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La société historique de l'immigration canadienne

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CIHS Needs Blood…new blood that is

With Joe Bissett in the chair, the CIHS board met on 13 May to develop a succession plan and identify a possible replacement for Mike Molloy who, after almost 10 years as president, has given notice that he wishes to step down within the next 12 months.

Since Mike arrived on the scene, the CIHS has recorded many advances in its contributions to immigration history. The Bulletin has never been so meaty and enjoyable to read. We have established the annual, prestigious Gunn essay prize, created an appealing website, and produced three hour-long videos on refugee policy as an educational tool (these are posted on our website). Several members have been active in mentoring graduate students, including at least three PhD candidates. Mike's efforts, tirelessly supported by his wife Jo, have established a record that will be difficult indeed for any one person to equal.

What emerged from the board's discussion is the fact that any new president will put his or her stamp on the organization in a personal way. It is obvious, however, that we cannot expect the same contribution of time or substance from any one volunteer that Mike and Jo have made in advancing the CIHS. This underlines the need to do a better job in recruiting new members, both from the Immigration program departments and from organizations connected with immigration issues but not part of the delivery system per se.

We have broken the mission of CIHS into five business lines that will need management and development as we move forward:

- Liaison with the federal government especially CIC/CBSA,
- Liaison with universities and colleges,
- Membership,
- Special events, and
- Outreach/communication, including maintaining the website.

Each of these areas will need to be beefed up with more volunteers to ensure CIHS remains vibrant and relevant.

The board will meet again in September to review the results of an informal search for a new president, so that the candidate or candidates can be presented to the annual general meeting in October. In the interim, all members of the CIHS are invited to become more active on one of the committees mentioned above or indeed, stand for election to the board.

If you are interested, please contact Mike Molloy directly at: joandmikeca@yahoo.com

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Smaller Refugee Programs: Argentinian Political Prisoners and the Cuban Marielitos

Ed. Note: Over the years, the CIHS has tried to gather accounts of lesser-known refugees movements, like the Palestinians of 1957 (Bulletins 56 and 58) and the Istrians (Bulletin 53). In this article, Jim Versteegh provides accounts of two small but important movements from Latin America in 1979 and 1980. Readers who were involved in other movements of this sort are invited to submit their recollections.

Canada's responses to large-scale refugee and humanitarian crises are generally well known. They receive abundant media attention and are recognized as reflecting Canada's commitment to assist persons in need. Not all of Canada's refugee-like programs in the past, however, have resulted in large numbers of people actually settling and staying in Canada. Several smaller programs that dealt with specific needs at the time have had little impact on Canada's overall demographics. Two such programs were managed by the Buenos Aires visa office in 1979-1980.

Argentinian Political Prisoners

By far the largest refugee/humanitarian program managed by Canada in Latin America in the 1970s was the movement from Chile following the overthrow of its democratically elected government by the military in 1973. The new leadership immediately detained tens of thousands of people associated (or thought to be) with the old government, along with others opposed to the new one. There was an urgent and obvious need for Canada, and others, to respond.

There was a similar occurrence in Argentina in March 1976. A military junta overthrew the civilian government in that country on the pretext that it was not doing enough to combat left-wing guerrilla groups that had been active for many years. The new military government initially had some public support and did not immediately round up opponents publicly in large numbers. Arrests, however, were taking place clandestinely. It would gradually become evident that Argentina's military government was as brutal as that of its Chilean neighbour (see the Argentine National Commission Report on the fate of the disappeared); but few people fled the country at first and it did not appear that many would be inclined to do so.

Under Public Law 21.650, decreed by the Argentinian military government late in 1977, persons detained without formal charges could opt to go into exile abroad. The government acknowledged in 1978 that it held about 3,000 prisoners who could benefit from the "right of option". To apply for exile, detainees needed to present a "certificate" from another country confirming they would be admitted. Early in 1979, Canada announced a special program for Argentinian political prisoners (APP) that would allow for the acceptance of up to 100 heads of family under the right-of-option provision. Argentine citizens detained for political reasons without charges were eligible for selection. Admissibility was to be determined through interviews in prison. Though we were fully committed to making the program work, we knew from the beginning that it would be unlikely that many (or any) of the persons we selected would end up in Canada. Several countries (including the U.S., Italy, Spain, France and Germany) already had similar programs in place, and in 1978 (before our program started) only 4 percent of those selected were actually allowed to travel.

Once the Canadian program was announced, names of detainees were referred to our Buenos Aires office almost immediately. They came from relatives and friends in Canada, church groups, and human rights organizations In Canada and Argentina. Identifying eligible applicants was not a challenge. The Argentine military provided lists, updated regularly, of persons eligible to apply for exile abroad. More difficult was getting permission to conduct interviews in prison. That needed to be obtained through a special military entity in Buenos Aires that also was responsible for informing administrators and guards at the prisons concerned that permission had been granted.

In that pre-email and pre-texting environment, it could never be assumed that the guards at the outer gates of prisons had received (or accepted) the message that a foreign representative should be allowed in to interview a detainee. Last-minute discussions with armed guards outside prison gates were not uncommon but almost always successful.

In 1979 and early 1980, numerous selection interviews were conducted with detainees throughout Argentina. Most interviews took place in prisons in La Plata (60 km south of Buenos Aires), Rawson (Chubut Province in Patagonia), Resistencia (in the north, close to Paraguay), and in the women's prison of Villa Devoto in Buenos Aires. The setting was rarely comfortable. The interviews were usually face to face (no glass partitions) but always with guards nearby. The exchanges could best be characterized as informal discussions. Though the interviewer needed to form a well-founded opinion on the detainee's admissibility to Canada, he did not want to encourage the prisoner to say anything that could be interpreted by prison authorities as being anti-government, as consequences could have been severe. Not surprisingly, few of the detainees had any substantive knowledge of Canada. They were grateful that Canada was taking an interest in their case, but most expressed a strong preference for staying in Argentina (but not in jail).

By mid-1980, there were about 350 APP files in active process at the visa office in Buenos Aires. If they were willing to leave and if Argentina was prepared to allow them to go, we would have had no difficulty in filling the target of 100 heads of family. Things were changing quickly, however, as the Argentine government was beginning to take more serious note of the criticism of its arrest and detention activities (as well as other human rights abuses). Those who were eligible for the exile provision (and our program) were openly acknowledged by the Argentine military as being in its care. They could no longer disappear with impunity. Not only were they visible, but their well-being was monitored.

Canada's program wound down in 1980-1981, with many persons selected by Canada being released and allowed to stay in Argentina. Though Canada's special program did not result in many people moving to Canada (only about half a dozen visas were actually issued), APP gave us a legitimate avenue to advocate on behalf of those detained. It established a Canadian connection for the 350 people who had sought our help and who did not end up among the disappeared.

Cuban Special Program (Marielitos)

The boatloads of Cubans arriving in Florida in 1980 from the small port of Mariel, in Cuba, received considerable media attention—understandably so. Within months, more than 125,000 had arrived, mostly picked up by small boats sent by Cuban ex-patriots in Miami. Most were allowed to stay in the U.S. On a more modest scale, Canada also helped the mass exodus, by agreeing to accept 300 of the asylum seekers for resettlement.

The Marielito movement began early in April 1980, when a small group of Cubans crashed a bus through the gates of the Peruvian embassy in Havana and requested asylum. When that embassy refused to turn them over to Cuban authorities, the Castro government responded by removing its guards from the embassy, leaving the building and grounds vulnerable to further incursions. Within a few days, more than 10,000 other would-be migrants had joined them. Cuban guards then sealed off the embassy while discussions took place on how to remove the asylum seekers from Cuba.

U.S. President Jimmy Carter initially announced that the U.S. would accept 3,500 Cubans, and Costa Rica agreed to serve as a staging area for third-country resettlement. A small number were airlifted to Costa Rica, but that provision became unnecessary when President Castro announced that those who wanted to leave Cuba were free to do so provided they left by boat from Mariel. The exodus began almost immediately, with the Cuban government augmenting the flow by releasing criminals from prisons, opening the doors of mental health facilities, and channeling former inmates to Mariel. By the end of September 1980, more than 125,000 asylum seekers had arrived by boat in Florida.

In addition to the small number of persons airlifted to Costa Rica in mid-April 1980, about 750 of those who had initially occupied the grounds of the Peruvian embassy in Havana were flown to Lima early in June 1980. Canada was to select its 300 from Costa Rica and Peru. The first 50 or so were selected in San Jose by the responsible visa office in Mexico City. The remaining 250 were processed between July and August 1980, by a four-person team (a Spanish-speaking visa officer from Buenos Aires, a non-rotational immigration officer from HQ, a medical officer from Port of Spain, and an RCMP officer from Santiago) established for that purpose in Lima.

The 750 refugees flown to Peru were put in Lima's Tupac Amaru Park, in a tent city set up by the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the national Red Cross. Though the Government of Peru had agreed to allow them entry and protection, it was not prepared to let them stay permanently. Not surprisingly, it didn't take long for Canada's new program to become very popular among the group. All were eligible to have their applications considered, and interviews were conducted only for admissibility assessments. With the assistance of the ICRC and local Red Cross, who helped with the distribution and completion of the application forms and who transported the refugees to and from the embassy for interviews (all conducted by the same foreign service officer), almost half of the population of the camp was seen.

The selection process was not particularly difficult as most of those interviewed were young and well educated, although few spoke any English or French. As they were presented to us as having been part of the initial occupying group of the Peruvian embassy in Havana, we were reasonably sure that they had not been recently released from prisons or mental health institutions. In our selection decisions, we favoured family units, hoping that they would be less inclined to make subsequent moves (illegally) to the U.S. Also, it was clear that those not selected by Canada would likely remain in the refugee camp indefinitely—an undesirable prospect for young children. But Canada was not their first choice. They had joined the crowd at the Peruvian embassy as an initial step in the process of getting out of Cuba and into the U.S. With tens of thousands of other Cubans still making their way by boat to Florida, the U.S. had little interest in considering any Cubans for resettlement from a third country. Other countries (including Brazil and Italy) were then considering accepting small numbers of Cubans from Peru, but only Canada had a full-scale program in place with a meaningful quota. We became the favoured destination by default.

The Cubans' preference for the U.S. was understandable. Few had any contacts in Canada or much knowledge of the country. Most had friends or relatives in the U.S.—if not already there, then on their way to Florida. Nevertheless, they were sufficiently realistic to understand their options. At the interview, they were grateful for the opportunity being offered to them by Canada and expressed their wishes to settle there. Though we were in the process of accepting about a third of the people in the camp, there was considerable frustration among the rest. One evening in mid-August 1980, about 168 of the camp residents made their way to the Lima airport to meet an American plane that was making a routine stop. They had little difficulty breaching the relatively lax airport security, got on to the tarmac and occupied the plane for several hours, demanding to be flown to the U.S. Eventually they were persuaded by local security forces to return to their camp.

The attempted hijacking drew little media attention and Peruvian authorities chose not to press charges. Criminal convictions for those involved would have made them ineligible for third-country resettlement. The RCMP team member on site was able to obtain a list of the participants. Fewer than half a dozen had already been interviewed and accepted in principle by Canada, but they were no longer considered genuine intending immigrants to Canada and were replaced by others who appeared to be more likely to stay.

The selection decisions were made, background checks done, medical examinations passed, and (hand-printed) visas issued to about 250 people by the end of August 1980. They were subsequently transported to Canada for permanent residence. A follow-up review by CEIC about six months later revealed that fewer than half could be located in Canada. Media reports from Miami in subsequent years indicated that most of those selected by Canada had made their way to Florida. Though not in the way we had intended, our program did provide an opportunity for relief to those selected. Of those left behind, 35 were subsequently selected by Brazil in 1981 and 15 by Australia. Thirty years later, several hundred airlifted Cubans were still being cared for in the "temporary" refugee camp in Tupac Amaru Park in Lima.

Reflections from the Past, a video series

Pathways to Prosperity and the CIHS have launched a video interview series featuring former immigration officials, practitioners and researchers. The insiders provide an oral history of immigration from the political and policy decisions through to program development and operational logistics. Their perspectives are now available to all with an interest in immigration and refugee issues.

The first videos, *Reflections from the Past*, feature three one-hour interviews and a group panel discussion with Michael Molloy, Raphael Girard, and Gerry Van Kessel. These three directors-general were responsible for refugee policy at the federal immigration department over a 30-year period.

Raph Girard and Mike Molloy

The interviews were conducted by Martha Nixon, a former assistant deputy minister at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, who was responsible for the department's operational arm during the 1990s. All four are well known to Bulletin readers. The videos may be viewed at p2p-cihs.com

Martha Nixon and Gerry Van Kessel

The CIHS and Pathways to Prosperity will undertake a second series of interviews, likely on economic immigration, beginning with the advent of immigration-levels planning in the early 1980s and continuing through the 1990s and, perhaps later. Many of the policy discussions and program changes during this period prefigure recent trends and decisions introduced by Jason Kenney, Canada's Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism. Interviews with former federal and provincial officials are expected to begin this fall.

Sudan 1983

Ed. note: Some years ago Peter Duschinsky told Bulletin readers about his near-fatal trip to the Sudan. Here is a more substantive account.

The Khartoum refugee office arranged a flight on a single-engine Cessna to Port Sudan. A grizzled old Africa hand piloted the small plane. Still, I almost didn't make it to interview the refugees. We flew by way of Gedaref, on the Ethiopian border. The landing strip in Gedaref was a muddy washboard, with weeds growing between the tracks traced in the mud by the wheels of planes. We landed, bumped along, came to a stop in a rut and delivered four cases of beer to the UN aid workers. In the scorching heat of the Sudanese summer, they awaited the brew's arrival like manna from heaven.

A few minutes after taking off again, the pilot called back: "We have a problem, the undercarriage won't retract. We must return to Khartoum. They can help if we run into trouble." Khartoum tower told us to fly in low and they'd do a visual inspection of the plane's undercarriage. Not seeing any problems from the ground, they directed us to land at the most distant desert landing strip. Hitting the ground, the undercarriage immediately collapsed. The small plane spun out of control, veered off the runway and came to a lopsided rest on one wing. The door opened and the pilot screamed "jump, it can blow!" I jumped and ran as fast as I could. The crippled plane sat in the sand.

Around us, half the Sudanese army waited. A general in a jeep drove me to the VIP lounge and offered food, refreshments and free luxury lodgings—anything I desired. The Sudanese wanted to keep Canada happy, didn't want to risk endangering the flow of Canadian aid. I declined, insisting that I needed transport to get to Port Sudan as quickly as possible as there were refugees waiting. I asked them to radio the small Port Sudan office to explain why I was held up.

We found another small plane heading out that afternoon, delivering a piece of equipment to the UN development program and piloted by a youngish black man, a decommissioned U.S. Navy flier picking up odd jobs in Africa.

By the Red Sea, camels and goats grazed on desert scrub at the Port Sudan airport. Beyond the end of the single landing strip, a large, rusting transport plane lay in the sand, beside the wreck of a Soviet fighter plane. Years ago, it had been chartered to take an enormous turbine, a gift from East Germany, to a distant place on the borders of Darfur. But they forgot to tie down the heavy machine and, on takeoff, it slid to the back and caused the plane to crash.

Port Sudan is surrounded by desert on three sides and faces the sea on the fourth. Some 300,000 souls lived in grass huts in refugee camps, mostly women and children. Each day the women lined up for water, waiting their turn at a spigot. A single spigot served between 400 and 800 people. The worst, thirstiest camp, exposed to sun and wind, with the least water, was popularly christened "Tel Aviv", for the Falashas, the Black Jews of Ethiopia. Purportedly they lived there, although nobody would officially confirm their existence.

But I didn't interview Falashas. They were off limits for Canada and the UN did not refer them to us. The Israelis were mounting a clandestine operation to fly the Ethiopian Jews to Israel; all they asked us and the Americans to do was to keep silent, remain discreet, and continue with our small refugee resettlement program, keeping the nervous Sudanese authorities compliant with the secret Israeli operations. It was delicate—everybody knew what was happening, but everybody kept quiet. The Muslim fundamentalist government of Sudan looked the other way as long as these unwanted refugees would be taken off its hands.

The refugees waiting for me in Port Sudan were mostly young Ethiopians and Eritreans who had fled Mengistu's hell in Ethiopia. Between five in the afternoon and midnight, I interviewed 20 of them. There were no women. The mostly illiterate refugee women took care of their children and were presented very rarely as candidates for Canada. It was 38 degrees in the shade. I interviewed with every door and window open. It cooled down to 32 degrees as midnight approached. There was no privacy in the UN's tiny offices; they were crowded and smelled of sweaty, unwashed human bodies. I felt intensely alive, knowing that I had to solve real problems, with little time for doubts. I had no luxury to procrastinate about decisions, but had to do rapidly what I could. The refugees had few documents, as most had been lost in last-minute escapes and other catastrophes. My decisions were based on inadequate translations of their stories, emotional exchanges in broken English and Arabic, and rapid personal impressions.

We finished just after midnight. The UN compound had a small swimming pool and we all jumped in, including the two translators and the young German girl who ran this outpost. We were in a state of total exhaustion. Splashing in the pool reinvigorated our bodies, and our spirits followed. It was a dark tropical night, the sky the color of deep blue ink. Flickering stars and the thin crescent moon of the tropics were mirrored in the water, mixed with the reflections of garden lights on gentle waves. The electric generator softly hummed in the background.
Next day, the UN staff took me to see the camps. I was a tourist of misery. I saw the water spigots with the long queues, the desperate women, the large eyes and thin faces of malnourished children, and the yellowish-grey desert dust over everything. Scrawny dromedaries, goats and yellow desert dogs roamed everywhere, searching for anything edible.

The translators and I flew to the Gedaref border camps late that afternoon. As we flew in just before sunset, the great massif of the Ethiopian plateau was on our left, rising steeply from the Sudanese plain. The refugees came from up there, from Gondar and the ancient kingdom of Axum and the towns and villages at the source of the Blue Nile. We stayed at one of the simple, square, cinder-block buildings used by the UN; there were no hotels in this overgrown African village.

Next day at noon, after 10 more refugee interviews, I headed back to Khartoum in a UN jeep. The driver spoke only rudimentary English, and so I was left with my thoughts as I watched the plains unroll beside the lonely road. There were stands of acacia trees in the midst of undulating fields. In the heat of the African afternoon, we rolled past the occasional village with round grass huts and scrawny cattle digging in the dust. The unrelenting tropical sun beat down from a clear sky. About half way to Khartoum, with the sun setting in the west, about a hundred wild camels grazing beside the road were spooked by our jeep. They ran parallel to the road for some distance, before heading off into the savannah and disappearing behind some low hills. Their

long strides, sleek legs, great speed in the midst of the seemingly infinite plain, dust swirling around them, left an impression of great natural beauty. This too was Africa.

In Khartoum, back at the oasis of the Hilton Hotel, I ate, drank and rested. With its soft buzz of omnipresent air conditioners, its Austrian chef preparing a sumptuous Beef Wellington with new parsley potatoes and tiny snow peas served with a fine, unassuming claret—allowed only to foreigners—and its sunken bar by the outdoor pool overgrown with bougainvillea, the Hilton was like any other luxury hotel in the tropics. Outside it was the Muslim Middle Ages—no booze, household slaves, bazaars selling all the wares of Africa, including ivory for all comers and young boys or girls if you had the right connections. Over everything were flies, poverty and the fine dust of the Sahara.

Next morning, it was a new flood of refugees and then the plane flying back to Cairo, with a Sudanese gentleman wearing a turban and flowing white galabeyya beside me. We talked about Sudan, Egypt, Canada and England. He bewailed the condition of his country and sank into long silences. We exchanged cards; he was a businessman with offices in Khartoum and Cairo. His last question was rhetorical; he did not expect a reply: "Sir, you who are a diplomat, who know this part of the world, can you tell me why, after taking so much out of Africa, after establishing so many structures that could not possibly continue to function without British control, why did the British just depart and leave us to our fate?"

Conference: The Indochinese Refugee Movement and Launch of the Private Refugee Sponsorship Program

CIHS is working with York University's Centre for Refugee Studies on a conference to be held between 19 and 22 November 2013 to commemorate the Indochinese refugee movement. The conference will have three objectives.

The historical objective is to mark a series of 40th anniversaries associated with the movement. We will promote efforts to collect, preserve, celebrate, learn from and use the experiences of the refugees who arrived here during Canada's largest refugee resettlement movement and the Canadian communities that received them.

The contemporary policy and practice objective is to gain a better understanding of how the sponsorship program has evolved up to the present. What have been its strengths and weakness? How might it be made more effective and therefore more attractive to potential sponsors, thus expanding Canada's capacity to provide solutions for a greater proportion of the world's displaced and persecuted by effectively integrating them into the Canadian community?

Our final objective is to link the historical and the practical by identifying the means through which the Indochinese experience that led to the unprecedented awarding of the Nansen Medal to Canada can be replicated to inspire and promote greater participation in the refugee sponsorship program.

The conference will complement work under way on a book, to be published in 2015, that examines the Indochinese movement from 1975 to 1980, from the perspective of the immigration department. To date, more than 30 memoirs have been received from members and colleagues. While the archival research is complete and writing will commence next month, we are still interested in receiving additional memoirs, memorabilia and anecdotes from former CEIC, NH&W and RCMP members who worked on the movement.

Beatrice May Forster: Reflections of a Home Child (Part 2)

Ed. Note: Part 1 of this article by Thomas Waldock is to be found in Bulletin 66.

My grandmother's reflections reveal so much about her past experience, and for me certain passages are difficult to read. From the vantage point of someone born into the security of a loving family, imagining the nature of this experience is difficult, if not impossible—into care at age five, losing parents, grandparents, and homeland, losing her name and identity. While one tries to focus on the few positive, early memories of her childhood, some of her comments speak volumes: "I was to spend the rest of my life wondering what happened to them"; "This is about the end of my life as a happy child"; "Then comes the sadness"; and "All I know as days went by I would sit in a big window and look down at the big gate to see if my Mum would come". Then there are my mother's reflections: "Her stay there was very unhappy—the matrons treated the girls very harshly and food was scarce. Her diet consisted of bread and dripping much of the time."

My grandmother was given a hymn book before leaving for Canada. On the inside cover, there is a dedication from her matron, a woman she referred to as "Mother". She is praised for "improvement in character" and referred to a passage from Luke (11.9). As I hold this book in my hands today, a feeling comes over me—perhaps a mixture of sadness, bewilderment, and awe best describes it. Just as an aside, the SS Minnedosa later was purchased by the Italian government and deployed against the Allies in WW II, as though it was not already assured its infamous place in history.

Beatrice May Forster
in her early 80s

For me personally, and perhaps for many descendants of the Home Children, coming face to face with such histories can be somewhat surreal. My grandmother did such a good job of sheltering her family from her past experiences. She was a Home Child, but for me, she simply was my grandmother. She didn't talk about her experience until later in life, and even then she confided only in a few. And whatever emotional or psychological scars existed, she hid them well. That is not to say that she was unaffected; for example, I knew her as tough—harder or stricter than the grandmother on my father's side. But having had discussions with my mother about this, it has become clear to me that her past was not revealed to us to the extent that it might have been. By rights, she could have been bitter and angry, and those emotions could have consumed her. Instead, I remember mincemeat tarts, shortbread cookies, peach pie (still a family favorite), knitted socks every year, and rugs that still adorn my mother's house. And I remember my grandmother loving china and ornaments, placing them carefully around her home. While I provide no basis in fact for the following statement, I believe it was a tougher generation than ours. The hardship of their past was often overshadowed by their resilience.

For the Home Children and their descendants, the discovery of their origins and history continues to be a challenge. Often the agencies that were involved can provide helpful information. My grandmother was a Barnardo Child (Barnardo's was one of the main agencies participating in the emigration scheme). In 1981, my mother wrote to and received some information from this organization. She also has been in contact with the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Her passion for and experience with genealogy has been instrumental in piecing together the puzzle, and, while she has made some headway, it has not been an easy task. Birth, marriage, death and census records—all such avenues have been pursued. Organizations representing the Home Children, such as the Canadian Centre for Home Children, have been vocal in their advocacy for assistance with such efforts.

The Barnardo's response letter to my mother's query ends with following words: "We are sorry that the details concerning your mother's early years make very sad reading and we hope that she will not be too distressed to receive this information. We are glad to know that after these experiences she eventually knew the happiness

of family life." That she did. My grandmother was married at 21 and went on to have three children, 12 grandchildren, 30 great-grandchildren—and new descendants arrive almost every year.

While individual legacies may seem to have relevance only within narrowly defined spheres of influence, taken together there is no doubt that the legacy of the Home Children is significant for the country as a whole.

Writing this piece has committed me to reflecting on a woman that I didn't know well enough during her lifetime. Many years ago, I would have looked at the knitted socks in my top drawer and just noted their existence, simply appreciating the fact that they were made by my grandmother. Today, they represent something different and more meaningful. First and foremost, they represent my grandmother's strength and resiliency; her life testifies to the wonders of the human spirit. They also represent the extent to which I have been able to take things for granted in my life, thanks to the efforts of my ancestors. And they provide history lessons—to be learned from the experience of the Home Children and other marginalized children—about what happens when governments and societies fail to value and support children and families.

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About the author

Thomas Waldock is Chair of Child and Family Studies at Nipissing University and a member of the Children's Rights Academic Network (CRAN), associated with the Landon Pearson Resource Centre for the Study of Childhood and Children's Rights.

Vote on Amended Bylaws

Corporations Canada requires all non-profit organizations to update their letters patent and bylaws to reflect changes in federal legislation. CIHS draft bylaws, which were sent to members with Bulletin 66, will be uploaded to our website in June. A two-thirds vote in support of the draft is needed for Corporations Canada to ratify the changes. Members will be canvassed for their views.

In Memoriam

John Arthur Hunter

We are sad to report the passing of John Hunter, a former President of the Canadian Immigration Historical Society and a member of the class of 1959, the first group of university graduates (Queen's in John's case) recruited as foreign service officers by the Department of Citizenship and Immigration.

After a year of training involving an extensive cross-country familiarization tour, in which he and his colleagues worked at various offices across the country, John was posted to Leeds in the U.K. as officer in charge. He married Patricia Henderson in 1961, served in London and returned to Ottawa in 1966, where he took leave for nine months to pursue an MA in public administration at Carleton. He was subsequently seconded to the Privy Council Office (1967-68) and worked at Immigration HQ for several years before transferring to the Employment side of the new Department of Manpower and Immigration. He was in the last group of civil

servants sent to Quebec City for language training and his time in Quebec coincided with the victory of the Parti Québécois. In 1991, John took early retirement at the age of 55.

He subsequently wrote a book on the history of employment services in Canada and found fulfilment as a consultant for 20 years with such international organizations as the World Bank and the European Community. His practice allowed him to travel and work in various countries, most notably Russia (where he helped establish a network of 23 employment offices from Moscow to Sakhalin Island), Azerbaijan, Korea, Malaysia and the Kingdom of Jordan.

John was a founding member of the CIHS and was active as a board member during its early years. He established the first research strategy for the society in 1991, a strategy which continues to fit with the work of the society decades later. John was elected president at the fifth annual general meeting in 1991 and served until 1993. His term as president saw the commencement of a number of memoir projects and the preparatory work for the first Uganda Symposium.

As we mark the loss of both John Hunter and John Sheardown, Pat Hunter provides the following anecdote. Towards the end of John's London posting, he and Dr. Larry Kotkas, decided to deal with the high price of tobacco by growing their own in the back garden of the Hunter residence in Golders Green. The tobacco was planted among a wonderful array of roses growing along the fence. The plants thrived and came to maturity. It was decided to dry the tobacco in the Hunters' garage on a line strung above the family car, but the Hunters' posting came to an end before the tobacco leaves were cured. John Sheardown came to the rescue and quietly completed the process, curing the leaves in the furnace room of Canada House in Trafalgar Square. History does not record the ultimate fate of this contraband tobacco.

John will be dearly missed by his family: Patricia (née Henderson), his wife of 51 years; his children, Andrew Hunter (Maria Gurevich), David Hunter (Jane Humphreys), Jennifer Hunter (Patrick Steed); and grandchildren Beatrice, Miranda, Emily and Joshua.

John Sheardown
By Kurt F. Jensen, a foreign-service colleague

John Sheardown died peacefully in Ottawa at the end of 2012, after a long illness. John joined Immigration in the early 1960s and later switched to the foreign service, before retiring in 1989 after a proud career.

John did his job—and he did it well—with little expectation of grand rewards and was always comfortable in his anonymity. Often in the background, often unseen, people like John are the "oil" of diplomacy, conducting the daily tasks of diplomacy, and doing it quietly. At considerable risk to himself and his family, John Sheardown was one of the heroes of the Teheran exfiltration. He did not rise to exalted status in the establishment as a result of his actions, but he did earn the highest respect of his peers. And he died knowing that he had, indeed, made a difference.

John was a humble and calm man, self-deprecating and with a keen sense of humour. In WWII, John served in the RCAF as a pilot. During a bombing mission over Germany, his Lancaster bomber was severely crippled. He managed to reach England and ordered his crew to bail out before he himself crashed with the plane. Both his legs were broken. He never tired of recounting how he crawled to a pub, waking the innkeeper in the middle of the night to ask for help and a glass of whisky. The innkeeper brought the whisky but insisted on payment while John waited for an ambulance!

John was serving in Iran when the revolution broke out. In response an increasingly tense situation, most Canadian dependants had left Teheran only days before Christmas. All remaining mission members contributed to a Christmas dinner hosted by Scott Munro. John suggested that "the only appropriate thing to eat…was a suckling pig", and a suitable victim was clandestinely procured. Instead of arriving at the party with the pig appropriately prepared and cooked, John arrived early in the day with the pig ready for the oven. Georgette Latimer, another mission staffer, arrived with a turkey, which also needed to be cooked. Luckily, the

Munros had a second smaller oven but it was inadequate for either beast or fowl. As the day progressed, the two dinners shunted back and forth between the two ovens, with John's pig being found at one point sitting on the oven door with its head inside the oven, seemingly attempting suicide. But somehow, everything was appropriately cooked, and the last happy Christmas in Teheran was celebrated.

John and his wife, Zena, were still in Teheran when Iranian radical students overran the U.S. embassy on 4 November 1979. On that day, a small group of Americans evaded capture by leaving through a building on the edge of the compound. For several days, they moved between various apartments. Then, realizing that the embassy occupation would not quickly be resolved, they looked for a more permanent solution to their dilemma.

One of the Americans knew John as a friend and called him for help. John, a man of principles and common sense, responded with, "Why didn't you call sooner?" John then reported to Ambassador Ken Taylor. Over the next several months, Canadian and U.S. officials planned and prepared for the exfiltration of the American "house guests", four of whom lived with the Sheardowns and two with the Taylors. Throughout this time, the Canadians at the embassy, particularly the Sheardowns and the Taylors, faced significant risk. The wives of the two principals, neither of whom had a Canadian diplomatic passport, faced particular danger.

Throughout the ordeal, John Sheardown was viewed by most of the Americans as a stoic protector, an "uncle" on whom one could count. In the evenings after dinner, he would gather his wards, light his pipe, and with drink in hand, preside over the gathering as all listened with rapt attention to the international news on the radio.

Under cover of dramatic licence, the exfiltration of the Americans has been dramatically, and largely incorrectly, portrayed in the recent film, *Argo.* The film ignores virtually all the Canadians and some of their exceptional contributions are credited to Ben Affleck, who portrays the CIA hero. (Mendez, the actual CIA officer involved, has fully acknowledged the contributions of the Canadians.)

When it was all over, John and the other Canadians in Teheran were awarded the Order of Canada. He accepted the award only after being promised that his wife, who faced equal danger, would also receive the Order of Canada. In the aftermath of the exfiltration and the closing of the Canadian embassy, the contribution of most of the Canadians involved in the operation was downplayed by the Canadian government. This does not, and should not, diminish our recognition of what John and others did to save friends, colleagues and neighbours.

John is survived by his beloved wife Zena; two of his children, Robin and John; and several grandchildren.

Harry Tobin

From *The Victoria Times Colonist,* we learn that Harry Michael Tobin passed away 13 June 2012, just short of his 100th birthday. Born in Stoppington, Alberta, the seventh of nine children, he spent his pre-WWII years as a teacher/principal in rural Alberta. Harry was a veteran of the Burma campaign and served as a flight navigator in the RCAF. He worked as an immigration officer for the port of Sidney, B.C., spent six years with the Canadian consulate in Chicago, and returned as immigration officer in charge of the Victoria airport and Sidney port.

Harry was dedicated to the community, serving on the first Sidney town council, on the water board and the school board. He was an active Rotarian and a member of the Legion, Probus and The Knights of Columbus. In 2002 he was presented with the "Lifetime Service Award" by the Lt. Governor. An avid golfer, Harry played until the age of 93, winning many seniors' trophies. He also loved fishing and gardening. Family was always first for Harry. He never failed to have a story to tell and entertained with his Irish wit.

George Varnai recalls that, when the late Corni Reijnen.joined Immigration and was told to report to Harry for duty on Vancouver Island, Corni couldn't afford to move his family. To save as much money as possible, he decided to live at the office. In secret, with many adventures, he just stayed at the airport after his shift and, when the coast was clear, he slept at the office! This went on for some time until Harry caught on. He sternly

informed Corni that his actions were totally unacceptable and his tenancy was terminated forthwith. He added, as "you can't live here, you're moving in with me". Until he saved enough money, Corni received room and board from Harry, who would not accept a cent for payment.

Janusz Zawisza

Ed. Note: Those who knew and loved John Zawisza wiil no doubt enjoy a quiet smile with the following.

Dear Mike,
Many thanks for the CIHS Bulletins with In Memoriam articles, they are much appreciated. Ali and Kris arrived two days before the memorial service on the 12th. We spent them frantically preparing for the buffet lunch, to which we expected between 30 and 60 guests.

The 12th was a beautiful sunny day. Whilst getting dressed, Kris noticed that his housemaid in Dubai had packed a black jacket and navy trousers. Ali discovered that I had put on navy leotards instead of black ones.

We left for the church on time. As we were driving through the forest, Ali remarked that it would be at moment like this that Dad (John) would have said "we're late". We all laughed, not stopping to think how precise such a thought would turn out to be.

On arriving at the church, Jolande (who helps me with house cleaning and sings in the church choir) said "where's John?" We had all three forgotten to take his urn! Kris dashed back to get it, so John was late for his own funeral, by ten minutes. To make up for lost time, the priest, bless him, took one hymn off the list to be sung during the memorial.

The memorial service was peaceful and had just the right amount of ceremony that Jan would have enjoyed. During the service, Kris took the opportunity to mention the significance of 12 September. It was the day in 1683 that Polish King Jan Sobieski III was victorious over the Ottoman Empire and saved Vienna and the rest of Europe from the invading Turks. The Polish king had asked the Virgin Mary to protect his troops, who were vastly outnumbered. He proclaimed that his victory was due to her protection. The then Pope, Innocent XI, declared the 12 September as the feast day of the holy name of Mary. John's middle name was Mary.

The buffet was well received, by 26 guests. As you can imagine, we are now swamped with leftovers, not least of which are three bags of small croissants. We had decided to take the above-mentioned historical reference a step further. Croissants were symbolic of the Muslim crescent moon and were apparently first baked as a victory cake in celebration of the Turks being beaten at Vienna. Once again thank you for all your help. All the best, Birgit Zawisza

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