

Class of 65 Newsletter

Bulletin d'Information—Classe de 65

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June/juin 2020

Disclaimer: This Newsletter is produced for members of the RMC Class of 1965 and is based primarily on inputs from members of the Class of 65. It is not an official publication of the Royal Military College nor does it purport to represent the views or opinions of all members of the Class. Unfortunately, the Editorial staff lacks the linguistic skills to produce a bilingual version. Items are published in the official language in which they are received.

Editor's Corner/Coin du rédacteur

There are a number of class related issues to report in this issue—cancellation of the 2020 Reunion Weekend; selection of the winner of the 2020 Class of 65 Teaching Excellence Award; the “reappearance” of a couple of lost classmates; and, a timely piece from our resident blogger.

Cancellation 2020 RWE

I suspect that most of you have already heard that this year's reunion weekend has been cancelled due to COVID-19 concerns. The following is an extract from an e-mail from Don Bell, Adjutant of the Old Brigade;

“This is to advise that at its meeting on 28 May, after consultation with the Commandant, the Club Board of Directors decided to cancel all in-person events that the Club would normally hold in Kingston this September due to ongoing concerns about COVID-19. A revised online format for the weekend is being developed. As a result, the Old Brigade dinner is cancelled. I have confirmed with the Four Points Sheraton that room reservations made at the special rate for this event can be cancelled without charge.

It is expected that the Foundation will also be cancelling the Legacy Dinner. A formal announcement of the Club decision will be made in the next edition of eVeritas, to be published on 8 June. This decision was made with great regret, as we all realize how important this event is to the esprit de corps of the RMC alumni, College staff and students. I will begin immediately to examine if and how it will be possible to hold double-cohort Old Brigade events in September 2021.

Please inform all of your classmates of this decision, and remind them to cancel any hotel reservations they have made.



Numéro 131

June/juin 2020

Page 2

Found Classmates



Thanks to the efforts of our persistent, but anonymous class sleuth, two more classmates have been located and added to our mailing list. **6667 Peter Messner** has been tracked down to a new e-mail address in 100 Mile House, BC. Similarly, **6416 Peter Kinkaid** was located under a new e-mail address in Australia. He provided this recent photograph.

2020 TEA Selection Process by 6496 Charles Emond

This is to let you know that notwithstanding the constraints imposed by Covid-19, the TEA selection committee met over “Zoom”, first to review all qualified nominations (8) and decide upon a short list, which this year consisted of 4 candidates, then twice more, first to prepare for and then, yesterday between 0845 -1415 (with some breaks), to choose this year’s TEA recipient and nominees to the Honours List. Both will be announced at RMCC’s Convocation, tomorrow, 21 May 2020 at 1300 live on Facebook.

The Short List (in alphabetical order) included :

- Captain (PhD in progress) Matthew Beirnes, Dept. of Civil Engineering
- Dr. Holly Ann Garnett, Dept. of Political Science & Economics
- Dr. François Rivest, Dept. of Mathematics and Computer Science
- Dr. Jennifer Shore, Dept. of Physics & Space Science

The other nominees (in alphabetical order) were:

- Dr. Richard Carrier, Dépt d’histoire
- Dr. Marie-Michelle Doucet, Dépt d’histoire
- Me Annie Riel (PhD in progress) Second Official Language Education & Training *(See comments below)
- Ms Margaret Shepard MBA, Dept. of Management

During our first meeting, in addition to the time spent deliberating the merits of each candidate, the Selection committee committed some time to discussing whether it was appropriate to consider, however well supported, a nominee from the Second Official Language Education & Training (SOLET). After it was decided to do so in this instance, we took some time at the end of our deliberations to return to this discussion.

This nomination came about as did the others because a group of learners felt that one of their teachers deserved to be recognized for the sustained excellence of their teaching and because there was nothing in the Call for nominations that specifically excluded this group of teachers.

I would not be surprised if some members of our Class were to feel that such a candidate falls outside of the intended objective of the TEA. After discussing this nominee with Dr Phil Bates, Vice-Principal Academics, prior to our first meeting with the Selection Committee and the fact that the nomination was already in hand, I decided in this instance to leave the question of its inclusion up to the convened Selection committee. Three factors influenced my decision not to object to including this candidate in these deliberations.



Numéro 131

June/juin 2020

Page 3

TEA Selection Process (Concluded)

First, at its most basic, the goal of the Class of 1965 TEA is to encourage the best possible effort by teachers in RMC's classrooms. Learning a second official language, in particular for Anglophones is no less a challenge than elements of other initial degree related learning and no less a requirement today to graduating and service as an officer in the CAF. Having an inspired and dedicated teacher can make a big difference and this was very much conveyed in the submission. Excellence in the delivery of such teaching is obviously equally important to encourage. The question remains, however, as to whether this encouragement should fall under our Class' award or something another Class might take up.

Second, Dr Phil Bates informed us that the College authorities had recently formalized the linkage requirements for granting the RMCC degree to the other 3 pillars and this has led to bringing Second Language Learning under the Academic Wing, and making Second Language Learning academic credit courses, even creating an optional Language Minor which links the deepening of Second Language learning to existing Academic Wing Departments. So from the Academic Wing's perspective, while they might acknowledge that there are still arguable differences, Second Language Learning is now a part of their teaching mandate. (To muddy the waters, the Physical Fitness pillar will also be introducing a "credit course", likely only in first year. Those responsible for physical fitness will not fall under the Academic Wing, though it is likely that the person(s) responsible for teaching any credit course will. I made it clear that I could not foresee the Class accepting a submission from anyone with such a narrow in-class teaching mandate and certainly not for anyone responsible for Sport of Fitness related training.

Third, in this instance, even though I thought that the SOLET nomination had a lot of merit, I also felt that it was not likely to be among the finalist and if it was, was unlikely to win, and if it did against such a strong field, then who could argue its unworthiness except that it might be outside of our intended focus. As you will have noted, the nomination, while well received, could not compete with the other files. Indeed in the later discussion, it was mentioned that any future nomination would no doubt face a similar challenge. That being said, the overall feeling among committee members was that the mere fact of having being nominated would have an effect on promoting teaching excellence among SOLET teachers.

A final interesting and pertinent point. As you will know, I asked our classmate, Claude Belhumeur, to oversee the Class of 1965 TEA award at CMRSJ. I attended the first year of his mandate but since then, he has overseen all activities, as I do at RMCC, independently of each other, except that I remain involved whenever they have updated their procedures, which vary a bit between institutions as regards administrative issues, while reflecting a common mandate. Last year, I found out after the fact that their chosen lauréat was a Second Language teacher (French as a second language). At her initiative, rather than delivering a formal talk before an audience, she suggested that members of the Class of 1965 might want to join her students in her classroom for 2 hours and participate in her student's learning experience. She found some enlarged vintage photos of the College during its early years that formed the basis for French as a second language exchange between us and the officer-cadets under her guidance. We combined this with a luncheon afterward with the Commandant, Director of Studies, former TEA recipients and some officer-cadets. CMRSJ at the time and even now is more College than University, so the difference between language learning (training) and the early degree related academic learning is perhaps a bit less. This choice of lauréat obviously did not disturb those in the Academic Wing who oversee the Award process and by then it was a done deed. I did not foresee that a similar nomination would become an issue at RMCC so soon or at all.



Numéro 131

June/juin 2020

Page 4

Winner 2020 TEA Award

The recipient of the Class of 1965 Teaching Excellence Award for 2020 was Dr Jennifer Shore of the Department of Physics and Space Science. Captain Matthew Beirnes of the Department of Civil Engineering was named to the Honours List. The following is Dr Shore's teaching philosophy -



Teaching Philosophy Jennifer Shore, Physics and Space Science, RMC May 2020

If there was ever a time that we needed to sit down and think about what it means to teach at RMC, now is that time. A worldwide pandemic has forced us away from each other and thrown our courses online. How will we connect with our students? Will this mean we have to change our courses? What will it mean for our students and for us as professors? Whatever it means, however we do it, we can't lose sight of what we need.

What RMC needs is to produce leaders for the CAF that serve and adapt well in future unpredictable situations and to do that we need to create lifelong, independent learners.

When Major Dick Winters recounted his time spent leading Easy Company of the 101st Airborne Division, he reflected on what he thought made him a competent leader and he concluded that it was the time he spent studying and educating himself on tactics and technology. *"For the nine months that [I was in Holland], I was studying, developing my own personality, my own personal perspective on command. The intense study paid huge dividends in Normandy."*¹ *The world the CAF now operates in has changed, probably permanently, and the situations members will be tasked to work in will require new methods invented by CAF leadership to meet these conditions.*

Student-centered or learner-centered teaching encourages students to master their own learning by developing their own skills for self-directed studying^{2,3}. I assume as of this writing that courses will be online in Fall 2020 and my conclusion is that students will have to develop these skills of independence almost immediately because of the reduction of real face-to-face time. I think it will be extremely challenging to implement many of the strategies that I normally use to keep the students engaged and to try to foster a community of skilled learners within these new online environments.

Student engagement is going to be our biggest challenge this year under a remote learning structure.

Below are my top 5 teaching strategies to foster independent learning and keeping students engaged and how I plan to implement them online in a real-time interactive classroom.

1. *Ask broad, open-ended questions.* I do this especially in 3rd and 4th year Oceanography. Students in Oceanography bring a lot of their own knowledge to the table and asking broad questions allows them to engage with the material and guide the subject material to things they already find interesting. Climate change and renewable energy sources are big draws for them and this allows me to contextualize these topics in terms of Canada's national interests in the Arctic and technological developments in ocean power -- subjects that have relevance to the CAF and to the students themselves. In 4th year, I tailor the subject of their final term essay to each individual student's interest. The key to engaging students is to make them care and show-



2020 TEA Award (continued)

-ing how these topics are personally relevant.

This type of engagement requires a lot of back and forth discussion. This can still be done for smaller class sizes held over Zoom with everyone's video link still active, but it is bandwidth limited as more video feeds cause too much lag. Many classes currently ask all student video feeds to be closed to prevent this so that only the professor's video feed is live. For larger class sizes, I am planning on having 10 minute rotating video feeds with 3-4 active student feeds at a time so that I can ask direct questions to those students that I can see (any student can ask and answer questions but I always mix in questions directed at individual students so that I can gauge their reactions). At the beginning I plan to control the tempo of the rotation and the students chosen to give every student a chance to interact but may slowly relax this. It's far from a perfect solution, but in extraordinary times, perfect is the enemy of good⁴.

2. *Demonstrations and discussions.* The first-year physics class, PHE104, is an ideal place to use quick and easy demonstrations to illustrate basic physics concepts. Two of the demos we commonly do are: setting up a race between a meter-stick and a meter-stick with an eraser tied to one end to see which one pivots to the ground faster⁵; and, attempting to get a cylinder to roll in a particular direction by wrapping a string clockwise or counter-clockwise around its edge. What's important is that the demonstration illustrate a simple physical concept and that the students are asked before the demonstration what they believe the outcome will be. Not only do I normally make students vote on the outcome, I make them attempt to explain why they believe they are right. This helps other students try to organize and marshal their own thoughts and arguments knowing that they can offer up their own possible outcomes. The great thing about demos and discussions is that I really encourage the students to state their ideas out loud even if they're wrong. Failing is a necessary part of learning and growing. In fact, if students have only argued for the correct outcome, I will go so far as to argue for the wrong outcome and try to convince some students that I'm actually right. This really helps develop their critical thinking skills and also builds a sense of support and community in the class.

Besides the Zoom chat window, how am I going to replicate this immediate feedback online? Real-time e-polls⁶. I will pepper my lectures with multiple choice questions and have all the students vote online. The collated results are shown in real time and I will share them with the class and use the results to jump start discussion. This provides immediate, honest feed-back as to how well the class is grasping the material.

3. *The flipped-classroom question.* Normally if I see students start to disengage during the class, I would follow the "see-one do-one teach-one" method once common to teaching surgery⁷. That is, after having explained material up at the board (see-one), I'll give them an example problem to do on their own in their notebooks (do-one) and allow them to talk to each other as they do it. I would then walk around and give individual one-on-one time with students as they work. This is especially helpful because students get the individual attention that they sometimes need and they have an opportunity to ask specific questions they may not want to ask in front of the class.

If a student has done something well, I'll ask him or her to explain or show what he's done to his friends (teach-one). This accomplishes three things: one it cements the idea in his mind because he has to explain it clearly to others; two it allows students to work together fostering a community of learning; and three, it gives me more feed-back as to how well the class is grasping the material. I hope to still accomplish this to some degree by using multiple choice e-polls during class to collect answers and also by reminding students that they can send a Zoom chat message visible only to me or by emailing me directly after class.



Numéro 131

June/juin 2020

Page 6

2020 TEA Award (Continued)

4. *The kickoff.* I always do two things before each lecture starts. One, I summarize the key ideas of the last topic that we covered. To do this, I generally just draw diagrams and maybe jot down an equation. I review this material at the start of each lecture to use as a jumping off point. Most students will write this summary down in their notes, which is really good practice to teach them how to collate their own notes and ideas later.

The second thing I do is ask the students how they're doing, if they did something good over the weekend or how their last midterm went. This lets me really understand who these students are, what they find interesting, which social media they use and what's currently troubling them⁸. I let them ask me questions too (the most common question I get: "Where did you go to school?") because this builds a sense of community in the classroom and gives me insight into the technology the students use so that I can bring these things into the classroom to use as a teaching tool. Students have so many interests and skills and different ways of thinking and reacting, that using media they are already familiar with to show them something new keeps them interested⁹. Bringing this tech into a physical classroom is great, but there's a danger when the classroom is online. The danger is that their attention will be drawn to that other website during class and then it will not return. You may show them a cool Minutephysics video, but then they may continue to browse Youtube afterward on their cellphones. When online, you run the risk of distracting them from your own class! The key here is to be passionate about the material and to share that enthusiasm and use it to re-engage them after the video ends.

5. *Students change, grow and learn.* To be an effective teacher, I have to grow with them. I do a number of things to improve my thoughts about teaching and my teaching skills and one way I do that is to watch others teach the same material I do. I watch the preeminent Feynman Lectures and Walter Lewin's MIT Lectures on Physics, but also Youtube channels like Learnfluidmechanics, and the excellent Michel van Biezen. I plumb through these videos for new ways to explain things, interesting demonstrations and better instructional examples. I ask myself: what do these instructors focus on and emphasize, what steps in derivations or examples do they include or gloss over? I listen to podcasts from the TED Education (TED-Ed) series to expose myself to the broader experiences of other instructors. I try to attend Prof. Holly Ann Garnett's RMC 'Lunch and Learn' series to interact with teachers that face the same challenges I do with the exact same students. Lastly, I tore a leaf out of the great Comedian Joan River's playbook. After every set she performed, Joan Rivers took her notes and threw out what didn't work and re-worded each joke she told so that she improved it for the next set. I fully rewrote my PHE104 Mechanics notes last year to add more interesting problems (rocket propulsion and gyroscopes!) I have rewritten the same 2 pages of notes explaining acceleration of an orbiting object at least 5 times. It's a complex mathematical derivation that I like to justify conceptually and I'm not yet quite satisfied with my explanation¹⁰.

How does a person know if they're a good teacher? I actually don't know the answer to this because I don't think there's a simple metric to judge. Do I create a supportive and engaging environment for the students to learn and participate in? Based on student behavior in class, I think so, but is that enough? Is it important to have good teaching evaluations or are they more like Yelp reviews, only the happiest or bitterest students leave comments? Do some students still fail my class? Yes, but rarely. Does that say something about me or has the student failed to yet master their own education? Whole books have been written by people more knowledgeable than me to try to answer these questions. I've seen classrooms as a student and as an instructor and I try to apply the lessons I learned as the former to the position I hold as the latter.



Numéro 131

June/juin 2020

Page 7

2020 TEA Award (Concluded)

I may be old-school, but I don't believe the future of instruction is remote delivery. Not all of it, at least. There's always that part of the lecture where I've just explained something pretty nuanced and will turn and say "Does that make sense?" and what I hear will be "Yes" but what I see in the students' faces and body language ranges from confusion to quiet terror. Which is great, because I can work with that! But until remote delivery uses real-time, full-sized holograms, that kind of feedback will be hard to come by. So I believe that in-person teaching will be the winner, every time.

In summary, whether I am online or in person, I hope I am helping to build a community in which the students feel they can learn and explore ideas as they progress on their way to becoming competent leaders for the CAF. Leaders that are educated and know how to, as Major Dick Winters says "become masters of their own profession".

References:

[1] Beyond Band of Brothers, Major Dick Winters with Colonel Cole C. Kingseed, 2006. Berkley Caliber, New York, NY

[2] Teaching and Learning STEM: A Practical Guide, Richard M. Felder and Rebecca Brent, 2016. Jossey-Bass—A Wiley Brand: San Francisco, CA.

[3] M. Stains et al., 2018. "Anatomy of STEM teaching in North American universities" Science 359 (6383), 1468-1470. Teaching Philosophy – Shore, 2020 5

[4] Elements of the Philosophy of Right, G. W. F. Hegel et al., 1991. Cambridge University Press, p. 447.

[5] (The stick without the eraser wins because it has less rotational inertia.) S. Shiliang, J. A. Shore and K. Spekkens "The falling rod" The Physics Teacher: Accepted October 2019.

[6] Google forms (free) or Poll everywhere (not free).

[7] S. V. Kotsis, and K. C. Chung, 2013. "Application of See One, Do One, Teach One Concept in Surgical Training" Plast. Reconstr. Surg. 131(5): 1194–1201.

[8] Gen-Z; Meeting Senior CAF members and finding out information about their future careers; WhatsApp, iPhone Group Messages and Twitch; Upcoming midterms, exams and tests.

[9] www.youtube.com/user/minutephysicsphet.colorado.edu/en/simulation/mass-spring-lab spin-lab.ess.ucla.edu/?page_id=311

[10] And if that doesn't work, I'll take another page out of Joan River's book and kill them with jokes. **Q: What is the funniest wizard disease mentioned in all 7 Harry Potter books? Ans: Scrofungulus.**



Numéro 131

June/juin 2020

Page 8

Take Advantage of It by 6533 Gord Forbes

You either want to or are forced to work at home and you're uncomfortable with the idea. I spent part of my professional life working at home at a time when it wasn't a well known habit. Along the way, I learned a few things that made it comfortable and productive. Let me pass some of them along.

A comfortable work environment is the first thing you need to consider. Even if you don't expect working at home to be a long term thing, a comfortable desk and chair will also make personal use of your computer more enjoyable. Recently, chiropractors are telling us about "work-at-home" syndrome resulting from poor working conditions. The first thing to consider is a computer desk. It does not have to be big or expensive, but it should be large and stable enough to support the things you need to work. I prefer a desk with a keyboard shelf since that keeps your arms lower and reduces the stress on your shoulders. Make it wide enough that you can also use your mouse (a more accurate tool than your touch pad) on it. The second thing is a comfortable chair. It should be supportive, with the ability to be adjusted up and down and for back firmness. A chair that swivels also helps. I finally, after several attempts, chose a chair with no arms so that the arms did not interfere with my elbows. I have two older chairs that are in very good condition if anybody wants them. The other important thing is proper lighting, not too bright or too low. It should not shine on the computer screen but be able to properly see the keyboard and anything else you might be working with. A monitor can make things bigger and clearer and can better display those video games that you or your kids play when you're not working.

Distractions can make working at home stressful. If you can work in a room with a door that you can close all the better. If you have children, try to have someone else look after them as you work. Other distractions can include too many personal phone calls, loud music and outside noises like construction or noisy neighbours. Try to do whatever you can to tone those down. Set aside a specific time when you deal with personal e-mails but try to read and respond to work related ones reasonably quickly, as you would at company offices. To minimize distractions and be able to concentrate better, my son, a successful author with three children, gets up at 5 am and gets 2 to 2 ½ hours of work done before everyone else gets up. Which brings me to another point. Set a work schedule that you will work to each day. This brings some discipline to your day and ensures that you will be productive. You don't necessarily have to get up at 5 am but a regular wake up time and mealtimes will get you to your desk at a decent hour.

Try to limit any breaks you take to a specific time. If you take a coffee break, limit it to ten minutes. Allow not more than one hour for a meal break. After all you will not be going out to eat. Try to put in about six hours of productive work a day.

Don't forget security of your computer and network. This is something that your employer should direct or help you with. A company virtual private network or a means of coding e-mail exchanges should be in place. If at all possible, work through your company's servers. Ideally you should have and use the same computer that you had in your company offices. This will ensure that you have compatible programs to work with. If you are using your own personal computer to work on make sure that it has a good and up-to-date anti-spam and anti-virus program running. Don't relax on security. You could jeopardize yourself or your company if you do.



Numéro 131

June/juin 2020

Page 9

Take Advantage of It (Concluded)

Jammies and slipper time? Well the slippers may be okay. At least you don't have to wear high heels. Get up, get cleaned up and dress reasonably. Dresses and shirts and ties may not be necessary but dressing well can make you feel better and more business like. Many jobs will probably require video conferences and you want to look good to give people the appearance of you being on top of things.

And finally, enjoy the experience. Enjoy not having to commute. Get a new appreciation of your home. Enjoy the fact that you can probably set your own schedule. Enjoy some of your favourite (quiet) music while you work. Enjoy being away from the office loudmouth or bully. Enjoy not being under constant scrutiny. Just remember to be serious and productive. The more you can demonstrate those two things the more likely the experience will continue.

Steve Arnold Steps Down

6588 Steve Arnold sent the following message to the Class Gifting Committee, *"I'm writing to say I am stepping down from our gifting committee. Charlie and Phil did a great job in updating the terms of reference (TOR) for the Teaching Excellence Award. The terms for the Professorship are working very well.*

On a personal level, Carynne and I recently celebrated our 50th wedding anniversary. We very much enjoy our daughter, her husband and their family of four who live only five minutes away. Our son and his family live in Kars. I spend a lot of my time looking after our 1860 limestone home and relaxing on our waterfront property across the road."

Steve has devoted a lot of time and energy to this Committee and his departure will be sorely missed.

Closing Notes

That's it for another month. Write and let us know how you are you are coping with COVID-19, particularly if you can share some novel ideas or unique experiences.



1965 Soccer Team