



## Howard Adelman: a Personal Memoire

Michael J. Molloy

Howard Adelman, a York University philosophy professor, founded [Operation Lifeline](#) in 1979 to promote and coordinate the private sponsorship of Indochinese refugees. He subsequently established the [Centre for Refugee Studies at York University](#). Howard died on 23 June 2023 at the age of 85. A “public intellectual” with deep knowledge and wide areas of expertise, he had a profound impact on the popularization of Canada’s ground-breaking private sponsorship program and helped to shape Canada’s resettlement policy.

An excellent description of Howard’s character, career, and stature can be found in an [obituary](#) by his colleague David Dewitt.

To understand how it was that Howard came to found and guide Operation Lifeline, and in so doing inspired thousands of sponsorships, it is impossible to improve on the humanity and humour of his own firsthand accounts, and here is a choice of two really good ones:

First option: Howard contributed a chapter called “Operation Lifeline” to the 2021 book *Finding Refuge in Canada: Narratives of Dislocation*, an informative and uplifting read.

Second option: If you would like to get closer to the man himself, I recommend a compelling [video interview](#) by the Carleton University based “[Hearts of Freedom](#)” project. Carleton University undertook this effort at the request of members of the Canadian Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian communities. In the years before Covid 19, the project collected 170 oral histories, mainly from Southeast Asian refugees who arrived in Canada between 1975 and 1985. This body of work also included 30 interviews with Canadian politicians, civil servants, and civil society actors including Howard Adelman. I watched [Howard’s interview \(HOF094\)](#) after his funeral, and it banished my sadness.

## Howard to the Rescue

The following story is illustrative of how Howard was able to defuse difficult situations, to extract positive solutions from complex problems, and to bring people along with him.

At a United Nations conference in Geneva in July 1979, Foreign Minister Flora MacDonald announced that Canada would resettle 50,000 “Indochinese”. The 50,000 would include 8,000 already “in the pipeline”, plus a “one-for-one matching formula” whereby 21,000 refugees sponsored by civil society would be matched by 21,000 government-assisted refugees. This enabled faith communities and organizations like Operation Lifeline and Ottawa’s [Project 4000](#) to tell potential sponsors that every refugee they sponsored would be matched by the government: “Buy one, get one free”. This was a powerful incentive.

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The government's call for refugee sponsorships was *too* successful. By October 1979, more than 22,000 refugees had been sponsored by citizens' groups. It was clear that by December 1979, the number would rise to nearly 30,000, and the program had another year to run. Many rural and small-town sponsors were just getting organized, and the government did not want to exclude them from what had become a great national endeavour. At the same time, the polls showed consistently that a slight majority of Canadians did not support the arrival of so many refugees from Asia, and government ministers were worried that exceeding the target of 50,000 would provoke a backlash.

To complicate matters, Minister MacDonald went to a United Nations conference on the genocide in Cambodia with Cabinet authority to pledge \$5 million. She was so disturbed by what she heard that she pledged \$15 million, leaving her colleagues with the problem of where to find \$10 million.

The solution, worked out between ministers, was as follows:

- The 50,000-person refugee resettlement target, now seen as a limit, would not be increased.
- For every privately sponsored refugee over 50,000, the government would subtract one government-assisted refugee from its commitment.
- The money saved by reducing the number of government-assisted refugees would be applied to Cambodian relief.

When news of this decision reached the refugee task force that was managing the movement, we were appalled, as it was unworkable. The obvious solution would have been to concentrate on privately sponsored refugees up to 50,000 in 1980 and bring the remaining sponsored and government-assisted refugees in 1981. However, ministers did not want to even intimate that the 50,000 would ever be exceeded or that the program would continue into 1981.

It was decided to invite 30 or so leaders of the sponsorship movement from across the country to a breakfast meeting at Parliament with ministers MacDonald and Ron Atkey (Minister of Employment and Immigration), so that they could describe the dire situation in Cambodia and the effect of the cancellation of the government's one-for-one commitment, the decision not to exceed 50,000, and the allocation of savings to resettling Cambodians in Canada. This they did, and as the implications became clear the atmosphere in the room froze. The ministers quickly departed on urgent parliamentary business, leaving two bureaucrats, Director of Refugee Policy Doug Hill and yours truly to face the music, as one by one the participants vehemently denounced what they described as the government's betrayal.

It is important to stress that for the most part, this was a meeting of strangers and few of the participants had ever met Howard, but he emerged as the clear leader. Howard let the venting go on for about 30 minutes and then he got up and said "Enough". He stated that this was clearly a political decision made by ministers, not civil servants, and that there was no point beating up "Doug and Mike". Regrettable as the decision was, it presented an opportunity. Aside from the fact that everyone was angry, what message should Doug and Mike carry back to Minister Atkey? Howard's redirection of the meeting's purpose led to a productive discussion that revealed, among other things, that there was a gap in the funding rules. Organizations that provided direct services to refugees could receive government funding. New organizations (like Lifeline and Project 4000) that came about to coordinate community responses and promote and assist sponsorship were excluded. Doug and Mike carried this message back, and within a week one million dollars was allocated to fill the gap.

As the Progressive Conservative government of Joe Clark had lost a critical vote in Parliament, there was an election in the offing. Some of the breakfast meeting participants suggested that the return of the "one for one" matching formula should be made an election issue. There was enthusiastic support until Howard explained calmly but with great conviction that making refugees a political football would almost certainly backfire to the detriment of the people we were trying to help. Both major federal parties supported the program, and no good could come of making it a divisive issue.

Doug and I were of course grateful that Howard diverted the course of the meeting into a more productive direction, but what impressed me most was the way that group of people —passionate activists and leaders in their own communities—accepted his leadership and his thoughtful advice without demure.



The late Howard Adelman, speaking at the 2016 Nansen Medal Anniversary Event at the Canadian Museum of History. (Courtesy of the photographer, Viet Hoang).

This was just one example among many I witnessed in my long association with Howard Adelman. He was a great Canadian and a great citizen of the world. I was lucky to count him as a friend.

By the way, by December 1980, 7,600 Canadian groups had sponsored 39,900 Vietnamese, Cambodian and Laotian refugees.

### **IT IS BACK!**

#### **The Canadian Immigration Historical Society's Annual General Meeting and Dinner**

When: 19 October 2023

Time: Drinks at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6:30 p.m. and meeting at 7:30 p.m.

Location: Royal Canadian Legion, 330 Kent Street, Ottawa

Tickets: \$45.00 per person (includes dinner). Cash bar.

**Payment to be made by 4 October 2023:**

INTERAC e-transfer: [info@cihs-shic.ca](mailto:info@cihs-shic.ca)

Or, by cheque: please tell us you are coming, and mail cheque to  
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**Members not attending in person can attend virtually via Zoom.  
Joining information will follow in an October members' newsletter.**

*For more information about the AGM, please consult the members' newsletter of 17 September 2023.*

### **ELLE EST DE RETOUR !**

La Société Historique de l'Immigration Canadienne tient notre  
**Assemblée Générale Annuelle et Dîner**

Quand : le 19 octobre 2023

Boissons : 17h30, Dîner : 18h30, et assemblée : 19h30

Où : Légion royale canadienne, 330 rue Kent, Ottawa

Billets : 45.00\$ / personne (dîner inclus). Bar payant.

**Paiement à effectuer avant le 4 octobre 2023 :**

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CP 4401, STN E, Ottawa ON K1S 5B4

**Les membres qui ne sont pas présents en personne peuvent y assister virtuellement via Zoom.  
Les informations d'adhésion suivront dans un bulletin d'information des membres en octobre.**

Pour plus d'informations sur l'Assemblée Générale Annuelle, veuillez consulter le bulletin d'information des membres du  
17 septembre 2023.

## Note of Thanks

Recently, the CIHS received a generous donation \$1,000 from a charitable foundation created by one of our members. The CIHS is a charitable organization that is registered with the Canada Revenue Agency.

The CIHS Board thanks this donor for this kind gift.

## ***Danebrog*: Promoting Danish Immigration from 1893**

Roy Christensen

*Danebrog*, the first Danish language newspaper published in Canada, was launched in Ottawa on 1 March 1893 by Carl Conrad Meyer. In a letter to his readers on the issue's front page, Meyer set forth the aims and objectives of *Danebrog*. He briefly mentioned preservation of the Danish language and culture, but he saw *Danebrog* primarily as a publication that would look after the interests of Danish immigrants in Canada and serve as a link between Denmark and Canada — above all, in providing information to immigrants. Moreover, Meyer stated that he would attempt to get Danish immigration to Canada on the right track by giving advice about opportunities for immigrants in the various parts of Canada. In the future, *Danebrog* should be able, he continued, to provide information about which kind of “workers and small capitalists” might expect a fair return on their work and capital, while he would discourage immigration of those whose trade or business was not needed in Canada.

Since the newspaper was published in Ottawa, Meyer said that it went without saying that *Danebrog* would be able to bring reliable and timely announcements about government regulations and policies that might be of interest to immigrants earlier than other papers outside Ottawa. As well, it should be pointed out that the paper's name was indeed *Danebrog*, and not Dannebrog, the name of the Danish flag.

The first issue of *Danebrog* contained a letter to the editor, written by Alfred Akerlindh, who offered congratulations and his best wishes to the new publication. Akerlindh, a Swede, began his career as the Scandinavian interpreter at the Immigration Office on Wellington Street, later becoming an agent for Scandinavian immigration in the Department of the Interior. Moreover, the Dominion government helped to distribute *Danebrog* to Danish immigrants by handing out copies on the trains, as immigrants headed west after landing in Halifax, Quebec City or Montreal.

Elsewhere in this issue, Meyer wrote that there were vast tracts of available agricultural land and an accompanying need for farmers, while many craftsmen and artisans went unemployed. Page three of the four-page paper carried a large homestead ad stating the conditions for obtaining a 160-acre homestead on the prairies. In an article in the same issue Meyer asked what can Canada offer people who, to improve their position, must sell their house, leave their home and family, and then embark on a long and far-from-pleasant journey? He answered without reservation that Canada had room for thousands of farmers willing to cultivate the land, which the government gave to anyone who intended to make a home here. He pointed out that farmers were welcome everywhere and thrived best in Manitoba and the Northwest Territories (Saskatchewan and Alberta). Yet, he said that he would not, in this first issue of the *Danebrog*, go into an exhaustive description of conditions in Canada and the advantages of immigration but only say that Canada is “overcrowded with trades people”. The only class of people Canada wanted and needed were farmers who had enough money to cover their initial expenses.

Meyer added that the interests of immigrants were now in good hands, as the new Minister of the Interior, Thomas Daly, the member of parliament for Selkirk, was a young and energetic man determined to address and improve the situation. Thomas Daly did his utmost to encourage immigration to Canada, but he was not able to stop the flow of Canadians moving to the United States, where apparently the economy was more attractive, nor was he able to hinder immigrants to Canada from relocating to the United States soon after arriving in Canada.



Carl Conrad Meyer  
(photograph provided by the author)

Carl Conrad Meyer was a Dane from Lemvig, Jutland, who came to Ottawa in about 1884. He was instrumental in starting a Danish club in 1888 and a Danish orchestra in 1892. The orchestra's conductor was Professor Robert R. Wimperis, a music teacher who also had his own orchestra that played at the Grand Opera House on Albert Street. A member of the Danish orchestra was Christian Marker, a butter maker from Vium in Jutland, who was then the dairy foreman at the Central Experimental Farm. Marker was a good friend of Meyer's, and it was Marker who recommended that Meyer be appointed as Danish vice-consul. Marker also wrote articles for *Danebrog* about the Experimental Farm and about making cheese. When Marker left Ottawa, he became a correspondent for *Danebrog*. In 1905 he was appointed the first dairy commissioner of Alberta.

Carl Conrad Meyer lived at 263 Albert Street, which was also the office address of *Danebrog*. In 1893, Meyer was appointed vice-consul for Denmark, becoming the first Danish diplomat in Ottawa. That year, he also travelled across Canada, visiting more than 200 Danish families. Meyer often gave lectures, and he published several books, including a little dictionary entitled *Handy Interpreter*. He wrote several feature articles for *The Ottawa Journal* and often wrote letters to the editor. In 1894 he moved to 273 Maria Street (now Laurier Avenue).

The first issue of *Danebrog* was printed at *The Ottawa Evening Journal*, but Meyer soon established his own printing shop, with the help of his father, Carl August Meyer. His father had been publisher and editor of the newspaper *Lemvig Avis*. Indeed, Meyer also printed *Das Echo*, a German-language monthly, edited by Albert Drenge, a cigar store owner and steamship agent. Later, Meyer also printed *Der Kanadische Kolonist*, another German-language publication, edited by Bertholt Nothnagel.

Just prior to founding *Danebrog*, Meyer was appointed the Ottawa agent for the Thingvalla Line, and this goes a long way to explain his interest in immigration matters. The Thingvalla Line had been established in Denmark in 1879 by the Danish financier and industrialist C.F. Tietgen as the first solely Danish freight and passenger line between Copenhagen and North America. The Line's flagship was the *SS Thingvalla*, which probably transported more Danish immigrants across the Atlantic than any other ship.

During its existence, the Thingvalla Line carried about 617,000 immigrants to North America. Many of them were Swedes and Norwegians, as Norway did not have its own America Line until 1910, and Sweden not until 1914. In addition, a fair number of Thingvalla's passengers were emigrants from Finland and Russia.

The first issue of *Danebrog* reported that the latest Thingvalla steamer had left Copenhagen with material, equipment, and artefacts for the World's Fair in Chicago, among them a replica of fairy tale writer Hans Christian Andersen's living room and office on the Nyhavn Canal, from where there was a superb view of the ships lining the canal.

The Thingvalla Line's success was partly due to its new steamships, which meant that it was no longer necessary for the ships to rely on wind power. With steamships, the transatlantic trip was fairly short and regular departure dates could be laid down.

The Thingvalla Line was to a large degree established to replace the big successful Canadian steamship company Allan Lines, whose Copenhagen office was located at Nyhavn 13. In fact, from the 1870s onward, the eight largest emigration agencies were located on the "fun" side of the Nyhavn Canal. Today they are all gone. Only one trace remains: on one of the stone steps leading up to Nyhavn 19 can be seen the inscription, "CPR Canada-Amerika".

In addition to agents in Scandinavia, the Thingvalla Line had about 400 agents spread across the United States as well as others in Canada. The agents were more than travel agents—perhaps immigration agents would be a better term—in that they were supposed to sell prepaid tickets and to promote immigration in general to North America.

*Danebrog* existed for an impressive 39 years, with Meyer as its sole owner and editor. The paper was published fortnightly until May 1896, then weekly, and finally it ceased publication in 1932. The Great Depression and the subsequent halt in active immigration meant there was no longer a need for such a publication.

Twenty-four issues of *Danebrog* can be found at Library and Archives Canada. These 24 newspapers cover a 30-year period, dating from 1 March 1893 to 16 February 1923. It is a shame that not more issues have survived, as a complete set would undoubtedly have revealed numerous fascinating stories.

"The Hon. C.C. Meyer", as inscribed on his tombstone, died in September 1945 and is buried in Ottawa's Beechwood Cemetery.

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**Fotografier.**  
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ver, det bedste, som nogensinde er indført  
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Til Læsere.



DET vi i Dag udgive nærv.  
Næst af Danebrog som det  
første danske Blad, der udgives  
i Canada, skulle vi i sin Ord  
gives Rede for, hvilket Mål vi  
have sat os, og hvad der har for-  
anlediget os til at stifte Bladet.  
Antallet af indvandrede Danske  
er nu saa stort her i Canada, at man med  
Ret kan stille det Krav at have et Presse-  
organ, som kan og vil sætte sig til at  
sætte dem i forbindelse med deres  
fædreland, og som vil sætte dem i  
forbindelse med deres fædreland, og  
som vil sætte dem i forbindelse med  
deres fædreland, og som vil sætte dem  
i forbindelse med deres fædreland.  
Og dette skal i første Række være Malet  
for vort Botræksblad. Deromst ville vi af  
al Magt vilde for, at Emigrationen fra  
Skandinavia til Canada kommer ind i et  
sædnt og fornuftigt Spor; vi ville opmuntre  
de, hvor der er grundet Udvalgt til et godt  
Resultat for Emigranterne, og advare de,  
hvor Udvalget er slægt og læstet paa  
Hamburg. Emigrationen til Canada vil  
sandsynligvis, naar de Forenede Stater giver  
Alvor af at forbedre Indvandringen dertil  
for et Aar eller flere, fra et mangt  
Sted fremad, og det er derfor nødvendigt  
at være forvarende for at ikke altfor mange  
af vore Landsmænd skulle blive skuffede  
i deres Forventninger ved deres Ankomst  
dertil; det er derfor vor Agt, saa ofte der er  
Anledning dertil, at give Vink om, hvilke  
Arbejds- og Smakkepladser der kunne  
vænte sig et godt Udbytte af deres Arbejde  
og Kapital, medens vi vilde fraråde In-  
vandringen af dem, hvis Haandtering ikke  
spør sig for dette Land.  
Da Danebrog udgives i Regeringsstaden,  
er det en selvfølge, at vi udgive end  
noget andet Blad udenfor Ottawas kreds  
bringe paalidelige Meddelelser om For-  
sættninger fra Regeringens Side, der kunne  
have Interesse for Indvandrere.

Bladet vil endvidere i Udbyg bringe  
de nyeste og mest interessante Efterret-  
ninger fra Hjemlandet, saa vel som fra Ca-  
nada, de Forenede Stater og det øvrige Ud-  
land. Ligeledes vil Bladet indeholde gode  
Fortællinger fra amerikanske Forfattere,  
nyttige Haandskrifter, historiske Ting osv.  
Det er en selvfølge, at et Foretagende  
som dette ikke kan bære sig, naar det ikke  
moder en energisk og stor Tilslutning fra  
vore Landsmænds Side, og uden Haabet  
om, at man eventuelt vil støtte os (sæson ved  
at tegne sig som Abonnent, og herved for  
Bladets Udbredelse, overføre i det samt lade  
det tillyve Meddelelser af almen Interesse  
fra de forskellige Egne af Landet) — vilde  
vi aldrig have været at sætte os i Spidsen  
for Udgivelsen af et Blad. Det naar os til  
vore Landsmænd, om dette vort Blad skal  
blive til fordel, eller om Bladet ved forenede  
Krafter kan hæves til at blive til Gavn  
og Glæde. Og i Fortsættelse om, at det  
sikkert man skal, vilende vi det første Nummer  
af dette Blad med Omkaet om en fyldig  
Forsendelse for os alle!

Ottawa, den 1ste Marts 1893.

CONTRACT.

Emigrationen

I Aaret 1893 vil i flere Henseender adskille  
sig fra foregående Aar, og man tør sikkert  
antage, hvorvidt den amerikanske Kongres  
vedtager den foreslåede Lov for at Aar at  
stærke al Emigration til de Forenede Stater,  
at Tilstrømningen her til Canada vil blive  
usædvanlig stor. Spørgsmaalet rejser sig

da, hvorvidt vi har noget at byde de Men-  
nesker, som, for at forbedre deres Stillings,  
solde Hjem og Hjem og begive sig paa en  
langvarig og langfærdig Rejse. Vi  
maa her til iden Forbehold erare, at Canada  
har Plads for Tusinder af Mænd, der vilde  
udnytte den Jord, som Regeringen giver  
enhver, som har i Sinds at danne sig et  
Hjemsted her.

Landsbrugere ere til enhver Tid velkomne  
og trives bedst i Manitoba og Nordvest-  
territoriet, hvor der findes en Over-  
flod af Regeringsland. Enhver Ny-  
bygger, der indtæ 18 Aarsveler fra Afreisen  
optager Regeringsland, er berettiget til en  
Udbetaling af 10 Dollars (36 Kr.) fra Re-  
geringen, endvidere 5 Doll. for hans Hustru  
og 5 Doll. for hvert af Børnene under 12  
Aar. Er der noget mandlig Medlem af Fa-  
milien over 18 Aar, som ønsker at optage  
Land for sig selv inden 6 Maanedre efter  
sin Ankomst, erholdt han en yderligere  
Udbetaling af 5 Doll.

Den Nykassens vil her finde erfaring og  
paalidelige Mænd, som vil Energi og  
haardt Arbejde have skabt sig en god Bil-  
ling. Men vi maa fremfor alt gøre vore  
Landsmænd opmærksomme paa, at 9000 en  
hils Kapital nytter det ikke at advandre til  
Canada med den Hensigt at optage Land-  
Regeringen betragter ganske vist 100 Acres  
Land til enhver Voksen, hvor saadant fan-  
des, men den Penge vilde det være aldeles  
umuligt at paabegynde Oplysning endlige  
det underinden meget betydelige Opyr-  
ningsarbejde.

Vi skulle ikke i dette, det første Nummer  
af Danebrog, gaa forover ind paa at give  
en retfærdig Beskrivelse af Forholdene  
her i Canada og Fordele ved at advandre,  
kan dette vilde et adlydende sige, at  
Haandtrækere er her overflødt af, og at  
den eneste Klasse Mennesker, som den cana-  
diske Regering ønsker og er villig til at  
underrette, er scandinaviske Landsbrugere,  
som ere i Besiddelse af Penge nok til at  
klare de første Udgifter med.

Emigranternes Interesse ere forøvrigt  
i gode Hænder, idet nemlig Indenrigs-  
ministeren, Hr. DALY, som er en ung og  
energisk Mand, har med Iver lagt sig paa  
Hjerte at forbedre de i mange Punkter  
uheldige Arrangementer, hvorover saa  
mange Landsmænd med Rette har klaget.

Vi skulle i hvert Nummer af dette Blad  
bringe korrekte Efterretninger om alt, hvad  
der henhører under Emigrationen, og skulle  
vi gerne her i Bladet give Svar paa mulige  
Spørgsmaal i denne Betning.

Skulle vi annektere Canada?

Spørger et amerikansk Blad nok saa naivt,  
som om allet var den mest naturlige og  
letteste Sag af Verden. Anledningen til  
Spørgsmaalet er en Udtalelse, som Profes-  
sor GOLDWIN SMITH fra Toronto foretog  
skul have gjort i New York. Hr. Goldwin  
Smith behøvede, at den nye President Cleve-  
land vilde møde Canadiserne paa Helt-  
vejen med Henyn til Anseelse. "Hvis  
Spørgsmaalet — siger Hr. Smith — skulle  
komme til Afstemning blandt Befolkningen  
i Canada, er jeg vis paa, at det store Flertal  
vilde stemme for Sammenlutning med  
de Forenede Stater. Det maa endes  
ledes, tilligt eller sent. Saa snart vi blive  
et med de Forenede Stater, vil vort Aar-  
brug og vor Mindelift fra en kolossal Ud-  
vikling. . . . Landet er fattigt, men det har  
store Muligheder; alt, hvad der mangler,  
er amerikansk Foretagelsestil til at sætte  
vore Mænd og andre Rigtigheder, og Vel-

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fra Fabrikkerne. Vort 17 Dollars Spisebords-  
Set bestaar af Buffet med Spejlska, Exten-  
sion-Bord og imiterede lakrettede Stole.  
Vort 10 Dollars Sorekammer-Set er det  
bedste og billigste i Byen.

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hærdt Træ, ender altid rørende Afstem-  
ning.

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Vore \$ 4,50 Spiseborde kunne forlanges  
i Forhold til Familiens Størrelse.  
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## 2023 Gunn Prize Winner: Alexandros Balasis Kurt Jensen

The selection committee, with two new members, met virtually on 1 August 2023 to evaluate three essay submissions, all of which were well done. The winner for 2023 was **Alexandros Balasis**, a PhD student at York University, for his essay "Voices of Migration: Exploring Agency within Canadian Immigration Policy and Greek Emigration Framework". The selection committee for the prize consisted of Dr. Laura Madokoro (chair), with Dr. Kurt Jensen, Rob Vineberg, Roy Christensen (a former CIHS Board Member, replacing the late Dr. Robert Shalka), and Dr. Jonathon Malek of the University of Manitoba initially substituting for Dr. Cassandra Luciuk (herself a Gunn Prize winner who now teaches at Dalhousie University and is on maternity leave). Dr. Malek has agreed to join the selection committee permanently.

The CIHS Bulletin will publish a short article by Alexandros Balasis that is based on his essay in its next issue.

This was the first year since the inception of the Gunn Prize that Dr. Robert Shalka was not on the selection committee. His vast knowledge and dry wit were missed.

## Whatever Happened to...? Meeting again after 50 years

Noorallah Jamal and Michael J. Molloy

*Ed note: this article appears in two parts. The second installment will be published in a subsequent issue of the Bulletin.*

*Mike Molloy: Like most people who have done immigration work abroad, I have in later life occasionally encountered people I interviewed long ago and far away. Most of the time, I've had to confess that I did not remember the person concerned but was glad to see them alive and well. In Kampala between 6 September and 8 November 1972, the four officers in the immigrant selection unit were expected to do 25 full immigration interviews a day. At that rate, individual conversations quickly blur and get forgotten.*

*There are exceptions. I recall one Sunday morning interviewing (five at a time) 20 Asian medical students who had been expelled from Makerere University and were offered places in Canadian medical schools. And I recall vividly my interview with a man who had been temporarily released from the terrible Kampala jail so that he could attend his interview chained to a large policeman with a machine gun. I also never forgot being told there was a special case that I needed to interview and watching a young man on crutches painfully making his way to my desk. Canada had a longstanding Handicapped Refugee Program, but Roger St-Vincent had made it clear that we were to ignore the complicated procedures the program demanded and ensure anyone with a physical handicap was given priority. The application indicated that the man before me had an accounting job and was training for British qualifications, but what impressed me most was evidence of a strong character and determination. It was not hard to conclude that with the support of his family and some help from settlement services he would be able to "successfully establish" in Canada. I told him (and his accompanying elder sister) they were accepted, explained the next steps, went on to the next interview, and promptly forgot his name. But I never forgot him, and I never recalled the Uganda experience without thinking about him and wondering how he made out in Canada.*

*In the spring of 2023, Chris Friesen of the Immigrant Services Society (ISS) of British Columbia called to say that the ISS and the Ismaili Community of Vancouver would be jointly celebrating their 50th anniversary on 4 March and would I be willing to join another fellow in a fireside chat chaired by CTV's Omar Sachedina. Any excuse to go to Vancouver! A few days before the event, there was an organizational meeting over the phone and I was introduced to the "other fellow", a Mr. Noorallah Jamal. We reviewed the agenda and the organizers' expectations, and as the meeting was drawing to a close the organizer told Mr. Jamal there would be a ramp so that he could get on to the stage! What were the chances?*

*Me: "Do I know you?"*

*Him: "Yes, you interviewed me in Kampala."*

*A couple of days later we met at the event, and the years slipped away. Here is his story, told in two instalments. The second instalment will be published in the next CIHS Bulletin.*



The Ismaili Centre, Vancouver, 50th anniversary event, 4 March 2023, Fireside Chat discussion: L-R Omar Sachedina (host), Michael J. Molloy and Noorallah Jamal. (Photo credit: the Ismaili Centre membership through Feezah Jaffer.)

## **Noorallah Jamal's Story**

The story of how Asians, mainly from Gujarat province in Western India, came to Eastern Africa is well-recorded elsewhere. My immigration story starts when General Idi Amin Dada, the President of Uganda, ordered all Asians to leave the country within 90 days, or risk being imprisoned. This step was taken within a context of gross human rights violations, extrajudicial killings and disappearances of the Idi Amin regime. With the utterance of the edict, my parents, my sister, my younger brother, and I became stateless.

Asians were the backbone of Uganda's business and economy and critical to Uganda's functioning. Realizing that if all of them were suddenly gone, the economy would be paralyzed and the country faced with a collapsing infrastructure, Idi Amin modified the edict and allowed those Asians who were "professionals" to remain in the country past the 90-day deadline. At that time, my father was working as an accountant and my mother as a teacher, and my sister had graduated in economics from Makerere University and was working. I was taking courses towards a professional designation from the Association of Certified and Corporate Accountants of the United Kingdom (ACCA) and working in the accounting department of a sheet-metal company. We were given to understand that we could stay. As no time limit had been alluded to, we thought it prudent to continue with life as best as we could, let the dust settle, and then reassess our future in Uganda while still pursuing visas with any country that would offer us refuge. We planned to apply to the U.K., Canada, and the United States. My mother and father were born in Kenya when it was a British colony, but the chances of getting passports from the U.K. were diminished because my father had renounced his British citizenship status when he applied for and was granted Ugandan citizenship. He had decided at the time to pledge his allegiance to Uganda, and his Ugandan citizenship certificate was one of the first issued to people of Asian descent!

Around the 60-day mark, Amin ordered all Asians to leave the country in the following 30 days, rendering the professional status exemption invalid. This announcement resulted in a more intense scramble than the initial edict. Even more Asians sought asylum from the countries whose teams of immigration staff had arrived in Kampala.

## **Getting Visas at the Canadian Embassy**

Our journey to obtaining Canadian landed immigrant status started with standing in the lineup, which, if memory serves me correctly, seemed to have been five to six people deep and three to four blocks long. People queued around the clock, trading off with family members so as not to lose their place in line. And this was just to get an application form! My family did six-hour shifts. Having my mother and sister stand in line was not an option for safety and cultural reasons. I was a paraplegic, ambulating with crutches and braces, and it was impossible for me to stand in line for hours on end. My sister's boyfriend, now her husband, took the most difficult shifts, with my father and me taking turns to relieve him.

Then we had to fill out forms, while looking for supporting documentation that was not readily available because there was no need of it before the edict. Then we stood in another line to submit the forms, hoping that if we hadn't all the required documents, we would be given some leeway. Not wanting to further encroach on my sister's boyfriend's generosity, as he had to deal with the application forms for his own large family, I had to figure out another way of submitting the documents. I found out where the Canadian contingent was staying, and although I was afraid that phoning them at the hotel might work against me for trying to bypass the system, I was desperate, and I took the chance. To my astonishment I was put through to the chief, Mr. Roger St-Vincent. He asked me to bring in my family's application forms the following day and go straight to the front of the line.

The next day I walked the application forms to the offices. I felt guilty and frightened going up to the door, concerned that people in line would get mad and attack me for going ahead of them, disability or not. Putting on an air of confidence, I ambulated on my crutches and braces to the front of the line, where a Ugandan policeman stopped me and barked at me to go to the back of the line. As luck would have it, somebody from inside the office saw me and came to inquire. He believed my story and took me in. Once the forms passed the basic requirement test, our family got an appointment for an interview with an immigration officer. This officer was Mr. Michael Molloy, a thin, physically fit individual with a no-nonsense and stern expression on his face. I think that he had to project that persona so as not to be taken advantage of by desperate people whose lives were in danger. Behind the persona, I thought I perceived a concerned man with a soft and kind side.

We went through a few more steps such as medical screening, and then came the waiting. The shock of being expelled from my country of birth, the fear of being attacked any time by the police, the military, or local individuals who were fervidly eager to take over our property before the end of the 90 days, was extremely stressful. Keeping all our options open, we continued to pursue the possibility of getting visas from the U.K., if its embassy would accept the fact that my parents had been born in a British colony.

A few days after meeting with Mr. Molloy, we were notified that our visas were ready. We were one step closer to our destination but still very skeptical since nothing had been for certain in the last while. Things could change at any time.



When my sister and I went to pick up our visas, we were shocked that there were only two, one for my sister and one for myself, instead of five. I was told that my parents and brother might receive visas later if they qualified, but the two of us had to leave for Canada within two to three days.

We did not want to leave our family behind not knowing where they would end up, what they might go through, or if we would ever be reunited. Leaving our parents and brother behind was simply not an option! Not wanting to reject Mr. Molloy's or the Canadian government's graciousness, we struggled with what to do: how to inform Mr. Molloy of our dilemma, how such actions would be perceived by Canadians who were from a different culture. Would we be seen as ungrateful or rude? Would our two visas be revoked, maybe forever, killing all chances of reuniting the family in Canada if we were separated? Objectively speaking, given my disability, it was a no-brainer to accept the visa. Feelings-wise, it was altogether another story. I had to process these thoughts and feelings on the spot while Mr. Molloy waited for our answer. I finally got the courage to tell him that we did not want to leave our family behind. His response was something to the effect that we could be killed if we stayed back. I told him we understood that, but we didn't want to leave our family behind. In my mind, regardless of how and where we ended up—dead, or alive in another country—it would be together.

I'd like to explain myself and my sister here. Given our family ties, values, culture, and religion, we could not bring ourselves to accept the visas and then just hope for the best for our parents and brother. Our parents had spent their lives raising the three of us. This was more pertinent to me, given my disability from polio at the age of one and a half. I was not expected to live. I became a quadriplegic at the time. They both walked with me every step of my life in a third-world country, expending resources and ensuring that I had a fighting chance. When I contracted polio, very little was known about it; there was no cure and no vaccine. I was put in isolation for 40 days. Doctors and nurses would come fully gowned, gloved, and masked with only their eyes showing. There would be no skin-to-skin human touch with the one-and-a-half-year-old child. My mother stayed with me through the 40 days and all the surgeries and hospitalization over the years. My father worked hard to support the family (which also included his aged mother) so that he could provide for my care, education, braces, and trips to Nairobi for surgeries. My sister continues to help me today. I couldn't ask for a more supportive family. You can see why it was not an option for us to leave our parents and brother behind.

### **Encounter with Soldiers**

Mr. Molloy's warning brought back memories of a life-threatening encounter with the military. While preparing for our final departure from Uganda, my mother, my sister, and I were driving around running errands. (Women were not safe alone on the road.) On the way home we were stopped by two armed soldiers. They pointed one gun at my mother, who was in the front passenger seat, and the other at me, the driver. (Yes, I was driving! A mechanic who managed the mechanical department at a motor vehicle company where my father worked had helped me install hand controls that enabled me to drive.) My mother and sister started to pray out loud. My mind was racing as to how I could get us out of this situation unscathed while I feared that my mother and sister might be molested, raped, maimed, or killed. With my adrenaline soaring high and with the assumed invincibility of a 21-year-old, I raised one hand out of the car to show that I was not carrying any weapons. With the other I opened the door, swung my legs out, and locked my leg braces. It didn't occur to me until after that the locking braces sounded like cocking a gun! As calmly as I could, I beckoned the soldiers towards me and told them in Kiswahili that I couldn't walk and tried to engage them in conversation to shift their attention from my passengers on to me. But one of the soldiers still pointed the gun towards my mother and ordered her to step out.

I stood up, steadying myself with one hand while holding on to the car. I told the soldiers that I was going to pull out my crutches. The crutches were made in the U.K., and were nothing like what we see here in Canada. They were made out of two single metal tubes, one inside the other, slightly angled at the handgrip and then extended into a triangle to fit under my armpit. The metal tube had holes in it and a flexible pin that could be used to shorten or lengthen the inner tube for height adjustment. I hadn't realized before, but the crutch looked like a machine gun without a belt of ammunition rounds attached! I kept yelling in Kiswahili, "This is not a gun! This is not a gun!" Fortunately, the one soldier did not shoot me, but the other soldier's gun was now also trained on me. When I put the axilla part of the crutch in my armpit, they must have realized that it was not a weapon. The other soldier started jabbing at my mother's purse, commanding her to open it. Money had little value as goods weren't available for purchase and inflation was at its highest, with lots of money chasing too few goods. Carrying hundreds of shillings in notes was not uncommon; in fact, one needed large amounts of money to buy the simplest of things. I was hoping that my mother would have some money to give the soldiers and hopefully buy our freedom. The soldier poked his gun into the purse to move the contents around; there was very little money in the purse and a small amount of gold jewelry. I don't understand what happened. Possibly the soldiers didn't see it. Possibly they saw and left it. But they let us go unharmed.

### **Visas**

Our options were narrowing fast. A long couple of days after we appealed for visas for the whole family, we were told that the rest of the visas were available for pickup! I wondered if my appeal got to Mr. Molloy's soft, compassionate side, but it might have been just a matter of timing. We rushed over to the building, went through the last step, picked up the visas,

and immediately went into hiding, paranoid that the visas might have been issued in error and would be retracted. That night we slept soundly, something we had not done in weeks. “Mission accomplished”, maybe.

We had just a few days to pack our bags before catching the bus that would start our journey to Canada—Canada, a place I had only heard of in books. Included in the school curriculum my mother taught her grade three students were descriptions of the “Eskimo” people near Frobisher Bay, who lived in igloos and hunted fish and seals. And in secondary school I had read *No Highway*, a novel by Neville Shute, about an airplane that crashed in Labrador. It didn’t dawn on me back then that it could also have been the fate of our plane as we flew over Labrador, Canada!

On 4 October 1972, we left Uganda and gave cash, our cars and our home with contents accumulated by my parents over 40 years to Juma, a man who had worked for us for many years as domestic help. I thought he would be joyful at improving his family’s living accommodations. On the contrary, he seemed more sad than happy. Perhaps partly because he would miss us and perhaps partly because we were leaving and he would not have a job nor have hope of a job with anyone else, since all the people that could afford domestic help were being expelled. Also, he was apprehensive of being accused of taking possession of our property without the authority of the powers that be, primarily the military, who were eagerly waiting to take over everything that the Asians were leaving behind. It was ironic that the authorities who wanted to kick us out and forcibly take our property would accuse someone, to whom we gave our property freely, of stealing it. My father gave him a handwritten letter explaining our gift to him. Did it do him any good?

Juma went with us to where we boarded the bus. Many people were seeing off their relatives, friends, and neighbours. Tears were shed, as it could be the last time they would see each other. I had never seen Juma cry, but I saw that he was very subdued, his eyes glistening as the driver put the bus into gear and slowly drove off. As we drove away, he waved in large sweeps with one arm and with a white handkerchief in the other wiped away tears he no longer needed to suppress.

While we were going through our own trauma of expulsion from the country of our birth, confiscation of our property, loss of our livelihood, threats to life and limb every day, and uncertainty about the future, I couldn’t help but sympathize with Juma who did not know how he was going to provide for his family or how he would survive. His situation was far from clear because he was not a native Ugandan but from Kenya. There had always been an underlying animosity against those from adjacent countries who were perceived to be stealing jobs from those who were born in Uganda. To this day I don’t know what happened, whether Juma was able to take advantage of the things we left him or if he and his family even survived. He was illiterate, and neither of us had an address, and so it was impossible to contact each other.

### **Entebbe**

Our bus was full of parents, children, and grandparents and their limited prized possessions. We knew most of them. There had been frightening reports: of buses being stopped by the military, who took whatever they wanted including suitcases, gold, and jewelry; of women being ordered out of vehicles at gun point and raped while their husbands were forced to watch; and of people being killed. Our bus was stopped twice. Each time the fear was palpable: Would we be turned back, would some of us be assaulted or killed, would we make it to our next stop in life? However, a Canadian medical technician escorting us, presumably having diplomatic status, was able to negotiate our way through.

*Mike’s comment: The departure of Noorallah and his family on 4 October took place fairly early in the process, as the first flight only departed on 22 September. At that stage, there was a flight every four or five days and the buses, boarded in the parking lot of the International Hotel, were bedecked with Canadian flags and escorted by a black diplomatic car flying the flag and one of our two attached diplomats pretending to be the high commissioner. Each bus had a Canadian on board, either a visa officer or one of our military medical technicians. The latter did not have diplomatic status, but they were tough young soldiers who took their duty of protecting “our” refugees very seriously. They loved escort duty as it got them a morning out of the malodorous tent in which they processed the medical samples. I have no doubt that some people heading to the airport were molested en route, but there were no reports of this happening to Canada-bound refugees.*

At Entebbe Airport we were placed in a holding area and “processed”. Uganda customs and immigration officers examined my wheelchair and my suitcase containing mainly clothes and a manuscript I had written as part of my college course, titled “A Survey of Polio in Uganda”,<sup>1</sup> my most treasured possession, and also searched me. They confiscated sundry items—a bottle of perfume, a piece of jewelry, cash—which family members had on them hoping these items would “facilitate” our passage to the airplane and out of Uganda. I was left with fifteen Ugandan shillings, which at the time had an official value of two Canadian dollars but an actual value much lower—so essentially worthless.

Our Pacific Western Airline flight was my first airplane ride, as it was for most of the others. Strange as it seems to me now, many of us were dressed in business attire—suits, dresses, and skirts—probably out of a desire to appear our best

on arrival in our new country. My mother had had my suit custom tailored, as there was no off-the-shelf clothing that would fit over and conceal my leg braces.

After what seemed to be a very long wait at the Entebbe Airport, we boarded the plane. There was a sense of cautious relief when the plane took off, but we all knew that we were still within Idi Amin's grasp. An hour or so after takeoff, the pilot announced that we had officially left Ugandan airspace! Although there was jubilation and clapping, I was still apprehensive and fearful—not unwarranted in light of what happened next.

### **Canary Islands**

When we stopped to refuel in the Canary Islands, our plane was immediately surrounded by armed soldiers. While their uniforms made them look like an honour guard, they didn't receive us with pomp and ceremony. We were held on the tarmac for what seemed like six hours in the hot sun. I was particularly uncomfortable because of my leather-covered, full-length, metal leg braces, and I had been up for close to 24 hours. We finally received permission to go into the airport building. A few people went, but our family chose to stay in the airplane for fear of not being able to re-board it. Our flight was well taken care of by the flight crew who had showed great understanding and deep compassion.

The people who had gone to the airport building returned, and of course everyone was eager to find out what it was like there and if they knew the reason for our detention. They were as much in the dark as those who had stayed back. Finally, we received clearance from the control tower to depart. We never found out why we were detained. Once beyond the Canary Islands' airspace, there was again jubilation in the plane. We were crossing the Atlantic Ocean and surely Idi Amin couldn't bring us back now.

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#### Note

<sup>1</sup> A memory: before the coup (and while Milton Obote was in power as the second president of Uganda) and while researching for my manuscript for an accounting certification, I had approached the office of the President's Polio Appeal Fund to get general financial information such as budgets, allocations for vaccinations and rehabilitation, future outlook, etc., This information would have provided an accounting perspective for the manuscript. I was soon approached by a military official informing me that if I knew what was good for me, I would leave and not address this matter again! Needless to say, I did not pursue the matter further.

## **Citizenship and Immigration Canada Selected Deputy Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award Winners, Part 2**

*Ed. note: With the permission of the Human Resources Branch of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada and the individuals concerned, the CIHS is pleased to present a series of reprints about employees who were awarded the Deputy Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award. In this issue, we highlight two award recipients: Deborah Tunis (2013) and Sandra Harder (2014).*

### **Deborah Carson Tunis Deputy Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, 2013**

*From the commendation (le texte français suit le texte anglais):*

Through her role as Director General of the Integration Branch, Deborah has helped foster the development of an inclusive, welcoming community for newcomers to Canada. She has had a significant impact on the development as well as the transformation of Citizenship and Immigration Canada's settlement and integration policies and programs. She has championed this program through a period of transition and, with partners, set the direction that will guide settlement and integration in Canada for years to come.

She has left her mark on the important work of the Integration Branch. She guided an extensive settlement review process that has encompassed numerous evaluations, an audit, an examination of the Standing Committee and myriad policy conversations on all aspects of the settlement programs at all levels across the Department and with key stakeholders. This process resulted in the articulation of key settlement outcomes and the design of policy directions that will assist in guiding the Program toward a more coherent and coordinated system with better outcomes for newcomers than has hitherto proven possible.

Deborah's work is characterized by her humanity and people values. She constantly reminds us all of our obligations to one another, to our partners and to the clients that we serve. This decency and interest in everyone she interacts with has facilitated the establishment, and in many cases the resuscitation, of critical relationships that are so essential for the success of the Settlement Program. Her commitment to engagement with every level and member of the Branch, partners across Citizenship and Immigration Canada, the federal family, provincial/territorial partners as well as stakeholders in the

Settlement Sector has created a cooperative and fruitful environment where foundational changes to settlement have been implemented.

### **Deborah Carson Tunis**

Dans le cadre de ses fonctions de directrice générale de l'Intégration, Deborah Carson Tunis a contribué au développement d'une collectivité inclusive et accueillante à l'égard des nouveaux arrivants au Canada. Deborah a eu une influence considérable sur l'évolution des politiques et des programmes d'établissement et d'intégration de Citoyenneté et Immigration Canada, et sur leur transformation. Elle s'est faite la championne de ce programme dans une période de transition. Elle a également défini, avec ses partenaires, l'orientation de l'établissement et de l'intégration au Canada dans les années à venir.

Deborah a contribué de façon indéniable au travail considérable que la Direction générale de l'intégration a accompli. Elle a supervisé un processus d'examen approfondi de l'établissement, qui comprenait de nombreuses évaluations, une vérification, un examen du Comité permanent et nombre de conversations sur chaque aspect des programmes d'établissement, à tous les échelons du Ministère, et avec les principaux intervenants. Ce processus a permis d'expliquer les résultats clés dans le domaine de l'établissement et de concevoir des orientations stratégiques qui faciliteront l'évolution du programme vers un système plus cohérent et coordonné, qui donnera de meilleurs résultats en matière d'établissement des nouveaux arrivants qu'auparavant.

Le travail de Mme Carson Tunis est marqué par son humanisme. Elle nous rappelle continuellement nos obligations les uns envers les autres, et envers nos partenaires et les clients que nous servons. Sa courtoisie et son intérêt pour chaque personne avec qui elle communique ont favorisé l'établissement et, dans de nombreux cas, la reprise de relations cruciales pour la réussite du programme d'établissement. Par sa détermination à susciter la participation à tous les niveaux et aux membres de la Direction générale, aux partenaires de l'ensemble du Ministère, à la famille fédérale, et aux provinces et aux territoires, ainsi qu'aux intervenants du secteur de l'établissement, elle a su créer un environnement productif, où des changements essentiels dans le domaine de l'établissement ont été mis en œuvre.

### **Sandra Harder Deputy Minister's Lifetime Achievement Award Recipient, 2014**

*From the commendation (le texte français suit le texte anglais)*

Sandra Harder began her career at CIC in 2002 as Manager of the Gender Based Analysis (GBA) Unit, putting in place the policy framework and training related to the only legislative requirement to report on GBA under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Through her determination, intelligence and sense of humour, Sandra broke down barriers and overcame significant resistance to ensure departmental buy-in and support for GBA, a legacy that endures and has been replicated across government. Status of Women Canada refers to CIC as a Government of Canada best practitioner and has trumpeted the work led by Sandra nationally and internationally.

Following a period of absence, Sandra returned to CIC to lead the Horizontal Policy Group in Immigration Branch, taking on responsibility for Levels Planning and, in 2008, developing as well as implementing Ministerial Instructions (MI). As the new Director General of Strategic Policy and Planning Branch, Sandra took over a branch in need of a strong leader, building an anchor for the group through the Levels and MI work, while throwing herself into the world of strategic planning. She has led the development of CIC's Strategic Plan as well as other foundational documents that are key elements of the strong management culture of the Department. Most recently, she has led work to advance implementation of a new application management system to ensure improved labour market responsiveness.

In recognition of Sandra's personal strengths and contributions to the Department, the Deputy Minister made her a member of the Executive Committee in 2010. It is hard to imagine what CIC would have been over the past years without Sandra. GBA would not have been integrated as it has without her commitment; rather, the legislative requirement would have been nothing more than a tick box process. As a director and as Director General, first acting in Immigration Branch and then in Strategic Policy and Planning, she has transformed the policy shop to be a model for other departments. Through her efforts, the Department has made fundamental changes to the immigration system in Canada including huge strides in eliminating backlogs, improving the evidence base for Levels Planning and is well on the way to launching our own labour market responsive application management system. Sandra has shown incredible dedication to advancing the Department's agenda and to developing staff along the way, dedicated to achieving the best results for Canadians. She leaves an amazing legacy of policy change as well as some very big shoes to fill. Sandra recently retired from the public service after almost 25 years of service, and we wish her a well-deserved retirement.

## **Sandra Harder**

Sandra Harder a commencé sa carrière à CIC en 2002 à titre de gestionnaire de l'Unité de l'analyse comparative entre les sexes (ACS), où elle a mis en place le cadre stratégique et la formation liés à la seule exigence législative de production de rapports sur l'ACS prévue dans la Loi sur l'immigration et la protection des réfugiés. Grâce à sa détermination, son intelligence et son sens de l'humour, Sandra a brisé les barrières et surmonté une résistance importante afin d'obtenir l'adhésion et le soutien du Ministère relativement à l'ACS, une réalisation qui perdure et qui a été reproduite ailleurs au gouvernement. Condition féminine Canada a déclaré que CIC est l'organisme du gouvernement du Canada dont les pratiques sont les plus exemplaires et a louangé le travail réalisé par Sandra tant à l'échelle nationale qu'à l'échelle internationale.

Après une période d'absence, Sandra est revenue à CIC pour diriger le Groupe des politiques horizontales de la Direction générale de l'immigration, où elle a assumé la responsabilité de la planification des niveaux et, en 2008, de la préparation et de la mise en œuvre des instructions ministérielles (IM). À titre de nouvelle directrice générale de la Direction générale des politiques stratégiques et de la planification, Sandra a pris les rênes d'un groupe qui avait besoin d'un bon leader et a consolidé son équipe autour du travail sur la planification des niveaux et sur les IM, tout en se lançant dans le monde de la planification stratégique. Elle a dirigé l'élaboration du Plan stratégique de CIC ainsi que d'autres documents de base essentiels à la culture d'excellence en gestion du Ministère. Plus récemment, elle a dirigé les travaux pour faire avancer la mise en œuvre d'un nouveau système de gestion des demandes mieux adapté aux conditions du marché du travail.

En reconnaissance de ses forces et de ses contributions personnelles au Ministère, le sous-ministre l'a nommée membre du Comité exécutif en 2010. Il est difficile d'imaginer ce qu'aurait été CIC au cours des dernières années sans la présence de Sandra. L'ACS n'aurait pas été ainsi intégrée sans son engagement. L'exigence législative à cet effet n'aurait été rien de plus qu'une case à cocher sur une liste de contrôle. À titre de directrice et de directrice générale, d'abord intérimaire à la tête de la direction générale de l'immigration puis de Politique stratégique et planification, elle a transformé le groupe d'élaboration des politiques et en a fait un modèle pour d'autres ministères. Grâce à ses efforts, le Ministère a apporté des changements fondamentaux au système d'immigration du Canada, y compris d'énormes progrès dans l'élimination des arriérés et l'amélioration de la base de données probantes pour la planification des niveaux, et s'apprête à lancer son propre système de gestion des demandes adapté aux besoins du marché du travail. Sandra a fait preuve d'un dévouement incroyable dans la promotion du programme du Ministère et dans le perfectionnement de ses employés au fil du temps, en vue d'offrir aux Canadiens les meilleurs résultats possibles. Elle laisse un héritage incroyable de changement stratégique ainsi qu'une place qui sera très difficile à combler. Sandra a récemment pris sa retraite de la fonction publique après près de 25 années de service, et nous lui souhaitons une retraite bien méritée.

## **Filipino Nurses and Canada**

Gerry Maffre, Gavin Stewart, Charles Godfrey and Jean Roberge

CBC Radio recently aired a [story on the movement of Filipino nurses to Canada](#). The producer explored the origins, driving forces and the people involved.

What was absent was the role of Canadian visa officers in responding to Filipino nurses' and Canadian employers' interests in recruiting nurses for the Canadian health care field. Many CIHS members served in Manila and we present these notes to complement the documentary.

### **Gavin Stewart**

To my knowledge, it is likely that the first Filipino nurses to work in Canada arrived from the U.S. in the early 1960s. They had been at training hospitals, most notably Cook County Hospital in Chicago, on limited work visas. Rather than returning to the Philippines at the expiration of their U.S. visas, several nurses contacted Catholic hospitals in Ontario and received offers of employment. Their Canadian entry documentation was probably processed at our ports of entry.

Word of their success spread quickly in the Philippines right about the time I arrived in Manila in 1964 to open and staff the visa office. The principal Manila newspaper carried a front-page article on these nurses' success in gaining employment in Canada. This publicity triggered a large number of applications at the mission.

### **Charles Godfrey**

In 1973 or so, the visa section at the Canadian embassy in Manila received an urgent telex from Saskatchewan saying it desperately needed two nurses within two weeks or a particular hospital would close. The province wanted the visa office to help.

My ex-wife had just been operated on at Makati Medical Centre so I knew a few of the nurses there. I went to the hospital and spoke to one of them. I asked if she wanted to go to Canada. The answer was a resounding “yes, of course”. I asked her if she had a friend, a qualified nurse as well who wanted to go. Again, “yes”.

I told her about the offer and emphasized that she and her friend had to be ready to go within two weeks. Working with Saskatchewan on the licence recognition, and with our medical and security colleagues, we had the visas ready and the two nurses left for Canada. It was all put together on time. I don't know how many nurses we also sent to Twillingate, NL.

### **Jean Roberge**

Having managed Canada's visa office in Manila, I was well aware of the balikbayan phenomenon, which is that of Filipino citizens or former Filipino citizens, returning to visit the Philippines after living and/or working abroad. The tradition is that they return with gifts for their parents and relatives. I knew of Filipinos working abroad in so many countries: from Dubai to Israel to Indonesia and many European countries. There was no stigma about working abroad in Filipino culture. They certainly welcomed Canada as a country that gave them permanent residence and eventually citizenship.

## **In Memoriam**

### **Robert Shalka and Victor Majid**

Neil Alexander

I knew Robert Shalka (Dr. Bob) and Victor Majid quite well. Bob became my immigration program manager in Riyadh when he arrived in 1995. He, Victor, and I were there together in the immigration section for a year. Bob was a great boss, and Victor was a colleague and good friend with whom I was also on postings in Hong Kong, Singapore, and Manila. I miss them both.

On his first day in the Riyadh office, Bob said that there was a lot of work to do, rolled up his sleeves, and took stacks of visitor applications to review. He was hard-working, fair, and personable. I remember our weekend trip with Victor to Bahrain, driving through the Saudi desert. Bob was excited about a Polish accordion band playing at a local bar in Bahrain, but we convinced him that we should go to the one featuring a Filipino band playing tributes to the Eagles and the best rendition of “Hotel California” I had ever heard. Bob enjoyed himself. We all had a few beers, which were forbidden in Saudi Arabia. Bob was a great family man too. We stayed in touch over the years.

I last saw Victor in Ottawa in February 2021, when he was there with his daughter Jasmine. She was applying for a Spanish student visa. I knew his wife Ju and his son Jaden too. Great kids.

At six foot seven inches, Victor was a tall man, and in Hong Kong the staff called him “Go Lo”, meaning “tall guy”. When we went to Wendy's at lunch, locals would exclaim “Waa!” when they saw him and took in his impressive height. Victor had to duck to get through doorways!

During our time together in Manila (2008–2009), Victor managed the immigration section's economic unit (EI) and served his last year as its unit manager. It tells a lot about Victor and how much he was loved that the unit staff prepared this tribute upon his departure for New York City in 2009.

“The EI unit would like you to know that:

We will miss you, Victor. Your sense of humour, your friendliness, your open-heartedness and your good nature. It would be a tall order to replace you.

As we part ways we wish you to know that...  
Hey, since you are leaving and going on your merry way  
We have gathered here to say,  
That you have done well at the end of the day,  
while engaging in serious play.  
The targets you had to reach  
made your hair in disarray,  
While it gave griefs, dramas and joys,

to so many of us girls and boys.  
 You brought good and bad news  
 in your own special way.  
 We know when you had a stress-free day,  
 you whistle while you work.  
 We know when you had a fantastic day  
 When you bid adieu you say,  
 "Have a good evening, folks"

Here is to the Gentle Giant who only takes seven steps out the door  
 as he makes his way home ...we wonder how many giant steps will it take  
 to get him to New York!"

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.

<p>The Canadian Immigration Historical Society (www.CIHS-SHIC.ca ) is a non-profit corporation registered as a charitable organization under the Income Tax Act.</p>	<p>The society's goals are:          - to support, encourage and promote research into the history of Canadian immigration and to foster the collection and dissemination of that history, and          - to stimulate interest in and further the appreciation and understanding of the influence of immigration on Canada's development and position in the world.</p>	<p>President – Dawn Edlund; Vice-President – Anne Arnott;          Treasurer – Don Cochrane; Secretary – Robert Orr;          Editor – Diane Burrows; Past-President – Michael Molloy          Members at large – Brian Casey, Charlene Elgee, Raphael Girard, Kurt Jensen, Gerry Maffre (Communications) and Ian Rankin          Member emeritus – J.B. “Joe” Bissett          IRCC Representative – Paula Pincombe          Webmaster: Winnerjit Rathor; Website translations: Sylvie Doucet</p>
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