



Edmonton Retired Teachers' Association Christmas Newsletter

www.edmontonrta.org

December 2010



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CHRISTMAS LUNCHEON

Join us for our Christmas luncheon at the

Chateau Louis

11727 Kingsway Avenue

Date: December 8, 2010

Lunch: 11:45 a.m.

Menu: Roast turkey buffet

Cost: \$20 per person (includes GST and gratuity)

Entertainment: Music by the ESSOTONES

Door Prize: Everyone is eligible for a door prize.

***Please note venue change ***

The luncheon is being served in the
Grand ballroom on the main floor.

PLEASE NOTE

A member of the Telephone Committee will contact you prior to
December 1st in order to provide an accurate count for our caterer.

ERTA has to pay for lunches that have been booked even if the
individuals do not attend.

**Donations to the Youth Emergency Shelter Society are
appreciated.**

THE EXECUTIVE

President:

Vi Oko,
780-459-8013

Vice-President:

Mike Mort,
780-761-5027

Treasurer:

Bernie Lemay,
780-469-5031

Membership Co-ordinator:

Maurine Maslen,
780-418-8032

PRESIDENT’S MESSAGE

Seasonal symbols are popping up everywhere! In spite of the approaching winter solstice and the sudden onslaught of cold weather, warm sentiments expressed by friends and strangers alike give rise to a renewed hope for peace as another Christmas season draws near.

We rejoice in the recent “good news” stories that include the rescue of the trapped Chilean miners, the strong debut of General Motors stock and the impending royal nuptials.

In the midst of the hustle and bustle of holiday preparations, we invite you to share the joyous spirit of the festive season with friends and colleagues at the Christmas luncheon to be held in the Grand Ballroom of the Chateau Louis Convention Centre on December 8.

In keeping with the continued advocacy for youngsters, both big and little, by members of the Edmonton Retired Teachers’ Association (ERTA), you are encouraged to support, if you are able, the Youth Emergency Shelter Society (YESS) again this year. For some young people facing dire circumstances, YESS is their last recourse.

May the combined glow of advent candles everywhere warm our hearts and homes this festive season and may this glow linger throughout the new year so that we may keep the spirit of Christmas in our hearts every day until, once again, the magic of the Christmas season returns.

Have a blessed Christmas!

DATES TO REMEMBER

Christmas Luncheon	December 8, 2010
Executive Meeting	February 23, 2011
Greater Edmonton Teachers’ Convention	March 3 & 4, 2011
Spring Luncheon	March 23, 2011
Retiree Brunch	April 9, 2011
Mayfield Dinner Theatre	May 25, 2011

SUMMARY OF EXECUTIVE MEETING

The following information was shared and decisions were made at the ERTA executive meeting held at the Central Lions Senior Citizens Recreation Centre on November 10, 2010:

- Maurine Maslen indicated that four more ERTA members qualify for a life membership (see Membership Report).
- Mike Mort stated that branch benefits representatives met on Friday, October 8, 2010, to review last year’s proceedings regarding the proposed implementation of the controversial Seniors’ Drug Plan that was eventually postponed, note the upgraded and new options included in the ARTA Extended Health Care Plan, ascertain the fundamentals of the Best Doctors program and discuss the shortcomings of the new Alberta Health Act.
- Bernie Lemay pointed out that receipts amount to \$9,523.92 and disbursements equal \$6,315.42, while \$3,208.50 remains unspent thus far this year.
- Eva Nolan reported that branch pension representatives participated in a workshop on November 8 and 9, where ATRF operations, the four pension options along with what happens at ATA pension seminars were explained and the four pension issues were discussed.
- Roast turkey and stuffing will be served at the Christmas luncheon.
- Tickets have been purchased for the brunch performance of the musical, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre on May 25, 2011 (see Mayfield Dinner Theatre).
- The contribution of \$500.00 to the University of Alberta Endowment Award was authorized.
- Several executive members volunteered to hand out brochures and answer questions at the Greater Edmonton Teachers’ Convention scheduled for March 3 and 4, 2011.
- A motion was passed to donate \$25.00 for prizes for the ARTA Memorial Golf Tournament planned for June 7, 2011, near St. Paul.

“No one stands as straight as when they stoop to help a child.”

Author Unknown

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

ERTA has 181 paid members for the 2010–2011 year who are receiving their newsletter by regular mail and 145 by email. One new retiree receives the complimentary newsletter via the postal service while 18 receive it electronically. ERTA also has four life and six honorary life members.

Once again I want to remind you that if you know of a new retiree, do tell them about the complimentary membership we offer. If you bring a new retiree to the social, please have them come to the membership table to get their membership card or give me their name and telephone number so that I can contact them.

We will be presenting life memberships to four individuals who are 90 years of age or older at the Christmas luncheon. Anna Byer is 90, Helen Harry and Tilley Poulsen are 91 and Isabel McRae is 102. If you know of anyone else who qualifies for a life membership, I would appreciate hearing from you.

Anna Byer was born in Lamont in 1920, moved to Peachland, British Columbia, then to Radway, Waskatenau and finally to Clodford, where she went to school until Grade Eleven, before returning to Waskatenau for Grade Twelve.

It was not typical for girls to get an education; it was expected that they would just get married! Anna was determined to get a post-secondary education. She applied to be a nurse at the University of Alberta Hospital but was told that she was too small. To earn money for her tuition and board at the Normal School in Edmonton, Anna cleaned turkeys for fifty cents a day, cooked for a threshing crew and did other odd jobs to augment the financial assistance that she received from her parents. She was fortunate to be enrolled in the full Normal School program because the Air Force took over the facility so teachers only received six weeks of training the following term.

Anna spent her entire teaching career in the employ of the Vermilion School Division. She was first sent to Rivercourse, where she taught mostly Norwegian students from Grades One to Nine. Her room was the curtained-off end of the living room in the home where she

boarded. She was paid \$600 for the entire year. After teaching there for two years, the inspector decided that she should move to the school in the town of Kitscoty. One mother complained that she was too young to teach there. Because men generally taught in the town schools, Anna never felt that she was really accepted. She was given the position because most of the men had gone off to war. In 1945, Anna contracted scarlet fever when the disease swept through the community. Her hair fell out, her skin peeled off: she was a mess. She stayed with her parents while she recuperated.

Her next school was at Deer Lake, near Islay. No sports equipment was available so Anna bought a ball and bat so everyone could enjoy playing softball. One noon hour they lost track of the time, and, of course, that was the day that the school inspector showed up. One day a prairie fire came right up to the door of the school. Much later, at a school reunion, one of her students confessed to her and his parents that he had started the fire. During the time that Anna taught in the Islay area, there was a freeze on all jobs: people could not leave their positions unless they joined the service. After passing the Government examination Anna went to Ottawa to get a job; however, the war had ended so she returned to teach in Islay.

Anna was engaged before her fiancé went off to fight in the war but, sadly, he lost his life and was buried in Holland. She married a family friend instead when he returned from overseas. The couple moved to British Columbia where their two children were born. Anna was not allowed to teach there because she was only certified in Alberta. She became very ill and the doctor's prescription was to have them go back to Alberta. Upon her return, Anna felt that she could breathe again. She still could not teach, however, because now she was married.

At that point Anna and her husband set up a construction company. She was the first woman in Edmonton to be involved in that field. At an industry convention in the United States Anna was told she could not attend the all-male sessions. Their company constructed buildings at the University of Alberta, including the Henry Marshall Tory Building.

Anna states she has led a very interesting life and has seen so many changes in her ninety years.

Helen Harry was born on a farm near Innisfail, Alberta, in 1919. Her family moved to Edmonton “to make their fortune” when she was two or three years old. When that did not happen, the family returned to farming, this time in the Pickardville area.

At the age of twenty-four, Helen and her new husband went to Kingston to live until he was sent overseas to serve in the war. She returned to Pickardville to live with her parents.

After taking the one-year Normal School training in Edmonton, she taught Grades One to Nine at Woodglen, a country school east of Camrose. She continued to teach at Woodglen as a bilingual instructor until the end of the war and the return of her husband from the service. When they moved to the Calder area in Edmonton, Helen applied for a full-time teaching position but the superintendent, Mr. McCalley, turned her down because, although she had excellent references, she was married. She was allowed to be a substitute teacher for the Edmonton Public School Board (EPSB). Helen completed her BEd degree by going to summer school and night school. After her two daughters were born, EPSB changed its policy and Helen finally became a full-time teacher, teaching first at Coronation School and later at Westglen, from which she retired at the age of sixty-five.

When Helen first started to teach, she only wanted to make enough money to pay for a fashion design course in Chicago. She never did go to Chicago, but, for many years both before and after her retirement, Helen was a dressmaker and designed clothes for her family and other people.

She fondly recalls her teaching days and very much misses the students and the camaraderie of the staff members with whom she taught. She continues to stay in contact with some of her classmates from Normal School. Recently she had several bad falls and has difficulty getting around.

Tilley Poulsen was born in 1919 in northern Saskatchewan at St. Laurent de Grandin near

Duck Lake, where everyone in the area spoke French and the nearest school was eight miles away. Since the family had no car, Tilley had to board at the convent in order to attend school. She did not know any English when she started school. The nuns taught most subjects in English but there was an hour and a half of French instruction each day. When she graduated, Tilley was granted a Grade Twelve diploma in French and one in English.

She went to Normal School in Saskatoon for nine months. Later Tilley took two university courses, one by correspondence and one at summer school, in order to receive her permanent teaching certificate.

She taught for six years in Saskatchewan, only eight miles away from her home. She was paid \$400 a year and was lucky to have a teaching position at that time.

Tilley was married in 1943 and, in 1944, moved to Fort Saskatchewan because her folks had moved to Alberta. She could not teach full-time but a principal asked her to substitute teach. During the following years, she moved to Edmonton, taught at Lamoureux (near Fort Saskatchewan) for a year and in St. Albert for two before she was hired by the Edmonton Catholic School Board (ECSB) to teach French. She taught half days at St. Francis and half days at St. Edmonds, travelling between the two schools by bus, often plodding through the mud and snowdrifts because there were no sidewalks. Tilley taught for sixteen years for the ECSB, thirteen of them full-time at St. Francis, where she had to teach physical education even though she knew nothing about the subject. She used the expertise of her students to win a cup in basketball. In 1967, the year of Expo, Tilley went on exchange to Montreal. Upon her return to Edmonton, she was appointed Department Head for the French Immersion Program at the Lady of Lourdes Elementary School. By the end of that year, she was appointed principal of the new St. Williams School, where she stayed for ten years. At the time of her appointment, Tilley was one of only two female principals in the system.

After taking early retirement, Tilley and her husband travelled extensively.

Isabel McRae was born at home in the Riverdale flats in 1908, the first of three girls born to her parents who had come to Edmonton from Ontario. Isabel attended Riverdale School before her family moved to Butte, Montana for four years. Upon her return to Edmonton in 1921, Isabel attended school at Oliver, at the Prince of Wales Armouries (which was turned into a school for a short time since Victoria Composite had too many students) and finally at Victoria Composite for Grades Eleven and Twelve. She took her teacher training at the Camrose Normal School in 1927.

Isabel first taught in Vegreville at the Presbyterian Homes School, where she taught Grades One to Six for three years, then at Menook teaching Grades One to Nine for a year. She returned to Edmonton to attend the University of Alberta for three years, graduating in Arts in 1934. Isabel went to teach at Thorntonville Rural School outside of Fawcett before moving to teach Grades Six to Eleven at Green Court, near Mayerthorpe. Times were hard so she was asked to take a reduction in salary from \$1,100 to \$900 a year. Isabel moved into Edmonton in 1938, where she taught for many years for EPSB at Calder, Oliver Junior High and McDougall, Westglen, Ross Sheppard and Queen Elizabeth High Schools.

During the 1959–60 school year she took a sabbatical to complete her BEd degree at the University of British Columbia, majoring in Latin and French. To improve her French, she taught in Montreal for a year and spent five weeks in France one summer.

Isabel travelled throughout the world during her thirty-nine-year teaching career and following her early retirement in 1970.

Isabel continues to enjoy good health and is active socially. She exercises three times a week and enjoys playing games, especially Scrabble. She loves to go on outings and having people come to visit her at Rosedale Manor.

A special thank you is extended to all of the phoners who contact the membership before every luncheon.

Maurine Maslen.

ARTA AGM REPORT

- Representatives from seventeen branches, including the new Parkland and Stettler branches plus the satellite branch in British Columbia, attended the ARTA Annual General Meeting at Barnett House on October 6 and 7, 2010.
- Guiding ARTA's direction for the upcoming year are Marlene Reddekoff of Grande Prairie, the new President, along with Gordon Cumming and Paul Demers from Calgary, serving as Vice-President and Treasurer respectively.
- Current assets of the ARTA Benefit Trust are valued at \$3.5 million.
- Alberta Teachers' Retirement Fund CEO, Emilian Groch, reported that \$600 million was paid to a total of 22,302 recipients last year. The number of teachers retiring each year has declined from a high of slightly over 1,400 in 2007 to 1,056 last year. The average age of teacher pensioners has remained steady for more than a decade – 68 for men and 69 for women. Two hundred pensioners are now 95 years of age or older, with the oldest male (ERTA's Fred Tarlton) being 100 and the oldest female 104. About 11,000 new retirees are expected to be added to the pension payroll over the next ten years. As of August 31, 2010, the assets of the post-August 1992 benefit period of the Teachers' Pension Plan reached \$5.5 million. The Plan had a positive return of 5.7%, the first one following the financial crisis of 2008–2009. Although the fund suffered some short-term losses, it has averaged a 6.9% rate of return each year over the eighteen-year period to August 31, 2010. Since the consumer price index rose slightly, the cost-of-living increase to pensions, effective January 2011, will likely be quite low. Benefits for pensionable service prior to 1992 are guaranteed by the Government of Alberta.
- ARTA membership includes 9,755 education sector and 825 public sector members. Online renewal capabilities have been implemented in the past year.

- The Communications/Technology Committee initiated the purchase of Dell computers for use by all ARTA board and committee members in an effort to move toward a paperless agenda as well as have a secure site to post board minutes.
- Income for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, totalled \$751,045 with expenditures that amounted to \$644,046, resulting in a net increase of \$106,999. Current net assets equal \$526,423. The budget for 2010–2011 projects revenue of \$897,940 and expenses of \$856,850, leaving a net operating profit of \$41,090.

ARTA CHARITABLE FOUNDATION

The ARTA Board of Directors approved the establishment of a charitable foundation at its November meeting. Setting up a foundation is a complex undertaking because the foundation will be handling large sums of money, issuing taxable donation receipts and funding charitable work.

Federal and provincial taxation legislation, the Alberta Societies Act and Canada Revenue Agency legislation and interpretation bulletins highly regulate the process of creating and operating the type of foundation that ARTA is considering.

Drafting the organizational structure, determining the “charitable objects” and defining the relationship of the foundation to the ARTA Board of Directors is expected to take up to three years to complete.

ALBERTA HEALTH ACT

Bill 17, the new Alberta Health Act, is poised to receive final reading in the current sitting of the Legislature. This new Act came about after a series of “consultations” held throughout the province last summer and, at first, appears to be responsive to many of the concerns and suggestions raised by Albertans.

Although the Alberta Health Act, complete with the Charter of Patients’ Rights (which can be changed by a whim of Cabinet) and a Health Advocate (who reports to the Minister and not the Legislature), appears to look like the Government is acting to improve the situation,

in reality it will result in the immediate shift of control over Alberta’s health care system from the democratically-elected Legislative Assembly to the Health Minister and the Cabinet. In effect, it gives the Minister of Health and Wellness and members of the Cabinet free reign to govern by regulation and sets the groundwork for the possible dismantling of existing standards and health care laws, de-listing of services and contracting out of more health care procedures to the private marketplace.

While the Government promotes Bill 17, increasing the number of long-term care beds for seniors, training more nurses and doctors, appropriate staffing of existing hospitals, providing an adequate level of home care funding and solving the serious emergency room situation are not being addressed.

If you are concerned about the implications of the passage of Bill 17, you are encouraged to contact your Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA). Telephone numbers of Edmonton area MLAs are listed in the blue pages of the phone book.

MAYFIELD DINNER THEATRE

Tickets for the brunch performance of the Tony Award-winning musical, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, have been purchased in the Broadway section at the Mayfield Dinner Theatre for Wednesday, May 25, 2011.

The production, direct from Broadway, is about the unlikeliest of heroes. The comedy tells the tale of six young overachievers in the throes of puberty that vie for the spelling championship of a lifetime. Led by grown-ups, who barely escaped childhood themselves, these quirky teenagers learn that winning is not everything and losing does not necessarily make you a loser.

To reserve a seat for this riotous and heartwarming afternoon of theatre, present Vi Oko with a cheque at the Christmas luncheon for \$54.43, payable to the Edmonton Retired Teachers’ Association, or mail it to her at 20 Glenhaven Crescent, St. Albert, Alberta T8N 1A5. Tickets for this presentation are at a premium so reserve your space early.