interviews and is professional, user-friendly, and interesting.

In the course of 2019, the team publicised Hearts of Freedom at the Metropolis Conference, at the University of Ottawa's Humanizing Migration Conference, and through CBC Ottawa's Morning Show. Carleton University highlighted the project on the Carleton Newsroom website.

The biggest challenge for Hearts of Freedom is financial. While already very worthwhile, the project will remain incomplete unless interviews of people living across Canada are recorded. This was always the aim of Hearts of Freedom's designers. A major project on documenting the refugee resettlement experience in Canada would be significantly weakened if it did not cover the West and the Atlantic Provinces, which hold significant populations of all three ethnic groups. Funds for Year Two of the project (the main interviewing year) are almost completely exhausted. The research group is trying to find new sources of financing and hopes that 45 more interviews in Alberta and B.C., and 15 more interviews in Halifax can be done before 31 March 2020. Carleton University, through its *Future Funder* initiative is also trying to raise money for the project. In this context, see <https://futurefunder.carleton.ca/giving-tuesday-challenges/>.

Hearts of Freedom will preserve for all Canadians a record of the settlement experience of Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian refugees. CIHS is an important participant in this project, and our members' work will be a major contribution to its success.



Pier 21: The Musical

Robert Vineberg

Robert Vineberg is the Chair, Board of Trustees, of the Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21

On 15 October 2019, I had the pleasure of attending Allen Desnoyers' Canadiana Musical Theatre production of *Pier 21: The Musical* at Greenway School. Greenway is a nursery-to-Grade 6 elementary school in Winnipeg's inner city "West End". It has about 450 students and represents Canada's broad diversity.

As the children piled into the school's gym, the level of excitement was palpable. Clearly the teachers did a great job in preparing the students for the show using study materials to familiarize their kids with Pier 21 and Desnoyers' storyline. From the youngest to the oldest, they were generally well behaved throughout the 45-minute show.

Desnoyers and his two colleagues sang, danced, and acted their way through countless scene and costume changes as their take on the Pier 21 story moved from immigrants to refugees to departing and returning soldiers to war brides and displaced persons and even to Wayne and Shuster. It was a lot for anyone to absorb in a short time, but the kids loved it and applauded wildly following each song. The students were delighted when Desnoyers went into the audience and selected one of them to play the role of a young boy brought to Canada as a farm worker. Following the show, dozens of the students had questions about what they had just seen.

While the show is a lot of fun, there are moments of real emotion and many of us had tears in our eyes as Desnoyers, as an immigration officer, granted immigrant landed status to a couple of Jewish refugee women or when the young Dutch displaced person talked about how the Nazis came to Holland and took their food but then the Canadians came and gave their own food to the Dutch.

I'd like to quote a verse from Desnoyers' song, "The Fallen and the Free":

*Who am I that strangers
Would give their lives for me?
Who sailed away from here to set me free?
All the years of darkness battered and confined,
Now I'm safe in Canada—its heroes left behind.*

The young students at Greenway School will remember the show for a long time.

The musical has been touring Canada since January. It premiered in Burnaby and was presented at schools in over 40 cities and towns in British Columbia and Alberta prior to heading east for a show at the International Metropolis Conference in Ottawa and a run of 17 performances at Pier 21 in Halifax, where it was seen by some 3,000 people—many of whom expressed to Desnoyers how moving they found the show. In Manitoba, there were 13 performances in Winnipeg and Steinbach, and then the show returned to Alberta and B.C. for performances in 15 cities and towns. In all, Desnoyers and his company have performed the show almost 200 times for about 75,000 people!



L-R: Jenny Daigle, Allen Desnoyers, Holly Beckmyer (Photo by Michelle Koebke)

If you want more information about the show, go to the Canadiana Musical Theatre's [website](#), where you will find the study guide to the show, among other things,. The show's lyrics are also there. Acknowledgements mention the CIHS, naming a number of us who provided Desnoyers with technical advice as he developed the show.

Canadian Visa Offices: 50 Years of Immigration Service Abroad

Part One: 1950–1959

Raphael Girard and Gerry Maffre

This article is the first in a series of decennial compilations of the cities where Canadian immigration or visa offices were established—either in the capital or consular city of a country or with officers accredited in a country or city other than that of their primary posting. The compilation draws on the [Global Affairs Digital Library](#) holdings of *Canadian Representatives Abroad*.

This publication of the Department of External Affairs (now Global Affairs Canada) was released on an irregular basis over 50 years to provide the names of Canadian personnel posted to diplomatic missions and contact information for those missions. The level of detail about the role of the officers varies from year to year and even within editions. In years of multiple editions of *Representatives*, the first edition of the year was used to complete the chart below.

Some familiar names of visa officers confirmed the presence of the immigration function in a mission. In other cases, it was a listing of an immigration doctor or a separate visa office's street or [telex](#) address at the mission's location that confirmed a visa office's existence. While other authoritative government resources on office locations may exist in archives, the fact that *Representatives* is readily accessible made it attractive for this project. Some contrary information on visa offices' locations and dates can be found in Freda Hawkins's 1972 book *Canada and Immigration: Public Policy and Public Concern*. Those differences are highlighted in the table below. Thanks to colleague Robert Shalka for pointing out Hawkins's data and for identifying J.M. Trautsch's [article](#), *The History of the Canadian Governmental Representation in Germany*. Relations with Germany were not formally established until 1951, providing some possible context for the discrepancies in the visa offices' opening dates.

It wasn't until 1959 that *Representatives* started to list the function "immigration" or "visa office" along with the sole name of the senior immigration *attaché* if he or she was resident at a mission. The names of other immigration or visa officers at missions are not listed in the publications from this decade. The term "consul" came into limited use in the late 1960s.

The intent here is not to trace the evolution of immigration policy; works like Valerie Knowles's *Strangers at Our Gates* provide that analysis. This decade saw the implementation of the *Immigration Act* of 1952, the creation of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration, the admission of refugees from Hungary and Palestine, and a slight easing of immigration restrictions on citizens of Asian countries—particularly from India, Pakistan, and Ceylon [now Sri Lanka]. Some 1.5 million immigrants joined the Canadian population in the 1950s.

Immigration regulations from 1952 onward required all intending immigrants other than applicants from the U.S. and visitors from many countries to apply for and obtain a Canadian visa before coming forward. The 1952 *Immigration Act* also defined the term "visa officer" in a restrictive way so that immigration services outside Canada would only be available where visa officers were stationed or in the territories they visited while rendering itinerant services. This requirement was a significant device for controlling who could come to Canada and simplified removal of those who did not qualify because a lack of a visa in itself constituted grounds for deportation. As a result, the opportunity to apply to come to Canada depended very much on whether a person had reasonably convenient access to a visa office.

There were also limitations on who could apply for a Canadian visa based on nationality. While the regulations permitted Canadian citizens and permanent residents to sponsor the immigration of their immediate family from any country, sponsorship of members of the extended family was only permissible when those relatives were citizens of countries of the old Commonwealth or Western Europe. These same geographical limitations applied to those immigrating in their own right as skilled or professional workers.

Post-war decisions on the establishment of visa offices had been related to the selection of European refugees displaced to Western Europe by the war and to tap sources of skilled and technically qualified workers. Canada's rapid industrialization created needs for qualified personnel that greatly outstripped Canadian training institutions' capacities. There was less concern about serving those who wanted to come to Canada than there was to actively seek out potential immigrants who might fulfil Canadian labour market needs, a key objective of the immigration program. Since post-war

Western Europe was a fertile source of these migrants and citizens of those countries were eligible, that is where the department deployed the bulk of its personnel and administrative resources.

These limitations on office locations only began to change with an amendment to the *Immigration Regulations* in 1962.

| COUNTRY | VISA OFFICE LOCATION | DATES AND NOTES |
|-----------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Americas | | |
| United States | Chicago* | 1957-1959 (only in Hawkins) |
| | New York City* | 1957-1959 (only in Hawkins) |
| | Seattle | 1950 (not in Hawkins) |
| Asia | | |
| India | Hong Kong* | 1950-1959 |
| | Delhi* | 1954-1959 (New Delhi - 1959) |
| Europe | | |
| Austria | Vienna* | 1957-1959 (Hawkins – opened 1955) |
| | Linz | 1953-1955 (Hawkins – opened 1952) |
| | Salzburg | 1950-1951 (Hawkins – closed 1952) |
| Belgium | Brussels* | 1950-1959 |
| Denmark | Copenhagen* | 1951-1959 (Hawkins – opened 1950) |
| Federal Republic of Germany | Bonn* | 1954-1956 (resident in Karlsruhe-Durlach) 1957-1959 (resident in Cologne) |
| | Berlin | 1958 (Hawkins - opened 1955) |
| | Bremen | 1953-1955 (only listed in Hawkins) |
| | Cologne* | 1957-1959 (1959 – resident in Bonn) (Hawkins – opened 1956) |
| | Hamburg | 1958 (Hawkins - opened 1954) |
| | Hanau | 1954-1955 (only listed in Hawkins) |
| | Hanover | 1952-1956 |
| | Karlsruhe-Durlach | 1950-1956 |
| | Munich | 1958 (Hawkins - opened 1954) |
| | Stuttgart | 1958 (Hawkins - opened 1956) |
| Finland | Helsinki* | 1958-1959 (Hawkins – opened 1952) |
| France | Paris* | 1950-1959 |

| COUNTRY | VISA OFFICE LOCATION | DATES AND NOTES |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Greece | Athens* | 1956-1959 |
| Ireland | Dublin* | 1950-1959 |
| Italy | Rome* | 1950-1959 |
| Luxembourg | Luxembourg* | 1955-1959 (resident in Brussels) |
| Netherlands | The Hague* | 1950-1959 |
| Norway | Oslo* | 1957-1959 (Hawkins – opened 1951) |
| Portugal | Lisbon* | 1957-1959 |
| Sweden | Stockholm* | 1950-1959 |
| Switzerland | Berne* | 1950-1959 |
| United Kingdom | London* | 1950-1959 |
| | Belfast* | 1950-1959 |
| | Bristol* | 1957-1959 |
| | Glasgow* | 1950-1959 |
| | Leeds* | 1958-1959 (Hawkins – opened 1957) |
| | Liverpool* | 1950-1959 |
| Middle East | | |
| Israel | Tel Aviv* | 1956 – 1959 |

Visa office locations marked with an * on the chart continued to be open into the 1960s or longer.

Readers are invited to signal any errors or omissions in this chart to info@cihs-shic.ca.

CIHS thanks its corporate members - IRCC, P2P and Pier 21 - for their significant support as well as its life and annual members. All these contributions allow us to pursue our objectives and activities.

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| <p>The Canadian Immigration Historical Society (www.CIHS-SHIC.ca) is a non-profit corporation registered as a charitable organization under the Income Tax Act.</p> | <p>The society's goals are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - to support, encourage and promote research into the history of Canadian immigration and to foster the collection and dissemination of that history, and - to stimulate interest in and further the appreciation and understanding of the influence of immigration on Canada's development and position in the world. | <p>President - Michael J. Molloy; Vice-President - Anne Arnott; Treasurer - Raph Girard; Secretary - Gail Devlin; Editor – Diane Burrows; Members at large - Brian Casey, Roy Christensen, Valerie de Montigny, Peter Duschinsky, Dawn Edlund, Charlene Elgee, Kurt Jensen, Gerry Maffre (Communications), Robert Orr, Ian Rankin, and Robert Shalka Member emeritus - J.B. "Joe" Bissett IRCC Representative - Randy Orr Webmaster: Winnerjit Rathor; Website translations: Michel Sleiman</p> |
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