



## The Boat People: One Event, Three Generations, Three Different Experiences

Joey Marple

*Ed. Note: Joey Marple is the Canadian-born son of one of the boat people who came to Canada in 1979.*

It was Chinese New Year in 2000. I was 16 years old and about to meet my grandfather, Gai, for the first time, in Mỹ Tho, Vietnam, 75 kilometres south of Saigon. In 1979, Thanh, my father who was ethnic Chinese, was one of masses of people who fled Vietnam and along the way earned the moniker “The Boat People”. My grandfather—his father—had remained in Vietnam.

What coming home for Christmas is to Canadians, coming home for Chinese New Year is to the Cantonese. After a long trip, we arrived at the home my dad grew up in, and all the grandkids rushed to Gai with smiles calling out “yeh yeh” the Cantonese title for paternal grandfather. Grandpa hugged me tightly. I was the spitting image of the son he said goodbye to 21 years ago. Then in perfect Canadian English I called him “grandpa”. He didn’t speak a word of English, and I didn’t speak a word of Cantonese. So many of my peers growing up in Canada had language barriers with their grandparents from “the old country” that it seemed normal. However, I have never met a human being who envisioned speaking to their grandkids through a translator. If sorrow results from a disparity between expectation and reality, then the burden falls disproportionately on the old generation from the old country. People can experience the same event but have entirely different experiences. The Vietnam war was one event, but my grandfather, father, and I had three entirely different experiences.



Gai (grandfather) and Joey Marple, in Mỹ Tho, Vietnam. (Courtesy of the author)

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In 1979, Immigration Minister Ronald Atkey went into a Cabinet meeting with the manuscript of *None is Too Many*, which described Canada's callous response to the persecution of Jews by the Nazis in the 1930s. He asked whether the ministers present wanted to be remembered in the same way as Canada's leaders during WWII.<sup>1</sup> Like some Holocaust survivors, Grandpa didn't want to talk about past traumas, but the same question I yearned to ask Holocaust survivors, I also yearned to ask him: "Why didn't you leave too?" Grandpa left the question unanswered, and now as an adult I have tried to answer the question by putting myself in his shoes.

Giai was born in 1921 in Guangdong province, China. During his childhood China was "the sick man of Asia", and Giai left on a boat to build a better life in what was then French Indochina. Like millions of Cantonese, he settled in Mỹ Tho where he resided for the rest of his life. By age 25, he had emigrated from China to Vietnam, learned a new language, survived the Japanese occupation of World War II, fallen in love with a young lady also living in the Cantonese diaspora of Vietnam, married her, and had their first son.

Mỹ Tho was mostly unscathed by the Vietnam war, contrary to the horrific images in my mind from movies like *Apocalypse Now* that made me imagine the entire 2,300-km-long country bombed out. Fortunately, I was offered a window on to the impact of the war on my family's city in a memoir written by Tobias Wolff, an American lieutenant posted in Mỹ Tho from 1967 to 1968. He wrote:

I'd never been to Europe, but in Mỹ Tho I could almost imagine myself there. And that was the whole point. The French had made the town like this so they could imagine themselves in France. The illusion was just about perfect, except for all the Vietnamese. It was a quiet, dreamy town, and a lucky town. For a couple of years now there'd been no car bombs, no bombs in restaurants, no kidnappings, no assassinations.<sup>2</sup>

During the 21 years of war, counting from the fall of Dien Bien Phu in 1954 to the fall of Saigon in 1975, Giai lived happily in Mỹ Tho. By 1975, the family grew to seven children, and the eldest two were studying and working abroad. Giai's tea business flourished, and he contributed to the construction of the local Chinese private school—the kind soon to be nationalized by the new government.

From an American perspective, the Vietnam war ended with the fall of Saigon on 30 April 1975, but to those living in former French Indochina, the borders were still being redefined. In March 1978, China invaded North Vietnam. Giai and millions of soon-to-be boat people now had the misfortune of being ethnically Chinese and under the rule of a Vietnamese regime suspicious of a fifth column.

Giai was 58 years old and he had to choose between staying in Vietnam, the devil he knew, or fleeing Vietnam to the devil he did not know. First, could he survive as a refugee at his age? Second, Giai's wife had suddenly died three months earlier. Understandably, a man grieving his wife might be too overwhelmed to contemplate rebuilding life in an unknown country, assuming that he did not drown first in the South China Sea. Giai had spent the last 40 years building a new life in a new country with a new language, but he didn't have enough years left to do it a second time. When an elder has spent decades sowing learning and labour, their society appreciates reaping the bountiful harvest. In Vietnam's new communist society, expropriation was more likely than appreciation, but forfeit was certain if Giai started over as a stranger in a new land.

If the Jewish people are the most famous diaspora, then the prophesy of Jeremiah that commenced their exile 2,600 years ago provided an uncomfortable archetype for the older generation of my culture too:

...unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem unto Babylon; Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters;... after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. (Jer 29:4-6,10).

For the elder, too old to build, too old to plant, too old to find new romance, and too old to wait 70 years for a redemptive return to the homeland, the silver lining of exile was paper thin.

If Grandpa had everything to lose by fleeing Vietnam in 1979, my father, at age 23, had everything to gain. He was athletic and likely to survive the sea and the refugee camp. Like all young, single men, he had to build a life of his own either in the country of his birth or in a new country. He was a keen learner, quick to make friends wherever he went, and his appetite for risk negated any trepidations about the unknown. In May 1979, the boat Dad was aboard spilled its human cargo into the ocean waves crashing off the coast of Malaysia. For the rest of his life, Dad talked about nearly drowning as he helped those who were overpowered by the waves struggle to shore. He would spend the next five months in the

crowded refugee camp of Pulau Bidong. On 11 September 1979, a CBC television news special described it as “looking like a South Sea paradise” but added that “crowded into a stinking, rocky cul-de-sac between mountain and sea are 40,000 people”.<sup>3</sup>



Thanh, in Pulau Bidong, Malaysia, 1979. From Thanh's photo album. Photographer unknown.

Meanwhile, in a quiet Saskatchewan village, a group of Christians gathered in a home to pray and study the Bible. With a soft voice but firm conviction, Joan Seabrook shared with the group, “Watching the suffering of the boat people on the news, I feel like there has to be something we can practically do to help”. Everyone else there quietly nodded, as if Joan vocalized their inner thoughts. They contacted their member of parliament and learned that if they formally joined together as a “Group of Five”, they could sponsor a family.

I imagine my dad shivering on the crisp October day he made the short walk from the tarmac to the small Saskatoon airport building. George Kenyon, one of the sponsors, waited inside the terminal for my father to arrive. He was old enough to be Thanh's dad, and I imagine George smiling with his thick glasses and extending a firm handshake characteristic of a hardworking man and saying, “Welcome to Canada, Thanh”. From the airport they drove 250 km on a single-lane highway, cutting through fields of

stubble that must have looked like an ocean of land to Thanh. They arrived just east of a town named Livelong, where the boreal forest meets farmland. For the next year, Thanh shared the Kenyons' home, a large two-storey house with a magnificent barn that decorated the farmyard with its silhouette each sunrise.

While Thanh lived with George and his family, he attended Turtleford High School and learned English. Veronica Quinn, the English teacher, generously gave her time and so did Tanja Hunter, a fellow classmate. In nearby North Battleford, Wy-Lee Manufacturing had become an overnight success, growing from a farmyard shop to a new facility in town. Word spread fast among the tightly networked boat people that Wy-Lee offered good hourly pay, abundant overtime, and could accommodate limited English abilities. Dad was exceptionally sociable and, despite the existence of unwelcoming sentiments which the National Citizens' Coalition<sup>4</sup> tapped into, Dad easily connected with people of any culture. In addition to Vietnamese and ethnic Chinese friends, soon Thanh counted many born and raised Canadians as his friends too. My mom was one of those Canadians, and I was born in 1983.

In 1986 Dad found work at Canada Packers, a beef processing plant, and as a family we moved to Calgary. Physically demanding work—lifting and cutting beef carcasses as tons of them moved down a production line—was like an unspoken Canadian immigration tradition. In the 1980s the boat people from Vietnam began to replace the retiring Hungarians, Poles, and Czechs who had fled to Canada a generation earlier after the Soviet tanks ostensibly liberated their countries. Today the tradition continues as immigrants try build a life in Canada working at Lakeside Packers, the subject of the 2011 documentary *Brooks—The City of 100 Hellos*.<sup>5</sup> In 1991, Canada Packers closed the plant in Calgary. Unemployment is a hard trial; it is even harder for those with limited English abilities.

It's my opinion that a person is accountable for the choices they make, and thankfully on most occasions, our foolish choices don't end as tragically as they could. On other occasions our foolish choices compound the misfortunes that afflict us beyond our control. Among the many traits that I and many others adored in Thanh, were others: emotional intensity, dark humour, shame, unpredictability, substance abuse, and relationship breakdown may have been manifestations of untreated post-traumatic stress disorder. Based on hard evidence supporting the timeline of his life and statements from family members, I postulate that Thanh was part of the army on 25 December 1978 when Vietnam invaded Cambodia and overthrew the genocidal Khmer Rouge. When Canadian foreign service officers selected 60,000 boat people from the refugee camps, they had concerns about “some of these guys (single military-aged males) coming from a war-torn country and the wrong side of the tracks, [who] were simply too hardened to fit the expectations of a Canadian sponsor.”<sup>6</sup> Despite the diligence of interviewers, people like my dad did make it to Canada and as expected struggled to integrate. My father faded out of my life, then passed away when I was 14. Most of my formative years, I was raised immersed in “old stock” Canadian culture. What I know about Dad's journey is a product of random memories and researching the boat people for the last two years.

By context I understood that “What is Canadian culture?” was the deeper question posed to me by a Cantonese relative who asked. “What is an example of Canadian food?”. I responded, “ginger beef, but Canadians call it Chinese food”. He had never heard of the dish, so he consulted Wikipedia to learn that it was a Chinese fusion dish that originated not in China, but in the heart of cattle country, Calgary, Alberta. Ginger beef is a metaphor for my Canadian culture, a fusion of influences from the immigration of ancient civilizations adapting to a vast land only defined as a country after the invention of the railroad.

Actions speak louder than words, and language wasn’t a barrier to my understanding that Grandpa valued education. In 1978, the Vietnamese government expropriated the private Chinese school in Mỹ Tho that my grandfather sponsored. The seeds he had sown were carried across the Pacific Ocean and when I started my career, Bachelor of Science degree in hand, I bought a plane ticket to go and show him my appreciation. It was the second and last time we saw each other. We hugged and I said the only Cantonese word I knew, “yeh yeh”.

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<sup>1</sup> Molloy, Michael J., et al. *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975-1980*. McGill-Queen's University Press, Montreal, QC, 2017. Pp 119-242.

<sup>2</sup> Wolff, Tobias. *In Pharaoh's Army: Memories of the Lost War*. Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2010. Kindle file.

<sup>3</sup> *CBC Television Crew Visits Vietnamese Refugees, Anambas Islands*. CBC, 11 Sept. 1979.

<sup>4</sup> Molloy, *Supra*, p 150.

<sup>5</sup> Yanchyk, Brandy, director. *Brooks the City of 100 Hellos*. Brandy Y Productions, 2011, <https://vimeo.com/ondemand/brooksthecityof100helllos/28109255>.

<sup>6</sup> Molloy, *Supra*.

## CIHS Annual General Meeting: Virtual or In Person?

Plans are being made to hold this year’s Annual General Meeting on **20 October 2022**.

Your board follows the news and is aware that the various strains of Covid-19 continue to circulate in Ottawa and across Canada. We realize that many of our members are in a demographic with greater susceptibility to Covid-19 infections; however, various vaccines and masking options are available to give greater protection.

The board is interested in your views about whether the meeting should be held virtually (via Zoom), as was done for the last two years, or whether it is time to return to the more traditional in-person dinner and Annual General Meeting in Ottawa, with no virtual component. Please let us know your opinion via [info@cihs-shic.ca](mailto:info@cihs-shic.ca)

## Our Early Days in China

Donald Cameron

*Donald Cameron is a retired foreign service immigration program manager.*

The Family Reunion Understanding with China was reached during Prime Minister (PM) Pierre Trudeau’s visit during October and November 1973.

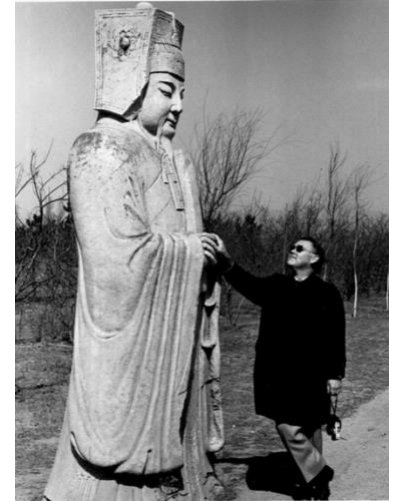
I made my first trip to Beijing in November while the PM was elsewhere in China. I was accompanied by Joe Freeman, who was the immigration program manager, and the inimitable Dr. John Willis, medical officer in charge at the Commission for Canada in Hong Kong. Over a few days, we reached agreement with the Chinese Foreign Ministry on how applications for permanent residence from persons who had been sponsored/nominated by relatives in Canada would be processed.

Nothing happened for several months. The Chinese government had ruled out our sending application forms to all those persons (about 10,000) in China for whom we held sponsorships/nominations in Hong Kong. We could only send applications to those persons with exit permits, and months later we had not been informed of any such persons. There was a lot of pressure from the sponsors/nominators, the press, and political opposition as well as government politicians to bring these sponsored/nominated persons from China to Canada. So in the spring of 1974, Director General of the Immigration Foreign Branch Merrill G. (Bud) Clark came out to Hong Kong from Ottawa to go to Beijing to press the Chinese government to get moving. My wife and I accompanied Bud on this trip, during which we met with the Foreign Ministry and Bud made his pitch. The Foreign Ministry told us that we would be able to interview applicants with exit

permits in Guangzhou on our return trip to Hong Kong. In those days, the only way foreigners could enter China was by train from Hong Kong to Guangzhou, with a long stop at the border to get off the Hong Kong train, be processed, and board the Chinese train. The small hamlet on the Chinese side of the border was known as Shum Chun but is today the booming city of Shenzhen. Foreigners were then taken to the Guangzhou airport for the flight to Beijing aboard the elderly Ilyushin 62s of the Civil Aviation Administration of China. (This aircraft was sometimes called the VC10-ski because of its similarity to the British VC10, although the Ilyushins did not fall out of the sky as did the VC10s).

The return flight from Beijing to Hong Kong did not arrive in Guangzhou until after the last train to Shum Chun had departed, so foreigners were required to stay overnight in the hotel for foreigners, the Dong Fang, which was located next to the location of the twice-a-year Canton Trade Fair, which was the only time most foreign business persons were permitted to visit China. Bud and I were informed that an applicant with an exit permit would be brought to our hotel for an interview. Perhaps the most unusual part of it was when I sensed that he understood my English without the need for translation. I asked him directly how he had learned English, and he replied, "in high school in Prince Rupert, British Columbia"!

The picture of Bud was taken on that trip. In those days foreigners could not leave Beijing without official Chinese permission except to visit the Ming Tombs and the Great Wall, so these were popular weekend destinations. I was taken on my first visit to the Wall and the Tombs by several members of the Canada-based staff using embassy cars and drivers, and thereafter I was able to take others such as Bud.



Merrill G. (Bud) Clark

## Interviewing Cambodian Refugees on the Thai-Cambodian Border 1983–1985

Paul Bennett

*The author was a Canadian foreign service officer (political and economic stream) from 1982–1996. When posted to Bangkok, Paul Bennett had a cross-stream assignment as a visa officer, primarily interviewing Indochinese refugees in Thai camps and Vietnamese applicants in Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) under Canada's Family Reunification Program. He recently wrote a memoir, the subject of this article, that may be of interest to readers.*

Bulletin readers may be interested in my recent book *On the Border: Twenty Life Stories From Four Continents* (Friesen Press). Its title story shares my recollections from 1983–1985 of interviewing Cambodian refugees situated along the Thai-Cambodian border for the Indochinese Refugee Program, during my posting to the Canadian embassy in Bangkok.



Refugees along the Thai-Cambodian border lived lives delineated by barriers and fences. (Drawing by Anouk'Chet Suong, from *On the Border* by Paul Bennett)

To provide readers with a brief background to that story: the governments of Vietnam, Laos, and Cambodia fell under Communist control in the spring of 1975. Shortly thereafter, a massive exodus from these countries began. While many Canadians became aware of the plight of the 700,000 Vietnamese "boat people" due to the heart-wrenching images being carried by the print and television media, equally shocking was the unexpected arrival of 750,000 starving, malnourished, and traumatized Cambodians along the Thai border from a country about which little was known, refugees fleeing the brutal and arguably genocidal Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot. After some hesitation, the Thai government, United Nations, various other humanitarian organizations and donor countries swung into action, establishing camps in various locations throughout the country to provide safety and services for these refugees and for those accepted for resettlement abroad.

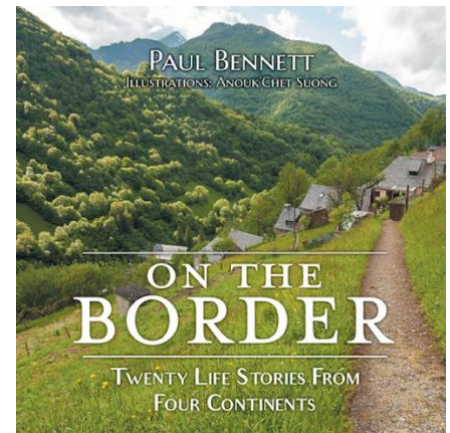
Many large and small Cambodian camps (some under the control of the various factions in the Cambodian strife) became established along the Thai border; the best known of which was Khao-I-Dang (KID), the only site where refugees were entitled to resettlement abroad. Designed to accommodate up to 100,000 people, the camp population overflowed to 160,000 in March 1980 but had dropped to 40,000 refugees when I undertook my immigration selection trips (1983–1985). Camp

conditions in KID were mixed. While there is little doubt that residents were physically safer and better provided for than elsewhere along the border or in Cambodia itself, the camps were seriously overcrowded. Residents were also subject to theft and extortion by various parties and occasional harsh and arbitrary Thai army justice. And their futures were far from certain due to the evolving situations along the border and in Cambodia itself. At the same time, those responsible for the wellbeing of the refugees were considering the perennial options of resettlement abroad, repatriation to Cambodia, and integration with the local Thai population.

What about Canada's Indochinese Refugee Program and the interview process? While the refugees had fled dire circumstances, for which we could not but be sympathetic, we had to uphold the laws and regulations of our immigration program. It must be said, however, that some of these parameters had been formulated in Ottawa quickly, and occasionally vaguely, in response to the extraordinary and rapidly evolving circumstances thousands of miles away. As a result, as visa officers, we had some leeway in interpreting these requirements. How does one objectively interview those whose lives had been torn asunder, who often spoke no English or French, and had no comprehension of life in Canada should they be accepted for resettlement? Had they been members of the Khmer Rouge, helping to perpetrate atrocities on their own people? From the refugees' perspective, there was little candidates could do to prepare for our interviews, except dress as best they could in their one change of tattered clothes, ensure that all family members were present, and rehearse a few lines of broken English they probably did not understand.

Our days were long, sweaty, and exhausting. The interviews were held in an old school between the local town and KID where there was no running water and only sporadic electricity to run our much-needed portable fans. As inexperienced as most of the Canadian team was, we bonded well and began to get the entire process down to a fine art. As the days wound down in the small border town where we stayed during these trips, dinner discussions with colleagues and members of the international community charged with responding to the needs of the refugees allowed us to compare notes and exchange intelligence on a wide range of topics. These included camp conditions, life in Cambodia and on the border, and the challenges faced by other resettlement countries such as the United States and Australia.

This chapter has been well received. Indeed, Mike Molloy, co-author of *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees 1975-1980* opined that "this is an article that would not be out of place on the pages of *The Economist* or *The New Yorker*". Retired Canadian diplomat and frequent political commentator Ed Whitcomb suggests that this chapter is an example of how important it is to read the book to understand "how the world actually works".



I think Bulletin readers and those who have worked under difficult and sometimes dangerous conditions to interview refugees and other applicants to fulfil Canada's humanitarian commitments will find much of interest in this wide-ranging collection of vignettes. Among my stories are a light-hearted look at the cafeteria at the Lester B. Pearson Building on Sussex Drive in Ottawa (where the immigration foreign service employees were headquartered from 1985–1992). I have included in my book a number of anecdotes: a Sunday stroll along the fabled Dong Khoi Street in Ho Chi Minh City during the height of the Cold War while on a Family Reunification Program trip; recollection of a little "down-time" at a tranquil Ethiopian lake while civil war was being waged throughout the country; a fond vignette of when I was an international polling station officer under challenging security conditions in Cambodia during the UN-sponsored 1993 election; and another occasion when I somehow managed to avoid near disaster by leaving Sri Lanka three days before the 2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami.

I have supplemented *On the Border* with illustrations by Cambodian survivor Anouk'Chet Suong, as well as appropriate maps and photos. Soft and hard cover and digital versions are available. The book can be purchased at various Ottawa and Kingston bookstores and [online](#).

## **Nouvelle Liste des Anciens Chefs et Chefs Adjointes du ministère de l'Immigration et de la Citoyenneté**

Gerry Maffre

En collaboration avec le groupe Gestion des connaissances, Recherche et l'évaluation d'Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté, nous offrons maintenant [une liste](#) des ministres, sous-ministres, secrétaires d'état, et sous-secrétaires d'état, responsables pour les programmes d'immigration et de la citoyenneté depuis 1867 à nos jours.

## CIHS Presentation of *Cong Lung Van Ganh* to UNHCR

On 8 June 2022, former CIHS president Michael Molloy met with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees representative in Canada, Rema Jamous Imseis, and presented her with a copy of *Cong Lung Van Ganh*. According to Molloy, she was very appreciative and enjoyed the many photographs at the end of the book.

Previous issues of the Bulletin have reported on the writing and publication of *Running on Empty: Canada and the Indochinese Refugees, 1975-1980* (co-authored by CIHS members Molloy, Peter Duschinsky, Kurt F. Jensen, and Robert Shalka). Within weeks of the release of *Running on Empty*, two members of Alberta's Vietnamese Canadian community, Tri Hoang and Tuyet Lam, asked Molloy whether it would be possible to produce a shorter Vietnamese language version of the book to reach a wider Vietnamese audience. Tuyet Lam had just ordered 300 copies of *Running on Empty*, and so she had Molloy's undivided attention.

Choosing the chapters to translate was the easy part. Finding people with sufficient mastery of both English and Vietnamese to produce a high-quality translation proved to be more challenging. Eventually Phan Trung Dam, a retired engineering technology professor (and former Columbo Plan Scholar) assembled a small team of highly skilled volunteers who devoted more than a year to the project. McGill-Queen's University Press kindly consented to the translation. Once the translation was completed, Dr. Tri Dinh Hoang of Edmonton designed the cover and layout, assembled both historic and contemporary photos, and arranged for the printing. What to call the Vietnamese version was a puzzle: the expression "running on empty" does not resonate in the Vietnamese language. Happily, Vi T. Nguyen came up with a solution based on the traditional Vietnamese practice of transporting heavy loads in two baskets attached to either end of a bamboo pole. *Cong Lung Van Ganh*, roughly "bent back still carries", conveys the notion of carrying on despite the heavy load.



L-R: Rema Jamous Imseis and Michael J. Molloy (Courtesy of UNHCR/Michael Casasola)

## Donald Milburn, Part II: Early Years in the Foreign Service

Kurt F. Jensen

*Ed. note: CIHS board member Kurt Jensen prepared this series of articles from Donald Milburn's memoirs, a copy of which Milburn donated to the Canadian Immigration Historical Society for its archives. Part I of this series appeared in Bulletin 99 (December 2021).*

Donald Milburn joined immigration on a temporary contract in 1947 for work at a small border crossing in British Columbia. After the end of the contract, he fortuitously was rehired after a year and soon qualified for an overseas assignment in the Netherlands.

The Milburns reached Rotterdam in September 1951 after an enjoyable voyage on the SS *Ryndam*. The family was met by Art Ewen, the officer-in-charge of the immigration office, and his wife, Marge. With the privileges of diplomatic passports, they quickly cleared Dutch customs and immigration.

Canadian immigration at The Hague was headed by Ewen, who was assisted by Eric Forbes, Gordon Chalmers, and George Small. Jack Armstrong and Jim McCarthy would later join them. Four Canadian doctors and RCMP Security Service officers completed the team.

It took nearly two weeks to find suitable accommodations, with the family staying at the delightful old Hotel Europa in the interim. Milburn began studying Dutch and passed an examination after about six months, thereby qualifying for an incremental \$15 per month in pay—the first officer to do so. As a result of his new fluency in Dutch, Milburn spent a great deal of time travelling throughout the Netherlands to lecture and show films on Canada. By August 1952, he begged to ease up on the travelling as his wife was pregnant with their second child.

They had just received their car, an Austin, from England. It was, in fact, their second car. Milburn was dockside to receive his first new car, only to watch the cable snap and the car have an unpleasant encounter with the concrete dock. That same month his wife gave birth to a second son.

Milburn thought himself good at selecting immigrants—partly, he felt, because he had been an immigrant himself, but mostly because he felt he understood the needs of the Canadian labour market from his extensive cross-Canada tour. Indonesia had recently gained its independence, and Dutch citizens returning to their homeland often found it difficult to settle into the European climate and culture. Many were eager to begin a new start in Canada.

After four years in The Hague, the family returned to Canada (spring 1955). Following a two-week vacation with family, Milburn embarked on a second six-week cross-Canada tour, this time by himself, and more focused on meeting with field offices to learn about settlement issues. Following the tour of field offices, Milburn picked up his family and returned to the Netherlands, on the same ship as his original voyage, arriving in August 1955. Shortly thereafter, he was sent to Copenhagen for a temporary duty assignment to relieve Andy Karsberg, the officer-in-charge, who was returning to Canada for three months of vacation and training. He enjoyed his brief tour, often visiting Tivoli Gardens with its many distractions, enjoying the boisterous fish market, and attending the National Ballet Company, one of the world's best.

He was just settling back into the routine in The Hague when he received a communication from Ottawa initiating a significant change to the immigration overseas service. Officers serving abroad would henceforth require a university degree and qualify through a Foreign Service Officers exam. Those already overseas without a university degree could enter the permanent overseas cadre by taking and passing the same exam. Milburn was the only one in The Hague to apply; the others returned to Canada at the end of their tour.

Milburn went to Paris, where senior people from Ottawa were conducting the exam. Wandering among the sights and pleasures of Paris, Milburn ran into Vic Horan, who had been with him on his cross-Canada tour and who was now posted to Stockholm and also taking the exam. Of the 106 immigration officers world-wide who took that first exam, only 56 passed, including Horan and Milburn.

Passing the exam resulted in a promotion and a pay raise, but little change in the duties. Milburn's salary was now nearly \$5,000 per annum. Immigration was booming, especially in Great Britain, where there were Canadian visa offices in London, Bristol, Glasgow, and Belfast. Milburn applied for an "Advanced Publicity Officer" position, hoping to qualify for one in London. He secured a position, but in Glasgow, not London. This ended his six-year posting to the Netherlands.

The family reached Glasgow in the spring of 1957 to find it grimy, sooty, and rundown in comparison to prim and bright Holland. The officer-in-charge was Lyle McEachern, assisted by Ernie Reid, another colleague from a cross-Canada tour. As "Advanced Publicity Officer," Milburn was to drum up interest in immigration to Canada, and in that capacity, he toured most of Scotland.

Six months after his arrival, Milburn was transferred to a new office that was opening in Leeds, Yorkshire. It was another grim industrial city, yet pleasant to live in. Milburn and family remained in Leeds until August 1959, when he returned to Ottawa. He had secured a Clerk-6 position, slightly lower in pay than the IO-6 rank as an overseas immigration officer. Immigration was now part of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. His new job focused on resolving issues from the field and preparing responses to correspondence.

An interdepartmental foreign service was developing, with the Department of External Affairs conducting examinations for foreign service officers. Milburn did not have a university degree but appears to have had a college education, which was accepted, and he applied. He returned to overseas service as an FSO-2 and was posted to London in 1962 for four enjoyable years, living in upscale Dolphin Square. He was then posted to New York City.

The consulate (or possibly only the immigration section) was located at the corner of 5th Avenue and 53rd Street, very close to many of New York's sights. The officer-in-charge was Tommy Thompson, who became a good friend. They shared the immigration case work as well as the publicity tours that introduced much of the American eastern seaboard to Milburn. He was in New York during the excitement surrounding Expo 67 as well as the dark years of Vietnam when the office became very busy with individuals seeking a safe haven from the draft. The posting to New York ended in 1969. He then returned to Canada on home leave and to prepare for his next posting in New Delhi.

His effects and car were shipped from New York to Mumbai (Bombay, as it was then known). In August 1969 Milburn flew by Trans Canada Airlines to London en route to New Delhi. From London he flew first class with Qantas via Frankfurt,

### **New List of Past Heads and Deputy Heads of Immigration and Citizenship Departments**

Gerry Maffre

In collaboration with the Knowledge Management group in Research and Evaluation at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, we can now provide [a list](#) of ministers, deputy ministers, secretaries of state, and under-secretaries of state, responsible for the immigration and citizenship programs from 1867 to the present.



Tel Aviv, and Tehran, eventually reaching New Delhi, where he was the only person to leave the flight. He arrived to 43°C heat and an air-conditioned Chevrolet station wagon (Milburn compared it to Flin Flon in February). He stayed at the luxurious Oberoi Hotel, equally well air-conditioned, and promptly caught a cold.

Milburn was deputy officer-in-charge under Cliff Shaw. At that time, the immigration section was in a separate location from the high commission and accommodations were found where possible. Two weeks after his arrival, he moved into a five-room house with five servants.

Milburn took up golf. On his first outing, the first tee was near an old stone fence. Glancing at the fence, he saw a cobra rearing up with hood spread wide. Milburn decamped for the club house, where his caddie caught up with him and told him the cobra rarely left the fence and was merely enjoying scaring first-time players. The cobra never bothered him again. Even so, there were many poisonous snakes on the golf course. Players had to hire caddies for protection against the snakes and to patrol treed areas against rhesus monkeys who would steal golf balls. Such was golfing in India.

A softball league existed among the various diplomatic missions, and Milburn became a member of the U.S. Marine Corps team. In one game he was hit by the ball. Later when seeking to run to the third base his leg suddenly gave out. His right Achilles tendon had popped. It was not immediately diagnosed. He soldiered on for a few weeks but was eventually medically evacuated in January 1970 to Leeds, England, where his family still lived. The operation went well, but healing was problematic. The Canadian doctor in London determined that he could no longer serve at unhealthy posts, ending his diplomatic career. Milburn returned to Ottawa in March 1970—his overseas career ended by an attempt to steal third base.

*Ed. Note: The third and final instalment of Don Milburn's memoirs will be in an upcoming Bulletin and will focus on his remaining career at immigration headquarters in Ottawa.*

## Canadian Immigration News from 1906

CIHS President Dawn Edlund has shared the two articles below from the *Saint John Daily Sun's* 1906 records. They provide statistics and background information about Canada's immigration levels in the previous fiscal year (FY) as well as some description of who was accepted and who was denied entry to Canada. The high rate of medical inadmissibility for eye disease is notable: in FY 1905/1906, the newspaper states that a total of 611 deportations occurred, of which 492 were for eye diseases. The second article points to the main reason for this high number: Canada's immigration laws identified persons with trachoma, a highly contagious eye infection, as being inadmissible to this country. Trachoma, also known as river blindness, is caused by the bacterium *Chlamydia trachomatis* and is now curable with antibiotics. According to the World Health Organization, it is the leading cause of blindness worldwide.

### CANADIAN IMMIGRANTS DURING LAST FISCAL YEAR

Number was 123,867, of Which 61 Were Deported for Various Reasons.

*The Saint John Daily Sun, 3 January 1906, page 6 (Special to the Sun)*

OTTAWA, Jan. 2 – According to an official statement the total number of immigrants who were inspected on entering Canada during the last fiscal year was 123,867. Of this number 2,500 entered at Pacific coast ports. The total number detained was 2,559, while the total deportations from all causes was 611, of which 492 were for eye diseases, and 12 for diseases of the nervous system. Those deported after landing in the country and before the expiration of one year was 86. Out of the total number of immigrants inspected, 65,359 were British, while 58,508 belonged to other nationalities. Of the British only 13 were deported, while of the other nationalities the total was 598, one in 13, as against one in 98.

During the past year the commercial agencies branch of the department of trade and commerce received 819 trade enquiries from commercial agents and other foreign sources. The number of foreign addresses to trade enquiries furnished to correspondents of the department totalled 2,985.

DUMPED IN TORONTO: Men Suffering From Trachoma, Infectious Eye Disease, Staying There.

*The Saint John Daily Sun Newspaper, Thursday, 5 April 1906, page 4*

*The Toronto News* says:

Trachoma is a disease of the eyes, prevalent in southern Europe and in Asia, and of such a virulent and infectious character that the government prohibits the entrance to Canada of immigrants afflicted with it. Recently a couple of Syrians affected with the disease passed the immigration authorities at Halifax or St. John and came on through Toronto en route to the United States. The United States immigration

authorities stopped these two men at the border and they were sent back to Toronto, where they are now living in a poor way at the expense of a relative in the United States, who has work waiting for these men. Mr. Walsh, assistant relief officer, endeavored to see if these men could not get into the United States, but the authorities pointed to the evidence of the disease, which was plain to be seen, and consequently they are held in Toronto.

Mr. Walsh thinks it very curious that men who were stopped by United States authorities should not have been stopped by the Canadian immigration physicians, who ought to be as strict. It is believed if the Canadian medical director of immigration, D. Bryce, knew of this he would have these men sent back to Europe at the expense of the steamship companies. It is certainly felt they should not be dumped on Toronto.

## **Update on the CIHS Molloy Bursary**

Charlene Elgee

Summer is upon us and another university school year has drawn to a close. We are rapidly approaching the time when we post the application form for the 2022 CIHS Molloy Bursary [on our website](#). Although we did not receive any applications for the first year of the bursary, we are hopeful that inclusion in a couple of web listings of scholarships and bursaries will get the word out for 2022. Please feel free to spread the word among your contacts! The other way you can help is to throw your name in with the volunteers who are assessing the applications. Two more volunteers should be enough to keep the work down to a few hours each at the beginning of November, since the deadline for the students to apply is 1 November. Contact me at [charleneelgee@hotmail.com](mailto:charleneelgee@hotmail.com) if you are interested in helping in any way.

As always, we are still aiming for that \$30,000 sustainability level to fund the bursary. We will publish information about how we are doing in our fundraising in the next Bulletin. If you would like to support the Molloy Bursary financially, **donations can be submitted:**

- **by cheque addressed to the Canadian Immigration Historical Society, Treasurer, PO Box 9502 Station T, Ottawa K1G 3V2; or**
- **by bank-to-bank INTERAC e-transfer using the email [info@cihs-shic.ca](mailto:info@cihs-shic.ca) with CIHS as the payee.**

**Please indicate on your cheque or email that the funds are for the Bursary.**

## **A New Website for CIHS**

Gerry Maffre

Work is now afoot to create a new website for the Society, with a new look and structure this fall. We aim for a site that continues to provide information on the history of Canada's immigration programs, is content rich and attractive to all levels of visitors, easy to navigate and, of course, supports CIHS objectives and promotes our activities. We will create this new website with its manager, Winnerjit Rathor, and his team.

## **New Gunn Prize Partnership**

Gerry Maffre

On 29 April 2022, the CIHS announced a new partnership for the Gunn Prize with the Local Engagement Refugee Research Network (LERRN) and Department of History at Carleton University. This award is for excellence in a student essay on a historical topic in Canadian immigration.

We look forward to working with Carleton University to support students in the study of and communication about the history of immigration to Canada. Further information and application details are on our [website](#).

## In Memoriam

### Allen, Théa Hildegarde

Many people connected to Canada's Immigration Foreign Service community would have known or encountered Théa Allen, spouse of Ernest Allen, on postings in locations around the world, including Germany, India, Hong Kong, and Kenya, as well as back in Canada in Ottawa or Halifax. She passed away on 18 March 2022 in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and her funeral occurred on 2 April 2022. A lovely tribute is available [online](#).

### Gordon, Albert (Bert) Victor

Bert Gordon passed away on 15 February 2022 in Victoria, British Columbia. Born in 1929, he was a former immigration foreign service officer. Bert Gordon worked overseas in London, Rome, Cairo, Geneva, Glasgow (two assignments), Kingston (Jamaica), and Lebanon. In several of his later postings, he was the officer-in-charge of the visa office. He is survived by his wife, Leila.

### Papademetriou, Demetrios (Demetri) G.

Dr. Papademetriou, who passed away on 26 January 2022, was one of this generation's preeminent thinkers and activists on migration policy issues—U.S. domestic, regional and international—and he had an enduring connection to Canada. Demetri co-founded and led the highly respected nonpartisan think tank, the Migration Policy Institute (MPI) and other important international migration groups and movements. Canadian policy makers, like those from all countries with interests in migration topics, benefitted from his people-focused, forward-looking, and highly practical advice. Canada's federal immigration department, Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), remembered Papademetriou in a notice on 28 January 2022 to all departmental employees, quoted here in part:

Dr. Papademetriou, or Demetri as friends and colleagues called him, generously and regularly shared his time and knowledge not only with the international community, but also with our own department. He regularly accepted invitations from Canada to speak at various multilateral organizations during our tenures of leadership and at events and conferences that Canada organized. Just last year he joined an IRCC Executive Town Hall meeting to discuss the impacts of COVID-19 on migration, and in 2020 he gave a keynote address during Canada's 2020 Chairmanship of the Intergovernmental Consultations on Migration, Asylum and Refugees (IGC). Many within IRCC came to know Demetri not only as a talented researcher, charismatic presenter and trusted source of insight, but also as a friend. His influence is too immense to capture, from the highest levels of migration policymaking to the smallest, most personal gestures of mentoring and connecting. He will be dearly missed.

MPI has kindly shared various links to information about Demetri and the immense impact that his life's work has had upon immigration practitioners:

- The family's [obituary](#), where people can leave personal reflections;
- The [MPI statement](#) on his passing;
- A short compilation of his [select writings](#); and
- A brief tribute [video](#).

#### *Remembered by Diane Burrows*

I was the Immigration Program Manager in Washington, D.C. from 2008 to 2013, during a time that Demetri was starting to pull back from the ongoing work of running and being the face of MPI in favour of focusing more on his cherished projects. He continued to be consistently and fully in tune with migration challenges and prospects in Canada and was always willing to spend time with visitors who came from Canada for an informal chat or as part of a structured program. Demetri was an attentive sounding board and inspiration for them and for me, and meetings with him could be counted on to be of the most enduring value. Listening to Demetri greatly enriched my time and effectiveness in Washington. I valued his discretion and unerring judgement.

#### *Remembered by Brian Grant*

I first met Demetri across the NAFTA negotiating table. He was representing the Department of Labor on the U.S. delegation, and I was the Canadian lead for the Movement of Persons chapter. I had heard of him before negotiations

began; senior CIC officials spoke warmly of him and, I was told, he had a genuine interest in Canada's immigration program. But this was a negotiation.

The American delegates were friendly, and as we got to know each other better we would often share drinks and meals at the end of a day's session and swap stories. But when they put on their Team U.S.A. sweaters the next morning, they were prepared to go for your back teeth. Friendly yes, but as I was to learn, they gave nothing away. Demetri too, as a member of the team, knew how to push you, as I was to discover. But there was something different about the way he pushed that was hard to put your finger on. While we, of necessity, given the much different Mexican approach, dug deep into immigration rules and regulations and skirmished over interpretations, Demetri stood apart, seemingly more interested in a wider view than ours.

Negotiations came to an end in a marathon session in Dallas. On the last night of the session, I joined the U.S. delegates for a farewell meal. At the end of the meal, someone pointed out that we were within close walking distance of the spot



where JFK was assassinated. It was after midnight when we got there. No one else was around, no cars, just the humming of the street lights. We came upon the grassy knoll and looked down at the empty road below us. Voices ceased. And then, gradually, the Americans, visibly filling with emotion, drifted slowly and silently down the slope, enclosed in individual memories. Only Demetri and I remained atop the knoll. We spoke briefly about where we had been when we heard the news—Greece, Canada—and then we spoke of other things. It occurred me then that Demetri's seeming aloofness during the negotiations was because he spoke from the detachment of higher ground, that his perspective was that of an outsider.

On the surface this may sound counterintuitive. In his later career with Carnegie and MPI, he would appear to be the ultimate insider. Nobody had the access to high-ranking officials he did. Ministers, senior bureaucrats in Europe and North America, the World Economic Forum—all doors seemed to open for Demetri. And they opened, I believe, because he was the outsider, the maven, the one who could tell them what their own officials could not, who could tell them what lay on the other side of the hill. Demetri held no brief. He offered a high-level view of migration, contextualized by sound research on patterns and trends, knowledge of immigration policies and practices in many countries, and a keen ear for the politics of migration.

His mission was to broaden the discussion of migration and its connection to other areas of public policy. One of the ways he did this was through the Trans-Atlantic Council on Migration, which he established in 2005 and to which he attracted accomplished senior people from Europe and North America (most not schooled in migration issues) to help make connections to other areas of public policy. António Vitorino, former deputy prime minister of Portugal and current director general of the International Organization for Migration, is just one example of the senior figures Demetri was able to draw to the migration table. And then there was the one who got away, the junior senator from Illinois who was on the verge of joining the council until other commitments began to absorb his available time.

Demetri was the servant of an issue which he pursued with passion. And he was tireless, like a field of energy; he was one of the hardest-working persons I have known. And while he might have made things look easy, the reason he could share his insight with senior policy makers was because he had put in the hours.

He was also a performer, a performer of amazing virtuosity. He could take the broken threads from two days of rambling, half-informed, disconnected group discussion and weave them into a beautifully coherent tapestry before your eyes.

And he was a charmer, definitely a charmer. He would fix you with his cobra-like attention, listen carefully to your every word, and then convince you by his eloquent response that you were even smarter than you thought you were. The view from the wings was equally fascinating.

I appreciate the friendship and the many kindnesses that Demetri showed me. And I am grateful for having had the opportunity to work with him and to learn from him over many years. It seems unlikely that we will see his like again. He was an original, a man who combined the critical discipline and disinterest of a true intellectual with the seductive voice of a traditional storyteller. We are fortunate that he bequeathed to us a library of knowledge made up of his own writings and insights as well as the substantial output of his beloved institute. RIP Demetrios.

*Remembered by Daniel Jean*

I had the privilege of meeting and learning so much from Demetri during my five years (1995-2000) as immigration program manager at the Canadian embassy in Washington. This was the beginning of a fruitful relationship that extended

for years after our departure from Washington, as I moved through numerous positions in the Immigration Department and later in my responsibilities as deputy minister of Foreign Affairs and national security advisor to the prime minister. We exchanged views on policy issues and always shared family stories; Natalie and Niko, I saw them become accomplished young adults through these periodic exchanges. Throughout this journey, I had the opportunity to introduce Demetri to a number of ministers and senior officials in the Canadian government. They all appreciated his ability to master the complex intricacies of migration policy and translate it into clear understandings and options. As I reached out to many to alert them on the sad news, it generated a number of exchanges and testimonies celebrating the life and career of Demetri. Demetri did so much for both the Canada-U.S. relationship on migration and the North American and transatlantic relationship. Rest in peace “mon bon ami”; we will miss you, but your professional spirit will continue to stimulate migration policy for generations to come, while your good “epicurean” spirit will remind us to continue to celebrate life despite the striving times. To Marg, Niko, and Natalie, please receive our most sincere condolences.

*Remembered by Martha Nixon*

I always remember how willing Demetri was to share his knowledge, wisdom, and experience. I very much appreciated the conversations we had and always felt he was someone I could be in touch with if an issue needed some good exploration. He was a lovely human being, with an open spirit that was enjoyed by many, I imagine. I am sorry that his death came on so quickly, likely not allowing those closest to him to say proper goodbyes.

*Remembered by Ian Rankin*

When I first met Demetri in 1987, he was at the Department of Labor, producing a massive demographic study on migration. His depth of knowledge was of the first order, but more importantly, he could layer on the political overview that made it a seminal work. Of course, he had to get people to read it, and Demetri was a salesman. I learned more about American migration from him than from anyone else, and, boy, he loved to teach. This also included lunches and dinners, and numerous family get-togethers. A continuous flow of senior staff from CIC to Washington met with Demetri, and an abiding Canada-U.S. relationship was grown. We’ve lost a true friend. It will be impossible to replace him.

*Remembered by Gerry Van Kessel*

I met and dealt with Demetri on numerous occasions, while in Ottawa and Geneva. He was always interesting to listen to and had a deep understanding of migration. He knew how to organize issues in a way that ensured very broad coverage. At the start of COVID he wrote a piece about the implications of COVID on migration. It was lucid and thought-provoking and made clear to me how wide-ranging the implications were, particularly if governments held to their lockdown strategies. He knew Canada and our immigration system very well, and his take on them was always thoughtful. He was one of the many Americans, including academics, whom I met who had helpful things to say to governments. He will be missed.

**Scatchard, Clare**

Clare Scatchard passed away on 26 December 2021 in Victoria, British Columbia. He was 96 years old. He joined the CIHS at its creation and was a lifetime member.

After serving in the Canadian air force during World War II, Clare started working in immigration in 1951, at the port of entry in Patterson, British Columbia, just south of Rossland. From 1956–1959, he worked in the Canadian immigration office in Glasgow, Scotland. Later, he held the title of senior officer at Victoria, and he became the manager of enforcement and control for the Pacific region. In correspondence with Mike and Jo Molloy, Clare wrote about the time when officers were given the power to arrest without a warrant and the director (Lyle Hawkins) was given authority to issue warrants and authorize a special inquiry for landed immigrants. No training courses were available to instruct the officers, Clare Scatchard included. With the assistance of the Vancouver Police Department, he developed the first immigration officer training program in Canada relating to arrests and detention. The inaugural event was a success, and he commented that they even had staff from NHQ attending.



Clare Scatchard, during his posting to Scotland, 1956–1959

In acknowledgement of this year's 50th anniversary of the expulsion of Asians from Uganda and Canada's resettlement efforts, the next issue will highlight articles by people who were involved in some way with that movement.

CIHS is involved in the planning of a conference on the expulsion and its consequences, at Carleton University in November 2022, and has also provided a speaker to support British efforts to mark the anniversary.

For more information, please contact the CIHS at [info@cihs-shic.ca](mailto:info@cihs-shic.ca)

The **Uganda Collection at Carleton University** is a unique archive that provides insight into the resettlement of Ugandan Asian refugees in Canada after their expulsion from Uganda in 1972. The collection includes:

- A memoir documenting the Canadian immigration team's efforts in Kampala
- National and international newspaper clippings on the expulsion
- Oral history interviews
- A handwritten log book of all arriving refugees at the Canadian Forces Longue-Pointe base

We are continually looking for archival donations to enhance the collection, as well as participants for our oral history project. For more, see:

[carleton.ca/uganda-collection](http://carleton.ca/uganda-collection)



CIHS thanks its corporate members - IRCC 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.

The Canadian Immigration Historical Society ([www.CIHS-SHIC.ca](http://www.CIHS-SHIC.ca)) is a non-profit corporation registered as a charitable organization under the Income Tax Act.

The society's goals are:  
 - 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.

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