The Canadian Immigration Historical Society
La société historique de l'immigration canadienne

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Annual General Meeting

Anne Arnott

The Canadian Immigration Historical Society's (CIHS's) annual general meeting (AGM) took place on Thursday, 19 October 2023 at the Royal Canadian Legion in Ottawa. This was the first time that we have met in person since the Covid pandemic began, and it was also our first hybrid meeting. Members from outside Ottawa (and those who didn't feel well enough to attend in person) could sign on with Zoom to hear President Dawn Edlund speak about the Society's accomplishments in the past year and to listen to our guest speaker, James Bissett, known to all of us as Joe.

We were delighted that CIHS's oldest member, Jack Mitchinson, was on the Zoom call, helped by another of our members, Doug Dunnington. Since the beginning of the pandemic and our move to virtual AGMs, we have been very happy to welcome CIHS members who live outside Ottawa. We plan to continue holding hybrid meetings in the future.

President's Remarks

After welcoming everyone to the meeting, the president remembered those friends and colleagues we lost in the past year. She then moved on to the highlights of the year, the first being two large donations to the Society: one from a donor who wishes to remain unnamed, and the second from the Vietnamese community as a share in the proceeds of the Vietnamese translation of *Running on Empty*. In recognition of the Bulletin edition dedicated to Ugandan Asians, Past President Mike Molloy, Dawn Edlund, and Bulletin Editor Diane Burrows were invited to the Senate and recognized as guests of Senator Mobina Jaffer. CIHS members attended the travelling exhibit of Hearts of Freedom in several venues. The documentary associated with this project, *Passage to Freedom*, has been shown in many locations, including at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), where 840 people saw the documentary and 600 stayed to hear the panel discussion featuring a number of people instrumental in the project, including Mike Molloy. CIHS members continue to meet with new foreign service officers to talk about the Society and their lives and careers in the foreign service. The slate of officers for the CIHS board was confirmed.

One of the big projects this year was the renewal and redesign of our website to give it a new look and, more importantly, to increase and improve searchability. Membership numbers remain steady, and we continue to look for ways to attract new members. This year's closing date for the CIHS Molloy Bursary application was 1 November 2023, and Dawn thanked board member Charlene Elgee for her work to publicise it. Dawn concluded by asking people to consider writing articles for the Bulletin and reminded us that if we don't write it down, the information will be lost.

Contents

Gunn Prize

The Society, in conjunction with Carleton University, awarded this year's Gunn prize to Alexandros Balasis, a PhD student at York University. We were very pleased to welcome him and his wife to the AGM dinner and meeting, so that he could receive a plaque in person. A summary of his paper appears in this Bulletin, and the full paper is posted on our website.

Gunn Prize winner Alexandros Balasis with his award. L-R: committee member Dr. Kurt Jensen, CIHS President Dawn Edlund, Alexandros Balasis, committee chair Dr. Laura Madokoro, and committee member Roy Christensen. (Photo courtesy of Don Cochrane)

Guest Speaker Joe Bissett

Joe Bissett received a warm welcome from Raph Girard, who joked with AGM guests that introducing Joe was one of his toughest assignments. Joe joined the immigration foreign service in 1956, after the wave of World War II veterans. Unlike most of those colleagues, Joe had a post-secondary education and was an excellent communicator both in writing and orally. Raph explained that Joe had a healthy scepticism of the flavour of the month. He knew that respect needed to be earned and that departmental values had to be communicated down the ranks—people mattered. He worked hard to protect his staff from unwarranted political pressure. Raph's view was that Joe's most public and important achievement was to move the department away from race-based immigration selection to the current points-based system, and for that we all owe him a debt of gratitude.

Joe entertained us with stories of his years in the immigration service and the people with whom he had worked and worked for. He pointed out that he and Raph never agreed on anything and told of going on cavalry horses to a fishing spot in Serbia with Raph and Brian Casey, with pistols from a wedding going off in the distance.

The first stop on Joe's cross-Canada training tour was Quebec City, where he and his wife married, after a bit of difficulty finding a church. When the tour finished in Vancouver, he moved to Ottawa and became the assistant to the new minister, Ellen Fairclough. Joe spoke of the many, many late nights this job entailed.

CIHS keynote speaker Joe Bissett and CIHS board member and former treasurer Raph Girard. (Photo courtesy of Don Cochrane)

When Joe left the Minister's office, he worked in Ottawa until 1961, when he went to Winnipeg first as deputy director and later as acting director of the Western Region. When the new Department of Manpower and Immigration was formed, Joe was called back to Ottawa and among other things became a member of the deputy minister's committee mandated to design a system enabling our immigration policy to select immigrants from any part of the world. A number of officers were brought back from oversees to help develop the system, which included looking at the applicant's abilities in Canada's official languages, job skills, and education. The group advocated for controls—if applicants did not get a high enough score, they couldn't come to Canada. The new system came into effect in 1967, and it worked, doing away with what had been in effect a racist policy. The driving force of the committee was Deputy Minister Tom Kent. Joe admitted that he was, and still is, very proud of the system they designed.

Another achievement for which all immigration foreign service officers owe Joe a debt is receiving diplomatic status during their postings abroad. Joe was posted to London in the early 1970s. Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, on his first trip to London in 1969, found that there were 16 departments at the high commission and talked about getting all foreign service officers into one department. Joe was part of the committee which brought this into effect in 1981, and he became the assistant undersecretary of state for social affairs in External Affairs. He later became Canadian high commissioner to

Trinidad and Tobago; Canadian ambassador to Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, and Albania; and head of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) bureau in Moscow.

Joe finished by saying that there was never a day he didn't enjoy going to work and then treated us to some of his poetry.

Closing remarks
Dawn closed the meeting by speaking briefly about the year ahead. In 2024, the CIHS plans to assist in commemorating the Kosovar movement to Canada 25 years ago. The Society needs to continue to develop the website and to advance our push to attract new members to the Society. We have facilitated researchers and academics to speak with immigration staff about machinery of government changes, and we need to determine how to use the work done already by several researchers from Toronto Metropolitan University to capture oral histories on refugee settlement in Canada.

A happy Budapest visa officer reunion at the AGM: L-R: Don Cochrane, Jim Bissett, and their former immigration program manager Peter Duschinsky. (Photo courtesy of Don Cochrane)

Voices of Migration: Exploring Agency within Canadian Immigration Policy and Greek Emigration Framework

Alexandros Balasis

The author, a Ph.D. student at York University, is the CIHS's 2023 Gunn Prize winner. He has examined Greek immigration to Canada during the 1950s and 1960s through immigrants' voices and is continuing his research studies into migrants' agency and their diverse experiences. The Gunn Prize Selection Committee was composed of: Dr. Laura Madokoro, Carleton University (Non-Voting Selection Committee Chairperson); Dr. Kurt F. Jensen, CIHS; Robert Vineberg, CIHS; Roy Christensen, CIHS; and Dr. Jonathon Malek, University of Manitoba. The following article is a summary of the prize-winning essay.

In 2019, I became aware of Toronto's diverse and vibrant migrant communities through an undergraduate international exchange program. Professor Sakis Gekas introduced me to the *Immigrec* oral history archive, which hosts more than 400 interviews and offers a perspective on Greek immigration to Canada during the 1950s and 1960s through immigrants' voices. Since then, my research interests have developed around migrants' agency and their diverse experiences.

Since the establishment of the modern Greek state in 1832, the country has seen two major emigration waves. The first occurred from the late nineteenth to early twentieth century; the second wave emerged after the end of the Second World War and the ferocious Greek Civil War in 1949. This second emigration wave saw over one million Greeks depart from their homeland and approximately 100,000 settle in Canada.[1] By examining Canadian immigration policy and the Greek framework of emigration, this text brings migrants' narrations and agency to the foreground of historical research. On the one hand, post-war Canadian governments dealt with numerous immigrants from around the world. On the other hand, Greece had to regulate the outflow of its people. Utilizing a never-before-investigated oral history archive, this research presents the ways immigrants demonstrated agency by obeying, exploiting, or disregarding the law.

Following the Second World War, Canada was among the few countries able to absorb the millions of people fleeing the devastation of Europe. The 1952 *Immigration Act* limited admissions based on nationality, property, health, and education criteria, protecting Canada's white European identity.[2] In 1956, new regulations specified four classes of preferred immigrants who could enter the country.[3] According to this classification, Greeks had two options to enter Canada: by providing guarantees about their future job or being sponsored. It was not until 1962 that the Diefenbaker government introduced more universal admission criteria to lower the racial barriers. In 1967, a less exclusive point system ranking applicants based on their education and training, personal qualities, and age was adopted.[4]

For the most part, the central problem of the Greek emigration post-war policy was that Greece did not have one. For Greece, emigration released the pressure caused by its excess workforce and provided the benefits of remittances.

Nevertheless, the country worked towards bilateral agreements with northern European countries to promote emigration.[5] Greece was a founding member of the International Committee for European Migration (ICEM), which mediated between countries to reduce Europe's excess workforce. In 1952, ICEM arranged to assist 115,000 migrants to relocate, helping around 20,000 Greeks to emigrate to the U.S., Canada, and Australia.[6]

While ICEM was the principal player for regulating Greek immigration to Canada, migration was on the agenda when officials of the two states met. The newspaper *Empros* in 1953 underlines the Canadian government's willingness to permit "unlimited Greek immigration to Canada".[7] Similarly, during the 1961 official visit of Greek Prime Minister Konstantinos Karamanlis to Canada, immigration was celebrated as a link of friendship between the two countries.[8] However, the Canadian Department of Citizenship and Immigration was reluctant to endorse substantial Greek immigration despite the requests made by migrant associations or the Greek government. In the following years, an annual influx of 4,000 to 5,000 Greeks was granted entrance; after 1964, their numbers increased, with a peak of 11,000 in 1967. This shift corresponded to the more receptive Canadian immigration policy.[9]

Being invited (sponsored) by a Canadian resident was the standard way for Greeks to immigrate to Canada. With chain migration being a recurrent theme in the interviewee's narrations, it is essential to stress that women drove the relocation of their relatives. Considering the demand for domestic servants and nurses, Greek women consciously followed the ICEM training as a gateway to Canada. After working the required period as domestic servants and nurses, having acquired basic English, and being deemed Canadian residents, they would change their jobs and sponsor the immigration of other family members to the country.[10] Similarly, families resorted to arranged marriages, allowing other family members to migrate through kinship. Hence, young women became part of the family's economic strategy to expand its networks and obtain social mobility. In these ways, Greek women played the role of migration initiators typically attributed to men. This role was a source of pride for many, as conveyed during their interviews.[11]

At the same time, the legal framework was not enough to discourage illegal migration. As Canada excluded would-be immigrants who did not meet the entrance criteria, some Greeks reached Canada as sailors and extended their stay as long as possible. One interviewee from Crete, when he reached Canada in 1964, left his ship and did not re-embark; his story was not uncommon, as there were a few hundred similar cases over the examined period.[12] In 1962, James Dimitrios and Anthony Gaitanis surrendered to the police because "they were tired of being exploited by employers" who knew that in 1959 they had jumped their ship. They said there were at least 1,000 cases of ship-jumpers in the greater Montreal area alone.[13] The phenomenon was not limited to Canada, since deserters from Greek ships frequently featured in the American press, nor did the phenomenon appear for the first time after the war.[14]

The cases of Greeks arriving legally in Canada as tourists but extending their stay were similar to those of ship-jumpers. People entering Canada with a visitor visa had to show the border service officer a round-trip ticket and 250 dollars cash to fund their trip. An anonymous interviewee explained that, after arriving in Montreal as a tourist, he settled there while evading the police. He believed the Canadian authorities did not actively search for individuals overstaying their permitted duration as long as they were "hardworking" and had a "normal life," like himself.[15] Interviews and articles about ship-jumpers and tourists suggest it was easy to avoid detection because Canada rewarded diligent immigrants.

Migration policies establish the legal framework for people planning their relocation and can significantly affect their migration decisions and trajectories. The way immigrants understood the legal framework, placed themselves within it, and navigated through it could not be shaped by any government or law. Examples of exploiting the sponsor system or extending the stay in Canada beyond the permitted duration demonstrate that the comprehension and interpretation of the law are as crucial as its conception. Immigrants, rather than being victims, could make strategic decisions to navigate through legal restrictions and find alternative means of achieving their migration goals.

Notes

[1] Michel Bruneau and Giorgos Prevelakis, «Η Χαρτογράφηση της Νεοελληνικής Διασποράς» ["Mapping the Modern Greek Diaspora,"] in *Οι Έλληνες στη διασπορά: 15ος-21ος αι.* [*The Greeks in the Diaspora: 15th-21st Centuries,*] ed. Ioannis Hassiotis, Olga Katsiardi-Hering, and Evridiki Abatzi (Athens:Hellenic Parliament, 2006), 322.

[2] Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos, "Dismantling White Canada: Race, Rights, and the Origins of the Points System," in *Wanted and Welcome? Policies for Highly Skilled Immigrants in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Triadafilos Triadafilopoulos (New York: Springer, 2013), 21.

[3] Ninette Kelley and Michael J. Trebilcock, *The Making of the Mosaic: A History of Canadian Immigration Policy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 328.

[4] Ibid., 360–361.

[5] Ibid., 179.

[6] Maria Plaktsoglou, «Η Μεταναστευτική πολιτική της Αυστραλίας προς την Ελλάδα και η Ελληνική μεταπολεμική μετανάστευση (1945–1953)», ["Australian Immigration Policy Towards Greece and Greek Post-war Immigration,"] in *Greek Research in Australia: Proceedings of the Eighth Biennial International Conference of Greek Studies, Flinders University, June 2009*, ed. Marietta Rossetto (Adelaide: Flinders University Department of Languages - Modern Greek, 2011), 720–21.

[7] «Τι επέτυχεν ο κ. Μαρκεζίνης εις τον Καναδά» ["What Mr. Markezinis achieved in Canada,"] *Empros*, May 15, 1953, 1,3.
[8] «Το Πρωθυπουργικόν ταξίδιον εις τας Ηνωμ. Πολιτείας», ["The Prime Minister's trip to the United States,"] *Makedonia*, April 15, 1961, 1.
[9] Peter Chimbos, "The Greeks in Canada. An Historical and Sociological Perspective," in *The Greek Diaspora in the 20th Century*, ed. Richard Clogg (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 92.
[10] Agape Gournis, 737, June 5, 2018, *Immigrec*.
[11] Noula Mina, "Taming and Training Greek 'Peasant Girls' and the Gendered Politics of Whiteness in Postwar Canada: Canadian Bureaucrats and Immigrant Domestics, 1950s–1960s," *The Canadian Historical Review* 94, no. 4 (2013): 532.
[12] G.A., Landed immigrant, Immigrec, https://virtual.immigrec.com/en#/r1/room-1-map.
[13] Eric Geiger, "1,000 Ship-Jumpers in Montreal, Officials Told by 2 Greek Sailors," *The Globe and Mail*, January 27, 1962, 1.
[14] Alexander Kitroeff, "Ship Jumpers: An Unspoken Chapter of Greek Immigration to the United States," *The Pappas Post*, April 16, 2020, https://pappaspost.com/ship-jumpers-an-unspoken-chapter-of-greek-immigration-to-the-united-states/.
[15] Anonymous, Round trip ticket, Immigrec, https://virtual.immigrec.com/en#/r1/room-1-map.

2023 CIHS Molloy Bursary Update

Following the application deadline of 1 November 2023 for the CIHS Molloy Bursary, a panel of CIHS board members met to review the applicants' submissions. It selected the successful recipient based on the merits of the submission. Notification and payment will occur in the coming weeks.

This year was the first time that the relatively new bursary of $1,000 received applications, and we hope that it will prove to be useful for undergraduate history students at Canadian universities. The CIHS website lays out this bursary's exact eligibility criteria and other useful information for potential applicants.

Humanitarian Factors in Selection of Refugees for Resettlement in Canada

Raphael Girard

As a country geographically far removed from most sources of forced migration, be it caused by natural or man-made phenomena, Canada historically has tended to perceive itself primarily as a country of resettlement for refugees in need who have found first asylum elsewhere. The humanitarian focus of these activities however, has shifted markedly since Canada first agreed to take in refugees. The purpose of this paper is to trace the process of that evolution.

It is often claimed that refugees have been resettled in Canada since its earliest days. It is not difficult to identify groups such as Mennonites, Doukhobors, and fugitives, especially Jewish refugees, affected by various pogroms and revolutions in Europe among the hundreds of thousands of immigrants who settled in Canada between Confederation and World War II. Most of these people would have had no difficulty in meeting the definition of Convention Refugee as eventually codified in the 1951 Geneva Convention. However, the motivation to accept them was not primarily humanitarian. They, like other intending immigrants, had to comply with the selection criteria in force that included ethnicity and ability to become self-sufficient in relatively short order. Immigration was a population-building tool for a young country that until 1911 sustained a net loss of population to the United States. To the extent refugees fit the overall objective of population building, they were welcome.

In that period as well, there was no outreach by the government to individuals in need. A network of officials was deployed overseas to promote settlement of people on the land in conjunction with transportation companies and other private interests that made a business of encouraging settlement in Canada. There was no visa system to pre-examine likely candidates before their arrival at a seaport or land border. Refugees, like any other intending immigrants, were either admitted or turned away at ports of entry. The decision in each case was made by immigration officials whose decision making was governed by legislation focused more on who should not be allowed to come into the country than who should. Those who did not measure up were returned forthwith whence they came. There were detention centres in all major seaports to accommodate those who for one reason or another could not be immediately returned to their own countries. The question of the fate that would befall these unfortunate people when they were returned was not addressed.

The legislation itself contained no reference to refugees, so it follows that there was no specific refugee policy. The immigration department received petitions from religious and ethnic organizations who sought agreement in principle to bring various refugee groups to Canada, and these were accepted or rejected based primarily on how well the individuals fit within the selection standards of the day. In 1910, for example, the inadmissible classes were amended to preclude groups who practised communal land holding—a clear reaction to negative views of Hutterites and Doukhobors who had

sought refuge in Canada prior to 1910 and who would otherwise easily comply with the Eurocentric selection preferences of the day. In 1919 another amendment to the Act precluded immigrants whose passage had been paid by a third party, and this was implemented to curtail the activities of certain British charitable groups that were financing the immigration of the urban poor to Canada and other countries of the empire.

The operational profile changed in the immediate postwar period, but the legislative base remained unchanged. The first specific initiative Canada took to reach refugees outside the country took place in 1946, when Prime Minister Mackenzie King stated in a speech that Canada had a moral obligation to help settle European refugees displaced by World War II. Visa officers were immediately sent abroad to camps in Germany, Italy, and Austria to select refugees, part of a resettlement effort coordinated by the newly established International Refugee Organization (replaced in 1951 by the UNHCR). By 1952, this program had brought more than 180,000 refugees to Canada. As in prewar days, however, the humanitarian aspect of the program was second to that of the economy.

Policy shifted from agricultural settlement to providing skills for the rapidly industrializing Canadian economy. Certain occupational groups were targeted by Orders in Council that determined who would be eligible to come to Canada. This policy was communicated to visa officers in the field through administrative instructions. After 1952, with the closure of refugee camps in western Europe, the policy was amended to include recent escapees from Soviet Bloc countries, evolving into what became known as the Ongoing Program for Eastern Europeans. This became the core activity for refugee resettlement until the Cold War ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Once again, the policy was established by Order in Council, which approved a definition of who would be eligible as follows:

a) as a result of events arising after World War II, was displaced from one European country to another and has not been permanently resettled: or

b) because of fear of persecution on religious, racial, or political grounds, left one of the Soviet-Bloc countries since the International Refugee Organization terminated its activities on December 31,1951, and has not been permanently resettled.

The government abandoned specific occupational selection, but refugees like other unsponsored immigrants, were expected to show that they possessed the skills and other personal attributes that would enable them to become self-sufficient reasonably quickly.

When Canada finally did sign the Geneva Convention and Protocol in 1969, resettlement policy was also reviewed in cabinet. This resulted in the adoption of the 1951 Convention definition for eligibility for resettlement and added provisions for people in humanitarian need, such as those who were internally displaced or members of oppressed minorities who would not meet the strict application of the 1951 Convention definition. These changes tipped the balance from economic to humanitarian in refugee selection practice.

For the first time, the administrative instructions (Operations Memorandum 17)—issued in January 1971 and amended in June 1972—directed visa officers to focus on humanitarian need that could be redressed through resettlement. Officers were to use an attenuated form of the points system when assessing Convention refugees, who unlike other unsponsored immigrants, would not have to score at least 50 points on the scale of the selection criteria that looked at factors of age, education, skill, language proficiency, and work experience.

This expansion of eligibility to refugees outside of Europe enabled the admission to Canada of refugees and oppressed minorities from anywhere in the world but did not contain any guidance as to whom or to how many the opportunity should be extended. However, in fairly short order, the core resettlement activity for escapees from the Soviet bloc was affected by other international crises requiring the resettlement of people such as the Ugandan Asians, Chileans, and Tibetans—three examples where Canada reached out to people based on their needs rather than the economic needs of the Canadian labour force.

In the Green Paper exercise of 1973–1975, which involved broad consultations with Canadians as to what an immigration policy should contain, refugee resettlement was reaffirmed as Canada's primary contribution to humanitarian relief of the oppressed and dispossessed. Minister Bob Andras, then responsible for immigration, was later quoted as saying, "Canada has been, and I hope it will continue to be for the long term, a country with a special compassion and receptivity to genuine refugees from around the world". The context in which he spoke was exclusively that of resettlement.

The legislation that emerged from the Green Paper consultation, the *Immigration Act* of 1976, defined the classes of immigrants who could be selected for permanent residence in Canada, a provision previous Acts had allowed to be determined administratively and through regulation. The new law created a distinct class of refugees and extended the

definition by giving the governor in council authority to designate other classes in need of resettlement. In recognition of the historic involvement of religious groups and secular nongovernmental agencies, it enabled regulations to be established governing private sponsorship of refugees and members of designated classes. Visa officers could continue to use the points system as a guide assessing the settlement prospects of individual applicants, but again there was no reference to occupational selection or points score.

What induced policy makers to address the question of refugee resettlement policy more formally beyond simply responding to periodic appeals from the UNHCR was precipitated by provisions in the 1976 *Immigration Act*. It required the government to formulate an annual plan for immigration levels that included a component dedicated to refugee resettlement. This change forced the government to plan its resettlement activities and therefore required a framework for rational choice among burgeoning numbers of refugees in the world.

The keystone was the UNHCR's hierarchy of durable solutions for refugees, which are: firstly, repatriation in safety; secondly, resettlement *sur place* (in place); and lastly, resettlement in a third country.

Canada's dialogue with the UNHCR about resettlement priorities through the late 1970s and early 1980s, which was a part of the policy formulation process, initially elicited a very tepid response. At that time the UNHCR itself had very little regard for resettlement, often characterizing it as a fig leaf used by immigration countries to mask their lack of interest in the protection of asylum seekers. Nevertheless, Canadian policy settled on giving priority in the annual plan to refugees for whom the other durable solutions were not available, typified by such groups as the Vietnamese boat people, refugee women at risk, and Karen refugees from Burma. The assessment of need and the eventual choice as to who should be included in the annual planning paid no regard to Canada's economic needs but was based solely to the needs of the individuals for resettlement as a durable solution to their particular problem, with the number limited only by budgetary considerations as approved by the cabinet.

As often as not, the general public—and often some Ministers—support resettlement in Canada as a response to natural and man-made disasters. Considering that very few countries are willing and able to offer significant numbers of resettlement places to refugees on a continuing basis, it is essential for Canada to consider all of the options for a durable solution before making a decision to offer an additional group an allocation of scarce resettlement places. In principle, resettlement should only be offered when other durable solutions are not, or are unlikely to become, available because of the specific circumstance of the individuals or group in question.

What we have seen in contemporary programming, such as Syria and Afghanistan, is a focus on humanitarian need that takes primacy over any other issue except security. But the federal government does not have sole discretion in bringing in people who will have long-term dependency on the provinces or municipalities that provide social welfare, and there was and will always be consideration of an individual's ability to eventually become self-supporting, taking into account the government and nongovernmental assistance available to them. However, beginning with Operations Memorandum 17 and the evolving acceptance by government that Canada should use refugee selection for essentially humanitarian purposes, factors such as occupational skill and the needs of the Canadian economy no longer dominate refugee selection.

Whatever Happened to …? Meeting again after 50 Years (Conclusion)

Noorallah Jamal and Michael J. Molloy

In the first instalment of this article in Bulletin 106 of September 2023, the authors described their meeting after 40 years. It described Noorallah Jamal's experiences as a Ugandan Asian student who used braces and crutches for mobility, as he and his family prepared to immigrate to Canada following Idi Amin Dada's edict expelling all Ugandan Asians. The article below continues this story, from his point of arrival in Canada and through subsequent settlement milestones. All photographs are courtesy of Noorallah Jamal.

Arriving in Canada

We landed at Canadian Forces Base Longue Pointe in Quebec. It was a militarily controlled location except we didn't see any guns. Nonetheless, I was not taking anything for granted, but I reasoned with myself that a country offering safe harbour to refugees would not do anything untoward. The base gave us a very warm welcome with loads of food, soft drinks, desserts, and then beds, dormitory style. The following day we were offered a hot breakfast and warm clothing donated by local residents to prepare us for the cold Canadian winter. In Uganda, we lived year-round in an equatorial climate of 20 to 25 degrees centigrade. The personnel at Longue Pointe took very good care of us.

Then came the time to find out the city to which we would be sent. Those with friends or relatives already in Canada were able to join them. Our family was given a choice of Montreal, Toronto, or Vancouver. Vancouver had a climate closest to what I was used to and with the least amount of snow so that it would be easier for me to get around. So that is where we chose to go. They didn't tell us about the rain! We were put on a commercial flight to Vancouver with just a few others. As soon as we had jobs, we had to pay back the cost of our flight from Longue Pointe to Vancouver, which we did without defaulting on a payment. When we landed late at night, we were met by an official and sent by taxi to a local motel on Robson Street. We had not eaten for several hours and went to bed hungry but relieved to be in what was seemingly a safer place.

Mother's Birthday

The following day was 10 October, my mother's 42nd birthday. My mother had always made a fuss over our birthdays. I felt sad that she would have to spend it in a foreign country with no ability to celebrate it. We couldn't even get a cake for her.

In the morning my parents and sister went to "Manpower", which is how the Canada Manpower Centre was referred to by those who had arrived before us. They did not have any money and so had to walk. My brother and I stayed behind. There was no way I would have been able to ambulate there. My brother, who was 10 at the time, was thrilled to have a choice of numerous television channels, compared to the one channel we had in Kampala! Not having eaten anything since the afternoon of the day before, we were both hungry. I had a hard time distracting him from thinking of food when we were bombarded with commercials of beautifully presented food enjoyed by the actors on TV. There was a small burger joint two blocks away which looked appealing, but we did not have any money. We suppressed our hunger by drinking water. At 6:00 p.m., our parents and sister had not returned. It had become dark around 4:00 p.m., something we didn't experience till 8:00 p.m. in Kampala. I felt helpless and worried, in a strange city and not able to walk any substantial distance on braces and crutches, plus having a hungry 10-year-old. My anxiety increased by the minute.

They arrived "home" at about 7:00 p.m., with a couple of bags bearing the name of a local grocery chain, containing bread, eggs, tea bags, milk, sugar, oil, and cupcakes. They had been given a small allowance for food for the week by the government. For dinner that evening we had white bread, sunny-side-up eggs, and tea. We celebrated Mum's birthday with a cupcake each. It wasn't much, but we reasoned that we might not have been around to celebrate, had things gone sideways at any point in our journey. The five of us crashed in the one-bedroom motel suite and must have slept for over 15 hours. Thinking back, even today it still feels that meal was the best meal ever!

Memorable First Experiences

The Manpower and Immigration Canada offices were located on Howe Street, too far for me to walk to from the hotel. Since we had received a family allowance, we splurged on a bus ride. With difficulty I managed to get into the offices and met a bubbly, bright-eyed, pleasantly loud, motherly woman with her hair done up in a bun, by the name of Eleanor Strong. Mrs. Strong, as she was known, was in charge of the Immigrant Services Society of British Columbia (ISSBC), a volunteer organization that had recently come into being to assist new arrivals to Vancouver. She was very kind, strong (living up to her name), reasonable, forward thinking, resourceful, a good manager of personnel, and a very compassionate but no-nonsense woman. For a very young organization with little experience in dealing with hundreds of refugees descending upon Vancouver, it did extremely well. I would attribute this to the direction and guidance of Eleanor Strong. She assessed people's needs quickly. I can personally attest to it. She recognized that I needed to see medical professionals for my leg braces and spectacles that needed repair and for warts on my hands that made it very difficult to bear my weight on the crutches. She made the necessary appointments and then dealt with how to get me to them. I suspect that sending me by taxi was too expensive; besides, I would need to be accompanied by someone to help me navigate the system.

While Mrs. Strong was seeking someone to help me with some of my other needs, I went to an appointment with a government doctor at the foot of Burrard Street to get referrals to the various places I would need to go for assessment. When I told the doctor about my braces and spectacles needing repair and the warts on my palms, he got upset and was rude and demeaning. He scolded me for not taking care of these items before emigrating and becoming a burden on my host country. He seemed to be oblivious to our plight as refugees, or maybe he knew but disagreed with the government's response. I felt ashamed, insulted, and wounded beyond expression. I had never encountered such rudeness. This was completely at the other end of the spectrum of experiences I'd had so far and would have later. The outcome of this visit was a consultation with the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre, a recommendation for an over-the-counter solution of Compound W for my warts, and the realization that I would have to expect such behavior and learn to protect against it. I did not know how to do so then, nor for many years to follow.

I had gone through a long, painful treatment for my warts in Uganda. Compound W worked like a miracle! In two days, the warts had caked out, leaving a couple of craters on my palms with barely any discomfort and almost making the doctor's

behavior forgivable… but not quite. It is important to say that this experience was exceptional; I had many other positive experiences with Canadians. An outstanding example is that, when an ISSBC volunteer took my broken spectacles to an optometrist, he fixed them and made a home visit to fit them properly. I was told home visits were unheard of, and on top of that he didn't even charge me! Another example is that on a cold, miserable night in pouring rain, a lady knocked on our motel room door. She had heard that some of the Ugandan refugees were staying at a motel just behind her home. She offered us a nicely wrapped box of chocolates. That was very touching especially when this lady, who had a bad cold, was not well dressed, and looked as if she needed the money more than we needed the chocolates. Seeing this, we had a hard time accepting the gift, but we did. I don't know who she was and never saw her again.

Mrs. Strong contacted a lady by the name of Edith Lando, who had heard about the plight of the Ugandan refugees and had decided to volunteer with ISSBC. Mrs. Lando was a dedicated woman of great character, kind, resourceful, well connected, creative, persistent, and one of the most compassionate women I have known. She took me to the GF Strong Rehabilitation Centre to consult with a physiatrist (a doctor who specializes in physical medicine and rehabilitation) and get my braces mended and then to the Canadian Paraplegic Association (CPA, now known as Spinal Cord Injury B.C.). It was at CPA that I was recruited to play wheelchair basketball. Mrs. Lando was instrumental in finding jobs for my father and me, which were difficult to secure without "Canadian experience". Once we had jobs, we were required to leave the motel in which the five of us had lived for a month or so. We found an affordable, old two-bedroom house on Davie Street, with about 10 steps, which I was able to negotiate. Mrs. Lando was worried I would slip in the snow that would soon be falling. Unbeknownst to me, she sought and purchased a pair of crutch tips with a three-spike removeable attachment that would provide better grip in the snow and ice. Her thoughtfulness brought tears to my and my family's eyes. It is even more impressive since she accomplished this in the days of no Internet, no Google, and no Amazon!

Mrs. Lando also lent me money to buy a car, because I needed one to work. She even went shopping for it with me. I paid her back as soon as I was able. Mrs. Lando even paid the fines for accumulated traffic tickets for a fellow Canadian wheelchair basketball player whose driver's licence had been suspended until the fines were paid. Another time, she paid for an airline ticket and hotel room for a stranger from Ontario so that she could attend a serious criminal trial for her son in Vancouver. That is the kind of woman Mrs. Lando was. My family and I developed a close connection with her. She had a daughter approximately my age and other children older than me. Mrs. Lando—Edith as she asked me to call her—and I became lifelong friends. I helped her with computers and other things. Being a philanthropist, she received many applications for funding, which I reviewed for worthiness and viability. She of course made the final decision. Edith was a very strong advocate for children and supported a number of related organizations. She wanted to find solutions for bullying before it gained the traction that it currently has. It was no surprise that she received the Order of Canada. As she got older, driving became difficult for her. I then had the privilege and honour of driving her around, doing chores, and just driving her around for pleasure. I spent at least one day a week with her until she passed away in 2003. Her charity, the Edith Lando Charitable Foundation, continued to support her interests (refugees and children) for many years after her death.

The author representing Canada at the 1974 Stoke Mandeville Games.

My New Life in Canada

My family slowly settled in with the help of the Canadian government and some very good-hearted local people and made Vancouver our permanent home. I was introduced to wheelchair sports, on which I thrived. I became involved in wheelchair basketball within four to six weeks of landing in Vancouver! I played for the Vancouver Cable Cars wheelchair basketball team and competed nationally in the North West Wheelchair Basketball League, which consisted of teams from B.C., Washington, and Oregon. My team also competed internationally.

Table tennis was another of my favourite sports, even in Uganda, where along with a physiotherapist, a renowned and able-bodied Uganda soccer goalie, an army colonel (who had become a paraplegic having been shot in the back by one of his own soldiers while in combat), and a couple of others, I had founded the Uganda Paraplegic Sports Association. In Vancouver I continued playing table tennis competitively. I was privileged to represent Canada at the 1976 Wheelchair Olympics (now the Paralympics), where I won a bronze medal in table tennis doubles. In 1978 I was again chosen to represent Canada at the Pan American Wheelchair Games in Mexico, where I won three bronze medals—in table tennis, track relay, and basketball. In 1982 I won two gold medals for Canada in table tennis at the Pan American Wheelchair Games held in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Later, I also coached the Canadian Wheelchair Table Tennis Team at the Pan American Wheelchair Games in Puerto Rico, where they earned the highest medal count in wheelchair table tennis by Canada at an international meet.

The author (centre) representing Canada at the 1975 Pan Am Wheelchair Games in Mexico City.

Professionally, I studied for and qualified as a certified general accountant (CGA, now Chartered Professional Accountant), while pursuing my sports career. Over the years I worked for a professional accounting firm and private companies, and finally retired as an auditor with the Canada Revenue Agency.

In 2023, the ISSBC and the Ismaili community of Vancouver co-presented a "50 Years of Welcomes: A Gala Dinner", and I was invited to partake in a fireside chat and share the stage with Michael Molloy and Omar Sachedina, CTV National News' Chief Anchor. This was my first meeting with Mr. Molloy since my first encounter with him in 1972, when he had granted my family visas to immigrate to Canada. It was an honour for me to share the stage with both gentlemen.

Meeting Mike Molloy was a surreal experience and one that I will cherish for life. I had thought of him over the years and toyed with the idea of contacting him but thought he would not remember me from the thousands of interviews he had conducted in Uganda and in the many other countries around the world where he had served. To my amazement, he did remember me. A frightening thought went through my mind, whether him remembering me was a good thing! Our meeting 50 years later was nothing short of miraculous. I saw that he was in fact the soft-hearted and kind gentleman I had perceived behind the necessary façade. Somehow two people from different countries, cultures, and positions in life sat on opposite sides of the immigration interview desk and hit it off instantly as equals. My wife and I, and Mike and his wife went out for kuku paka (chicken cooked in coconut sauce and spices), his favourite Indian dish, to which he was first exposed in Uganda, samosas, and gulab jamun dessert, pledging to keep our new friendship alive for years to come!

Noorallah Jamal (in white) wearing his gold medal, earned in table tennis, on the podium of the 1982 Pan American Wheelchair Games in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

Mike: Just before returning to Ottawa, we met once more at an event at the Ismaili Centre, after which we repaired to the Jambo Grill for African snacks (mojo), Indian milkshakes (faluda), and a good "getting know you" chat.

Jack Mitchinson, 98 Years Young and an Ontario Region Icon

Doug Dunnington and Jack Mitchinson Jr.

Back in 1952, Jack Mitchinson, a retired veteran of the Canadian Navy, sought a job in Niagara Falls, Ontario. A counsellor at the National Employment Service referred him to the local immigration office. Jack liked what he heard and told his wife Helen that he would try to get a job there. He phoned the office every day for three weeks and was finally told he had the job but would have to write an examination.

At that time the Public Service of Canada was running a nation-wide job competition. Jack studied, wrote the exam, and felt confident he had done well. He was delighted to be told he had passed the exam. He was offered and accepted a permanent job at the Niagara Falls port of entry. What he learned later was that he placed ninth of all the candidates.

The Mitchinson family spent several years in Niagara Falls, where Jack covered a variety of tasks, including working at the port of entry at the bridge, examining traffic and passengers arriving by train, assisting in the main office, doing immigrant settlement work, and traveling on the road with his colleague, George Bridge.

Being involved in these diverse tasks certainly prepared him for his next position: he went to Goderich, which fell under the London Ontario office, to replace an officer who had been transferred overseas. In Goderich, Jack was the sole officer

in Huron county and was responsible for the port of entry. This role included processing all documentation, landings, and extensions, and delivering settlement programs. Goderich was a small town where everyone knew each other, and frequently individuals would call his home looking for support.

At one point, there was a requirement to house 40 people from Hungary in local hotels and private houses, but no supporting funds. In general things were calm and peaceful; however, troublesome situations arose. In one incident, a newcomer murdered his son. In another, three newcomers were killed in a train accident and Jack had to arrange for an interpreter, the funerals, and burials. Another incident saw a bullet shot through the window of his office!

While doing settlement in Goderich, Jack commuted three days a week to Stratford and other smaller communities where there were another 150 Hungarian refugees who needed housing, furnishings, jobs, and language training. He was the only officer, so his life was busy, but after three years, the Goderich office was closed.

In 1958, through another competition (in which he placed first), Jack opened an office in Chatham, Ontario—and he was still working to settle the Hungarian refugees. As the sole immigration officer, in addition to supporting other offices, and "normal work", he helped to settle 300 members of the Istrian community who had been recruited as farm workers by the Dominion Sugar Company and approved by our visa office in Rome. More details can be found in Bulletin 53 in June 2008. In 1966, Jack helped bring Jamaican farm workers to Canada for Canadian Canners.

Throughout his career, Jack realised the value of publicizing the activities of the immigration program in the media. His articles and personal contacts enabled his clients to get support from such community partners and stakeholders as church groups, chambers of commerce, service clubs, and volunteer groups such as the Imperial Order of Daughters of the Empire (IODE). His scrapbooks contain news clippings about the arrivals of "his" immigrants, the jobs they filled and created, and celebrations of the day they became Canadian citizens.

Management recognised Jack's talents and sent him to Belleville, London, Hamilton, Toronto, London, Toronto Airport, and back to Hamilton. All those communities benefitted from his steady hand on the immigration wheel.

Jack is grateful to all his managers and peers for the many development opportunities that he received: in particular, Win Fisher and Vince Bing in Niagara Falls at the beginning of his career and later, Roy Hunter in London.

When Jack was near retirement, the Department of External Affairs asked him to join the visa office inspection team, and for the next two years Jack's team visited 26 posts to review their operations. Fortunately, his wife, Helen, was able to accompany him on many of his trips. Jack retained a taped video where he was interviewed about his experience doing visa office inspections. The CIHS website has uploaded that video, and its informal transcript follows below.

Jack formally retired in 1990 and he and Helen were feted by a proud cross section of colleagues, friends, and family. Many laudatory tributes were read, including from Minister of Immigration Barbara McDougall and Prime Minister Brian Mulroney. Harry Cunliffe from the Canadian Immigration Historical Society also spoke.

Jack sold his home a year ago and now resides in a lovely retirement home in Chatham. In 2022 he lost Helen, his beloved wife of 74 years, but has five adult children to take care of him. His son Jack lives in Chatham and supports him as required. Jack Senior's memory is still very sharp, but his speech is halting. As he said to me during our meeting "I wish I could have met you when I could still talk".

Thanks, Jack, for providing our country, immigrants, and refugees with such sterling service.

Transcript of Video Interview: Jack Mitchinson's Experience Auditing Canadian Visa Offices

Ed note: exact details about the video interview transcribed below have been lost in the mists of time, such as the occasion for this interview, the date and the interviewer's identity. We think that the interview may have happened during Jack's retirement party, but we have no confirmation. Nevertheless, it is an interesting historical artifact to share with the Bulletin's readers.

Interviewer: *Jack, you spent a good deal of time looking at operations overseas, there's probably an aspect of the business that's little understood by field staff, and you're a field staff person.*

Jack Mitchinson (JM): In the last two years, since I've been on this assignment, I've visited 18 countries and examined or audited the immigration sections in each of these countries, and they're all different. One thing that I find is the common thread, the spirit of immigration officers overseas, which is very much the same as immigration officers here in Canada.

They're dedicated, they're hard working, they're dealing with their clients in a very compassionate way, usually, and they're enjoying their work just every bit as much as I have here in the Canadian service.

Interviewer: *What about the pressures they may face that we might not understand on the Canadian side?*

JM: The pressures are sometimes the political situations of the countries in which they're working; the demands of the clients themselves and of their counsel. For instance, in the past, we thought that it was easier to say "no" overseas than in Canada, because we had the lawyers and the interest groups and so on. Well, if they say "no" overseas now, the lawyer or the client flies out to the country and is at the desk the next morning, asking "why did you refuse my brother or my sister?"

Other problems that they have? Accommodation is often a problem, for they may be in an old historical building that can't be renovated, so they're not really set up as an office, so they're working against problems all the time.

Interviewer: *Before you went over, you may have had some notions, or maybe misconceptions, that were dispelled?*

JM: I suppose that one of the single notions that I had was that the overseas officers were having a very relaxed time of it, all cocktails down on the beach and so on. What I actually find is that many officers work overtime—they work on weekends, to keep their backlogs down. They're always under time pressure, receiving representations.

Even their locally engaged staff, who are in most cases nationals of the country they're in, have that same dedication to Canada. They're working overtime, and often uncompensated overtime, and they're always willing to pitch in and work on Saturdays, Sundays—it is just amazing.

I had met people 35 years ago—I was receiving families when I was in Chatham, from Holland and from Italy, and I met people overseas on these trips who were there, in those countries, working as locally engaged staff 35 years ago, and we were talking and I recognized that we were talking about the same families. For instance, a very large family, one of the largest families to ever come to Canada, ended up around Chatham, 19 children, and I met the young lady who processed and visaed this family, and she's still working in our office in The Hague, and enjoying every minute of it.

Interviewer: *I guess they have to be creative sometimes—that story about the computers?*

JM: In many of the offices, we talk about automation. We're automating in Canada and also overseas. They have the CAIPS system, the Computer Assisted Immigration Program [Processing] System, and many of the officers on their own purchased their own computers. They take them into the office and automate such reports as processing times, historical, for their future planning. They're taking this on their own and purchasing the equipment on their own. One office had reclaimed condemned computers that had been in a fire. The outside jacket of a computer was melted and they had the insides working. So they are very innovative.

A Piece of History

Alexandra Remmling

Alexandra Remmling is an employee of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, now working as a human resource assistant with the Enterprise Change and Learning Academy. She provided all photographs in this article.

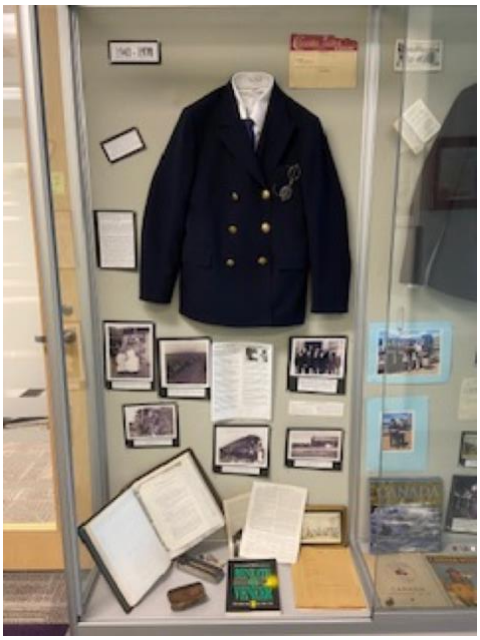
The Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's (IRCC's) Learning Centre, located in Etobicoke, Ontario, is home to a museum with memorabilia donated by IRCC employees, as well as items received from the Canadian Immigration Historical Society.

This museum displays its items in a timeline format, from 1940 to 2023. Some of the items displayed are immigration officer uniforms donated by a former IRCC manager, pins, and badges, as well as immigration books and pamphlets.

This year, the Learning Centre was very fortunate to receive a collection of pins from the Canadian Immigration Historical Society. They were originally collected by the late Randy Orr, an immigration foreign service officer who passed away last year and are displayed in the various cases of the museum, according to the year in which they were issued.

The first display case features items from 1940 to 1970, including a navy-blue uniform jacket worn by immigration officers at that time. There are also testimonials from immigration officers, highlighting their experiences on the job. One wrote, "My first day at the office started with a bang, two men escaped from detention last night and a shipload of people arrived

with insufficient papers" (10 June 1941). The display case also presents pictures of immigrants arriving in Canada, and one photo shows the first official Canadian citizenship ceremony, in 1947, and involving immigrants from all over the world. Other items in the case include old glasses, pens, and pins.



First display case, 1940–1970.

First display case, 1940–1970. Immigrants arriving in Canada, early 1900s.

The second case features items from 1977 to 1985. This section also features a uniform jacket, which is brown and has an Immigration Canada badge. The case also contains images of immigrants recently arrived in Canada and proudly holding their citizenship cards in the new country that they now call home. There are also photographs of the regional headquarters teams from 1988: Recruitment and Selection, Priorities and Program Coordination, and Settlement. The bottom of the case holds books and pamphlets about Canada, such as a Canadian atlas and an immigration procedures guideline document.

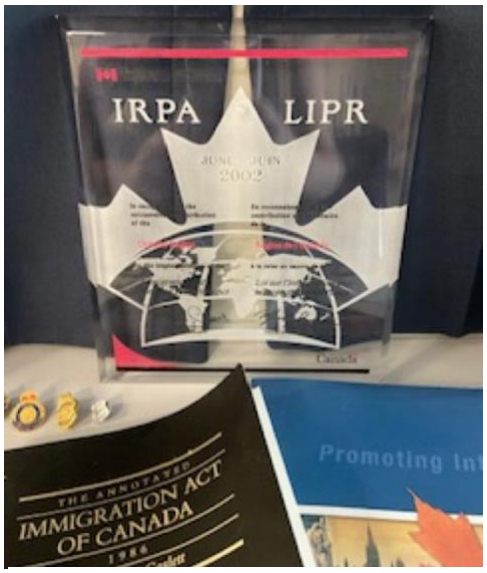
Second display case, 1977–1985.

Second display case, 1977–1985.

The third case features items from 1985 to 2002 and includes a full navy-blue suit uniform with the Immigration Canada badge and a photograph of an immigration officer wearing the same uniform. One testimonial from an immigrant reads

“Canada gifted me a future, one of freedom of speech and religion and the opportunity to make choices”. This case also contains stamps: a Canada Immigration Port of Entry stamp and a Citizenship and Immigration Canada stamp, a stamp machine used to stamp the passports of people arriving in Canada, and the 1986 edition of *The Annotated Immigration Act of Canada*.

Third display case, 1985–2002.



Third display case, 1985–2002. *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act* (IRPA) commemorative plaque.

The last display case contains items from 2002 onwards. The uniform from this time period is quite different from earlier ones. It is interesting to see how the uniform styles have changed over the years. The uniform in this instance includes a grey button-up shirt with Immigration Canada badges on each sleeve, black cargo pants, and a black sweater with the same Immigration Canada badging as the button-up shirt. The first Ontario Region Learning Centre opened on 17 June 2009 and the plaque commemorating the opening is found in the case.

Fourth display case, 2002–now.

Fourth display case, 2002–now. First Regional Learning Centre plaque June 2009.

In Memoriam

Baker, John

John Baker, a former visa officer, immigration program manager, director general, and mentor to many in Canada's immigration foreign service, passed away on 2 December 2023, after a lengthy illness. He and his family had many postings, including London, Belfast, Hong Kong, Singapore, Bridgetown, Nairobi, Bangkok, and New York City. He finished his formal career with the immigration foreign service as director general of the Case Management Branch, and he worked alongside his former colleagues as a consultant for many years afterward. As the tributes that follow demonstrate, John's work ethic and attitude greatly impressed and influenced his colleagues, and friendships built during his working life endured until his death.

John contributed to the Canadian Immigration Historical Society's Bulletin frequently, offering personal and program insights to our readers. With thanks to Gerry Maffre, who researched and wrote what follows, here are links to John's contributions:

- John's grandfather came to Canada from England as a "Bernardo child" and here John provides a glimpse of Mr. Baker's life (Bulletin 97/June 2021, page 4).

- In a special edition of the Bulletin to mark the anniversary of the Indochinese refugee movement to Canada, John's work in establishing a visa office in Saigon not long before the city's fall is detailed in Peter Duschinsky's article (Bulletin 73/April 2015).

- John also provided some important details about Canada's early efforts to respond to post-World War II migration pressures in Europe, in his letter to the editor about the first group admitted to Canada (Bulletin 99/December 2021, page 4).

- Finally, we provide John's accolades to the team that launched the CAIPS system in immigration processing (Bulletin 63/ February 2012, page 9).

Remembered by Donald Cameron
John was a loyal friend for 56 years. Without his generous help, I would not have been able to join the immigration foreign service. I will not forget him.

Remembered by Larry Carroll
I first met John in May 1967, when 26 of us started our careers as foreign service officers with the Department of Manpower and Immigration. For the better part of a full year, we were divided into two groups and John was one of the two team leaders.

He and I never served together overseas. However, our paths crossed midway through our careers when we were assigned to headquarters in Ottawa. Though we did not work in the same unit, I witnessed John in action at various committee meetings. What I recall was that John was an indefatigable worker, the likes of which I had never seen before. He was a giant in many respects—including his height, his work ethic, and his gentle nature. In our last five years before retirement, John visited

John Baker (back left) circa 1984-85 at a refugee camp in Thailand. Paul Bennett to his left. (Courtesy of Paul Bennett)

India as part of an “inspection team” reviewing immigration procedures at our mission. I had the privilege of having John accompany me in my role as immigration control officer (ICO) on a three-day “Field Investigation” trip to the Punjab, where we looked into cases of fraud and misrepresentation. I was particularly struck with John’s composure and determination, and the wise counsel he shared in reviewing and commenting on the cases we were investigating.

John, you left an indelible mark on the lives of many of us, and on the immigration program in particular. I miss you and trust our paths will once again cross in the afterworld.

Remembered by Joyce Cavanagh-Wood
John was one of the Class of '67, a group of (mostly) very young, enthusiastic trainees who entered the immigration foreign service at a time of much change.

Our group spent a lot of time together, what with lectures, touring, visiting industrial sites, etc. During those months we came to appreciate just how fortunate we were to have been selected for this work and to appreciate each other. The group has remained remarkably close over the years. We last met on our 50th anniversary, in 2017, spending time in Ottawa catching up, sharing stories.

John was a strong presence from the beginning. Tall, with an engaging manner and pleasing voice, intelligent, patient, kind, and perceptive. He was a dedicated family man, and ever ready to smile and see the glass half full.

I last had contact with him less than a month before he died, when he assured me he was happy and content. He had just been to the McMichael collection to see Tom Thompson’s work. He never lost his enthusiasm for life. His children can be proud of his life. I am proud to have known him and shall always cherish his memory.

Remembered by Paul Gray
John and I joined Manpower and Immigration Canada on 8 May 1967. After our year of training, we seldom saw each other as we never shared a posting abroad or in Ottawa.

On retirement we both bought houses south of Ottawa: John and June in Burrits Rapids, and Nadia and I in Oxford Mills. This happenstance led to a close friendship, with us often sharing meals and taking local trips together. Our travels expanded to month-long trips to Central Europe and Italy. We shared lots of memories and photos.

John lived as full a life as possible to the very last. His courage and determination serve as a model. As I said to him just prior to his passing, I hope that when it is time for me to cash in my chips, I will do it as well. He was a friend and a true gentleman who will be missed.

Remembered by Elizabeth Heatherington
John Baker met Scott Heatherington and me at Kai Tak Airport, Hong Kong, in the fall of 1973. We had just arrived on the Canadian Pacific Air flight from Vancouver—it was morning, and the old-fashioned aerodrome was quite empty. John was really kind to meet us; he was nattily dressed in a new “Maple Leaf tartan” suit, complete with maple leaf tie! He explained that George Kook, his “personal tailor” had just made it for him and he was keen to show it off.

Scott was to work with John for two years, and he really respected John’s strong work ethic and sound judgement.
Both June (John’s better half) and John were our mentors for the first few months. June came to see me the day after our arrival and took me shopping at the Chinese Merchandising Emporium and China Arts and Crafts. She had a good eye for quality and always looked stunning in attractive cotton or silk outfits made for her by George Kook. (He outfitted practically all of us at the Commission.)

We enjoyed the Bakers’ company very much until John was posted to Singapore, but they still kept in touch by mail. On, 18 April 2015, we reconnected with John in Toronto, when we all attended the special dinner hosted by the Vietnamese community to celebrate the 40th anniversary of the arrival of the “boat people” in Canada. It was attended by a number of Canadian dignitaries, including former Minister of Employment and Immigration Ron Atkey and Senator Thanh Hai Ngo, Canada’s first senator of Vietnamese origin. It was not a surprise that these families from Vietnam had thrived, their children becoming successful professionals and leaders in their community, as their experience as boat people made them incredibly strong and determined.

Later, we celebrated with John at Robert Butler’s wedding in Ottawa. John was so proud to attend this wedding as he had found Robert as a baby when our colleagues Roslyn and Don Butler (DFAIT) were posted to Singapore and wanting to adopt a child. We also connected with John on other trips to Toronto and enjoyed some great conversation at the historic University Club near John’s residence. What a fine man—a wonderful mentor and a kind friend.

Remembered by Scott Heatherington
It is over 50 years since I first worked with John Baker, and I am so grateful for his support and collegiality. He had a firm grasp of immigration policy and the impact we had on our clients. I can never forget his Canadian tartan suit—so unique. John made such a contribution to our nascent programs in Southeast Asia. My only regret is that he did not have the opportunity to become a more senior manager in the late 1990s, when early retirement robbed us of his considerable talents. I also appreciated his continuing good humour and company in retirement. I recall our lunch at the University Club of Toronto as but one example.

Remembered by Scott Mullin
John Baker was one of the most influential bosses I had in my career. I met him in Nairobi on my second posting in the foreign service. I know that I am not alone in saying junior staff such as myself were listened to, respected, encouraged to offer ideas, and openly acknowledged when they had done well. John never took credit for the work of those who worked for him but instead shone the light on others. For me, and I suspect others who worked for him, his example offered essential life, career, and "the meaning of leadership" lessons that helped me grow and develop. Years later when I left government and worked as a vice president at Toronto Dominion Bank, I would tell my staff and others about the lessons I learned from working for John as key in my professional development. John was a true mentor before we really started using the word as widely as we do now.

Remembered by Tom Ryan
I had the pleasure of working as John's deputy for two years in Bangkok (1984-1986) at the height of the programs for Indochinese and family reunification from Vietnam. John was the kind of immigration program manager everyone needs as they move through their assignments. We had a large team and were under close scrutiny to meet our targets, to work closely with like-minded immigration and refugee-receiving countries, and to respond to host-country sensitivities. John offered encouragement, outstanding leadership, and a sense of calm, as well as a breadth of regional knowledge and a keen sense of humour. Those of us who were there at the time worked with the awareness that no matter the issue, John would have our backs.

Versteegh, Alison

We are sad to announce that Alison Versteegh, spouse of immigration foreign service officer and manager Jim Versteegh, passed away in October 2023 after a long battle with cancer. Her obituary can be found online.

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.