

Class of 65 Newsletter **Bulletin d'Information**—Classe de 65

Number/Numéro 164



January/janvier 2024

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Editor's Corner/Coin du rédacteur

Happy New Year everyone. I hope everyone enjoyed the festive season and is looking forward to a productive new year. Lots of stuff this month that I want to get out before Janet and I head out for our annual winter sunshine sabbatical down south. I will forgo the usual introduction and dive in with no particular order of priority.

The 2024 Teaching Excellence Award

With apologies to the winner and to the organisers of the award, I have a very nice poster advertising the event. Unfortunately it seems to be beyond my technical skills to reproduce it so I am transcribing the pertinent info as follows:

**Conférence publique du prix d'excellence
en enseignement de la Promotion de 1965
Class of 1965 Teaching Excellence Award Public Lecture**

Dr. Ruben E. Perez, P.Eng/Ing.
Department of Mechanical and Aerospace Engineering
Département de génie mécanique et aérospatial

But Will It Fly? The Art of Teaching Engineering So It Is Not Science
Mais est-ce que ça volera? L'art d'enseigner le génie sans que ce soit toute une science

Monday 22 January 2024 19:00 Lundi 22 janvier 2024 à 19h
Currie Hall Salle Currie

Identifiant Zoom / Zoom Meeting ID: 978 9181 6896
<https://zoom.us/j/97891816896?pwd=YjhXNFExNktlN0lvMEM3VThNUWczZz09>

Code d'accès / Passcode: TEA2024

Personne-ressource / Contact: Karine Blouin 613-541-6000x6705 karine.blouin@rmc.ca



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2024 TEA (Concluded)

JOIN AS EARLY AS 18h TO CHAT WITH CLASSMATES: As in past years, there will be an opportunity to exchange with classmates ahead and after the presentation. You can join the TEA Zoom call as early as 18h (local), as there will be several Chat Rooms available until shortly before the official presentation, as well as afterwards. Take this rare opportunity to reconnect face-to-face with friends.

REJOIGNEZ L'APPEL DÈS 18h POUR JASER ENTRE NOUS: Comme les années précédentes, il y aura l'occasion d'échanger avec les camarades de classe avant et après la présentation. Pour cela, vous pouvez rejoindre l'appel TEA zoom dès 18h (locale), car quelques salons de discussion seront disponibles jusqu'à peu avant la présentation officielle, ainsi qu'après. Profitez de cette unique occasion de renouer face-à-face avec des amis.

History Matters—Post and Cold War Innovation in the Royal Canadian Navy by David G. Michelson

6158 Jim Astley drew my attention to the following article by David Michelson who is the Canada Historian for the Canadian Institute of Electrical Engineering (IEEE). "This article originally appeared in the History Matters feature of *IEEE Canadian Review*, Summer 2023 edition and is reprinted here with permission from the author."

Innovation has always been an important part of the Royal Canadian Navy's (RCN's) culture. Many readers of *IEEE Canadian Review* are familiar with some of the iconic naval innovations introduced by the RCN during the post- and Cold War period (1945–1990), including the following:

- the development of the variable-depth sonar that allowed surface vessels to more reliably detect submarines situated between layers of water of differing temperature and salinity (1947–1971)
- the introduction of the St. Laurent class destroyer escorts, which introduced many important elements to small warship design that are still in use today (1955–1957)
- the invention of the beartrap system, which allowed small warships equipped with stern-mounted flight decks to reliably recover helicopters under a range of sea states (1956–1964)
- the development of a fast hydrofoil escort that could travel faster than the new and more capable submarines that began to appear (1968–1971).

However, fewer readers are likely familiar with the contributions made by the RCN on the electrical and computer engineering side during this period, many of which remain quite significant today. In this issue, we consider the role of the RCN in the chain of events that led to the following:

- *Alouette 1*, Canada's first satellite
- DATAR, a pioneering naval tactical data system
- the track ball and the rolling-ball computer mouse
- SHINPADS, a pioneering shipboard distributed computer system



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Innovation (continued)

- SHINCOM, a widely adopted system for shipboard internal communications
- the first processing of synthetic aperture radar (SAR) imagery using digital techniques.

The RCN and Canada's First Satellite, *Alouette I*

For much of the 20th century, long-distance radio communication between ships at sea and bases ashore was based on shortwave propagation through the ionosphere. During the Second World War, Section 6 of the RCN's Operational Intelligence Centre (OIC/6) was tasked with building upon earlier work by the National Research Council (NRC) and developing the insights and techniques required to make long-distance communications via the ionosphere more reliable. OIC/6, supported by the NRC, the Department of Transport, and the other two services, established a network of ionospheric sounders or ionosondes to measure the local properties of the ionosphere at various stations across Canada. In 1944, the Canadian Radio Wave Propagation Committee (CRWPC) was set up under the leadership of the RCN with a mandate to formally coordinate the research of the three services in this area.

After the war ended, the need to continue this work to support peacetime applications and operational needs was recognized. The Radio Propagation Laboratory (RPL) was established under the CRWPC and housed at Naval Headquarters. After the Defence Research Board was created in 1947, RPL became part of the newly formed Defence Telecommunications Research Establishment (DTRE). By the late 1950s, DTRE was ready to start developing—and, by the early 1960s, to launch—Canada's first satellite. *Alouette I* was a topside ionospheric sounder that, among other things, clarified the nature of the ionosphere in northern regions, helped to define the International Reference Ionosphere (an international project sponsored by the Committee on Space Research and the International Union of Radio Science), and became the focal point from which Canada's new space industry rapidly developed.

By the late 1950s, DTRE was ready to start developing—and, by the early 1960s, to launch—Canada's first satellite.

Not only was *Alouette I* developed by a lab that, fewer than 15 years earlier, had been operated under the direct supervision of the RCN, but many of the key DTRE personnel involved in *Alouette I* (and, three years later, *Alouette II*), including DTRE Superintendent Frank T. Davies, had begun their careers as RCN civilian scientists. During this period, the RCN still relied on shortwave propagation via the ionosphere to communicate with the fleet, and RCN personnel contributed to efforts to analyze and interpret the data returned by the *Alouettes*. In 1969, the DTRE became the Communications Research Centre when it was transferred to the newly formed Department of Communications.

The RCN and First Naval Tactical Data System, DATAR

The RCN emerged from the Second World War with a keen awareness of the need for ships engaged in antisubmarine warfare (ASW) to operate as a unit and to exchange tactical data easily and efficiently. At about the same time that the Royal Navy (RN) began to develop a command,



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control, and coordination system for anti-air warfare based upon the type 984 radar and analog computing technology, Commander James Belyea of the RCN advocated for development of a similar but much more advanced system for ASW.

The RCN system, called *DATAR* (*digital automated tracking and resolving*), was intended to share radar and sonar data between ships and process the data so that a unified view of the battlefield relative to any particular ship's current heading and location could be presented. The RN's analog system was insufficient for this purpose. DATAR would be the first to use wireless data links—in this case, based upon pulse code modulation—to share tactical data between ships as well as digital computers to process the data and generate tactical displays in real time.

Work on this incredibly forward-looking system began in 1949. Ferranti Canada signed on and set up a new facility under the direction of Kenyon Taylor in Malton (near the Avro Canada plant) to pursue it. Everything from the wireless data links to the digital computers to the digital displays had to be invented by the RCN–Ferranti team. The first demonstrations of the system were conducted in Lake Ontario in 1953. Two Bangor-class minesweepers, HMCS *Digby* and HMCS *Granby*, and a shore station were used to simulate an ASW task force.

The DATAR demonstrations were almost flawless. According to one account, a U.S. Navy officer in attendance became concerned that the demonstration was too good to be true and briefly wondered whether the display was being faked. The RCN hoped that DATAR's stunning success would lead to adoption of the technology by the Royal Canadian Air Force, the United States, the United Kingdom, and others. Unfortunately, like the Avro Arrow a few years later, the hoped-for export sales did not materialize, and DATAR development was halted. Instead, many of DATAR's key ideas would be adopted by others, including the U.S. Navy's Navy Tactical Data System and later versions of the RN's Comprehensive Display System.

The RCN and the Computer Mouse

While Douglas Engelbart is credited with the invention of the computer mouse in the mid-1960s, the rolling-ball computer mouse, developed by researchers at Telefunken a few years later, is the version that was most widely adopted in the decades that followed. The rolling-ball mouse is essentially a small, upside-down trackball. The trackball concept itself was originally proposed as a user input device for the RN's Comprehensive Display System but was abandoned in favour of a conventional joystick.

The RCN's DATAR tactical data system project is widely credited as the first to fully appreciate the potential of the track-ball concept and to reduce it to practice. The success of the RCN's demonstrations of DATAR to the international defence community did much to raise awareness of the trackball and to promote the widespread adoption of trackballs as user input devices. In this manner, the RCN played a key role in the chain of events that led to the modern computer mouse.

The RCN and Shipboard Distributed Computing

By the early 1970s, command, control, and coordination systems had become an essential



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Innovation (Continued)

component of naval task forces, and digital computers had become well established in shipboard operations. The next big step was introduction of the Shipboard Integrated Processing and Data System (SHINPADS) concept, which promoted the adoption of distributed computing using standardized tactical displays and computers interconnected by a shipwide fault-tolerant data bus to increase system reliability, redundancy, and resiliency. Championed by Capt(N) Jim Caruthers, SHINPADS started slowly but rapidly gained traction. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, this Canadian approach to systems integration in warships had become a guiding design principle of the Canadian Patrol Frigate program and influenced the practice of other major navies as well.

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The RCN and Shipboard Internal Communications

SHINCOM is a naval intraship and external communication system that was developed for the RCN's Halifax class frigates. The underlying technology was adopted by the U.S. Navy's Aegis Combat System, through which it was exported to Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea. In the U.S. Navy, SHIN-COM is referred to as the Integrated Voice Communications System. By 2017, SHINCOM had been installed on more than 150 warships.

The RCN and Spaceborne SAR

During the mid-1970s, as NASA, the U.S. Naval Research Lab, and other stakeholders were planning and preparing for the launch of Seasat, the first spaceborne SAR, the RCN and researchers at Defence Research Establishment Ottawa (DREO) played a key role in discussions concerning the application of spaceborne SAR for oceanography; ocean surveillance and the monitoring of sea ice; and, importantly, the selection of the inclination of Seasat's orbit.

At the time Seasat was launched, the standard method for processing the raw data stream from SAR to construct an image of a scene involved transferring the raw data to film and processing the result using a complicated set of lenses referred to as an *optical SAR processor*. It was recognized that processing the data digitally instead offered significant advantages, but the general-purpose minicomputers available to engineers in the late 1970s were only barely capable of supplying the enormous processing power required. DREO decided to try, but hedged by contracting with Vancouver-based MacDonald, Dettwiler, and Associates (MDA) to pursue a parallel effort.

After Seasat was launched in June 1978, the race was on. It was widely expected that a large, well-funded team from NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory would prevail. Instead, the small upstart team from MDA that had begun their task two years earlier won the race in November 1978. So significant was the accomplishment that this first image was featured on the cover of the 26 February 1979 issue of *Aviation Week & Space Technology*. In 2014, it was recognized as an IEEE Milestone.

MDA's accomplishment marked a turning point in the history of SAR. By reducing the cost but increasing the quality of SAR processing, the digital approach made the routine application of



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SAR imagery practical. It led directly to Canada's decision to invest in the RADARSAT series of Earth observation satellites and assess the merits of SAR in meeting the needs of a variety of use cases, including the monitoring of polar sea ice, ocean surveillance, and vessel detection. Since 2011, the Polar Epsilon project has provided the RCN with enhanced capabilities for surveillance of Canada's Arctic region and maritime approaches, including the detection of vessels, and turned the RCN into RADARSAT's single biggest customer.

A New Book by H24263 John Cowan

My new book, *The Opinionated Middle Ground*, is now available. Published by Sutherland House Books, it is widely available through most booksellers, and online. I include only two Canadian links, the Sutherland House one, and Amazon. In the US, I believe Barnes and Noble has it. I have included that link.

I believe that a review of it will soon appear in Ottawa Life Magazine. I'll send the link to that review once it appears.

I send this message only as news. Please do not take this as me asking you to buy the book. Many of you, who received my previous book in 2021 as a gift from me can expect this one as a gift too, but, in those cases please remind me by sending me your current address, and an indication that you'd like to receive it.

For those of you who are trying to reduce clutter, and now get your books most frequently in electronic form, you will note that it is available as in eBook form from Sutherland House or Barnes and Noble, quite inexpensively (ie less than the cost of mailing you the hard copy).

<https://www.amazon.ca/Opinionated-Middle-Ground-Consensus-Polarization/dp/199082353X>

<https://sutherlandhousebooks.com/product/the-opinionated-middle-ground/>

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/the-opinionated-middle-ground-john-scott-cowan/1143757195>

or

<https://www.barnesandnoble.com/w/book/1143757195?ean=9781990823534>

Of course, I've already (with the help of friends who have read it) found four typos. But the publisher tells me we'll get those corrected in the next printing.



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Letters and Updates

The following are updates prompted by **6611 Doug Cope's** annual contact with his classmates from Fraser Flight, RRMC.

6611 Doug Cope—HO HO HO and Merry Christmas to all you old Frasers. Note that I have added Fats' wife, Gail, since she may wish to hear from you all. I have also added Richard Archer as an honorary Fraser since he was with us in 2nd year and had to try to keep me from causing too much trouble.

I hope this finds you all was well as possible considering the years that are now behind us. It is hard to believe that we all first met as Frasers over 52 years ago – yikes.

Carol and I had a good year. Because of the noise from renovations at our apartment building in Ottawa we spent a lot of time at our cottage which is nearby on the Rideau River.

In 2023 we took our first trips since the start of the wretched COVID. In June we visited my relatives in the St. Catharines, Ontario area and then continued on to Stratford, Ontario to see a couple of musicals at the festival.

In early October we ventured a few hundred kilometers south to the Adirondack Mountains for a few days to view the fall colors in the mountains. Not too adventurous but it was a start.

Other than that I attend a few military and nostalgia shows as a vendor during the year to try to sell off some of the 'stuff' I have amassed.

John Hilton took up the initiative from Fats and organizes a Class of 65 lunch in Ottawa once a month. That way we local Frasers get to see each other more often.

I wish you all a very merry Christmas and a happy New Year and hope to see some of you in 2024.

6585 Richard Archer—Greetings to all you Frasers, and Gail, glad you could join us. Thanks Doug, for including me as an honorary member of the clan, and for your successful efforts to keep everyone in touch. It's good to hear from all, and to be updated on your comings and goings.

For Marilyn and I, we've never been busier. Our two daughters and their families live nearby, and so they've kept us close and involved. And beyond family activities, Marilyn and I have at last been able to resume our travel experiences. In Spring 2023, we enjoyed an expedition to Portugal — Lisbon and the Algarve — and then in midsummer all the family — us, two daughters, son-in-law and two grandsons — used Air Canada Vacations for a trip to Italy with stops in Venice, Florence, Naples and related excursions. The trip wasn't executed well by Air Canada, and so right now the airline is well into our bad books. In the Autumn, Marilyn and I drove down to one of our favourite places, both to relax and be active, Hilton Head Island in South Carolina. Now, this last trip was such a success, we've already booked another similar expedition for this Spring.

Since 2005, I've been the (unpaid) editor of the biannual newsletter, Soundings, of the Ottawa Branch of the Naval Association of Canada. Although published only twice a year, it keeps me busy tracking down and encouraging potential contributors. The latest edition has a piece and photos by classmate Mike Braham on Jim Carruthers being added to the RMC Wall of Honour. And Fraser clan member Ernie Cable has a very timely piece on the effort to replace the CP-140 Aurora long range patrol aircraft. I attach a copy of the edition. If you're interested, that and previous editions can be found at <http://nac-o.wildapricot.org/soundings>.

That's it from me. Marilyn joins me in wishing you all a great Christmas season and a happy 2024.



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Updates (Continued)

6598 George Brown—Christmas Greetings from Brussels. It has been a busy year for us, post-covid, although we have not resumed the level of visits and travel that we had before. We did get to Northern Italy for a few days last Spring, and the highlight of the year was our family reunion in Ireland in the Summer where we rented a manor and had all the children and grandchildren (except for one) over -13 in all.

We did not get to Canada this year so sadly I missed seeing the Roadants in Ottawa, and the Royal Roads event in the Fall. A bad knee and some other health issues have kept us at home lately but we look forward to getting back in 2024.

I guess most of us have slowed the pace a bit... "Getting old is not for sissies" (attributed to Betty Davis).

6610 David Cooper – Greetings to you all from Victoria presently awaiting the arrival of an "*atmospheric river*" previously named a "*pineapple express*"! Nothing exciting to report, except I did purchase an e-bike for my 80th birthday which I have used with my PROBUS cycling group!

However, it will be of interest to you that Jack Harris & Keith Ambachtsheer decided to arrange a small reunion for our year at RRU last September. We had tour of the "university" grounds to view the changes, the RRCM Museum and RRCM display in the new entrance to the rear of the Grant Block where all the brass name boards are now mounted. They also treated us to a light lunch in the former drawing room in the castle so it was a great event. In the evening, Jack hosted a fine pizza supper at his home on Gonzales with great views of the strait. A picture of the gathering is attached, but missing is Al Kennedy who only attended the tour. Since I was an early "graduate", at RRCM I vaguely recall them other than Jack who was BCEO at CFB Esquimalt when I was BADMO, and Al, a naval engineer. He recently lost his wife. (For those of you who missed my career, after RRCM I went to UBC, joined the RCNR then jumped back into the RCN until retiring.)

Thanks, Doug, my old cabin mate for the annual letter and check up.

6601 Ernie Cable: Merry Christmas Frasers! and a warm welcome to Gail to our group.

We all have various memories of Royal Roads, one that stands in my mind is stepping off the bus in front of Nixon Block in early September 1961 and from that time onwards our lives changed.

Jumping ahead to current times Carol and I have had a major change in our lives. We sold our house in Barrhaven and at the urging of our daughters moved into an independent living seniors residence. So far we enjoy very good health, but now that we are both over 80 the girls thought we should move into a seniors residence at a time and place of our choosing and not forced into the first available place by a medical necessity.

This year I have become a published author. Two years ago, Randy Wakelam, a professor emeritus from RMC decided to publish a RCAF history book to commemorate the RCAF's centennial anniversary. The book covers the Cold War from the end of the Second World War in 1946 to Service integration in 1968, the end of the RCAF as we knew it. He chose subject matter experts to author each of the 15 chapters in the book ranging from NATO, NORAD, Peacekeeping and the AVRO Arrow, etc. He asked me to write the chapter on naval and maritime aviation. I initially was intimidated as I was the only author without a post-graduate degree in history. However, after a number of peer reviews the book, *On Wings of War and Peace - The RCAF in the Early Cold War*, was published late last month. For a Quick Look click on, <https://utorontopress.com/9781487526764/on-the-wings-of-war-and-peace/>



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Updates (continued)

6612 Bruce Corbett: This past year, we had one of our Old Fraser's (Fats) commemorated on RMC's "Wall Of Honour". A very distinct and well-deserved honor. At that event Gail unveiled Jim's plaque. Those of us there had a chance to remember what Jim has meant to our class of '65. How Jim regularly did things to bring us together ... the many lunch get-together's at the Crow's Nest, our participation in his initiatives with the RMC Foundation and importantly, the very generous annual class of '65 garden parties at his home on the Ottawa river...an event at which Gail played an important role as co-host and at which many of our classmates from miles around annually made the trip to be there. With Jim's health problems, it is very doubtful if these annual events at Jim's home would have continued taking place without Gail's strong support and help. At the plaque unveiling ceremony, Gail expressed her wish maintain contact with us and her wish to be able to attend future class reunions. I support that and will look forward to seeing her, representing Jim, at our class reunions. Enough said.

As we have done since 2009, Lida and I will be having our Christmas in Naples with our daughter and family. We have gotten used to enjoying Christmas without snow. When I think back, it is hard to believe that I am saying that. Having come from Quebec City to Royal Roads in 1961, I remember becoming very homesick studying for exams at Christmas time and seeing the festive lights under the rain. If you had asked me at that time if I ever wanted to have Christmas without snow my answer would have been "absolutely never".

6602 Jim Cale: Thanks again to Copious for keeping this tradition going. It's great to hear from you all. Jane and I wish you a Merry Christmas and all best wishes for 2024.

This has been a quiet year in the Cale household. We are no longer able to travel so we stay quite close to home. Apart from physical difficulties we are both healthy and enjoying our family. I'm still cycling in the better weather and trying to get some hiking in during this season.

Gail Carruthers: Thank you all for your warm welcoming words. It is so genuinely appreciated as I was a "new comer" at the onset of my time with Jim (15 years)..I must say that that I have not met a more impressive group of friends , gentlemen who were so dedicated to maintaining their friendships with each other along with their partners . I especially appreciate the understanding partners who I was privileged to spend time with. It's not an easy thing to want or get to know a new person especially when Jim and Brenda were also a big part of your time together. My best to all and I'm wishing you all good health and fun with families over the holidays .

Cope! So nice to see your name come up in my emails!! Merry Christmas to all of the Fraser family! I'm a first time grandma this summer (baby Joy) and living in Carp. Not the Bay! that's for sure but making my way. I have a new, non-stop Beagle puppy to keep me more than busy. My big kids are making their way as early 20-30 somethings. I hope all in the group are making the most of : sort of post covid times. Hope we can gather together -maybe in the Springtime. I will say I miss my Jim and his Big plans for each day!! My best to all and Merry Christmas and Happy wishes and times for 2024.

6607 Ken Clarkson: Thank you Doug for taking the initiative to remind us all that we are still alive! Merry Xmas and Happy holiday to each of you and may things go well in the New Year. Diane and I made a trip down to Hamilton a few weeks ago. We visited one of Diane's friends that she went through nurse's training with in Brockville and we also visited Dean Carriere. It was really great to see him! He is having some challenges with arthritis but we all seem to have that to a greater or lesser degree. The price of getting older. Anyway, you all keep well.



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Updates (Concluded)

6606 Roger Chiasson: I never get tired of thanking Copious for rallying us at this time of year. And we are very happy to see Gail in our midst!

I will follow the trend and not focus on medical issues, except to say we are grateful to have made it this far while still above the sod. Our travels have tapered off to some extent, but we escaped to sleepy PEI in September for a few shows and the slower pace, but the exciting trip was to Holland for a boatbike tour that I won (I posted an article in the class letter). Although she didn't cycle, Bonnie enjoyed the trip as a spoiled passenger. We even got to see GAS in Brussels. I managed to increase the odometer reading on my ebike by about 1600 0 kms for a total of 4600 kms over the last 3 summers - just to prove I'm not getting old! Our grandkids are thriving and growing like weeds and continue to make us proud.

Movie Review by 6559 Gerry Mueller

As a lover of both books and films I continue to debate in my mind a dilemma I am sure at least some of you share; when a book is turned into a movie in what order do you enjoy them? If one reads the book before the movie, one is often disappointed, the worst case being the movie has very little to do with the book other than the same titles. (Yes, I am speaking of you, James Bond franchise, but others are guilty of this to a greater or lesser degree.) Doing it the other way around inevitably, for me at least, "colours" my reading of the book; the scenery I see in my mind is that of the film, and the characters look like the actors that portrayed them. And sometimes, again for me at least, an actor becomes so much associated with a particular character (personal typecasting?) that I can't see them in other, non-related roles. (I can't watch Cate Blanchett in anything without wondering what she has done with her pointy ears!)

This movie, from a book with the screen play written by the book's author is rare; the order of viewing and reading didn't seem to matter. The actors are perfect for the book's characters, and the book illuminates some of the internal mental processes of the characters better than the film can. I saw the film first, then read the book, and found that order meaningful, but it left me wishing that the producers had made the film longer and included some pre-plot (is that a concept?) matters that were good stories in their own right, and would have strengthened the movie plot arc. And inevitably, it disappoints that the producers/director/writer gave in to the need for American audiences to have a "happier/more satisfactory" ending than the book has.

The Children Act (2017)

Director: Sir Richard Eyre (directs film, theatre, television, and opera)

Producer: Duncan Kenworthy (for FilmNation Entertainment (USA), BBC Films)

Writer: Ian McEwan (Based on his book *The Children Act*, 2014)

Principal Actors: Dame Emma Thompson, Stanley Tucci, Fionn Whitehead (Dunkirk)

Note on Release: Shown Sep 2017 at Toronto International Film Festival, limited release UK theatres Aug 2018, US theatres Sep 2018

This is one of those films which deals with a socially significant but difficult subject (yes, it is another of the "difficult decisions" movies) with excellent production values, great direction, outstanding acting, yet which made no impact in theatres (limited release because it isn't traditional "Hollywood" and does not have a happy ending even though it is happier than in the book), and it was probably judged "cerebral". And quite possibly because the protagonist is a powerful woman who refuses to put up with the fantasies of her spouse, and fearlessly makes difficult and unpopular decisions; a tagline for the film's advertising was "We all make choices. Hers make history."



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Fiona Maye (Dame Emma Thompson) is a Judge of the Family Division of the High Court of Justice of England and Wales. The title refers to an Act of Parliament (1989) which in any legal proceedings puts the welfare of a child (defined as a person under the age of 18) before all other considerations, including the wishes of the parents or religious considerations. Judge Maye is the recognized expert in the applications of this law, and thus gets the “difficult” cases, and spends most of her time outside court thinking about cases and writing well-crafted (and appeal-proof) decisions. Her husband, Jack Maye, is an academic who has plateaued in his professional career, wants more of a sex-life than their non-existent one, but likes the comfort of their well-ordered life in a posh apartment in the Gray’s Inns of Court. His solution is to suggest he have an affair with a colleague, but that otherwise nothing changes, and Jack is quite mystified when she wants nothing to do with this and boots him out of the apartment (and has the locks changed and consults a divorce solicitor).

Meanwhile as judge, having just dealt with the difficult case of conjoined twins that will both die if there is no medical intervention, but the medical intervention will kill one of them (a classic trolley problem!), she is hearing another case involving a young man, Adam Henry (Fionn Whitehead), near but not yet 18, who is being treated for leukemia, and in order to save his life and allow further treatment needs a blood transfusions. His parents, and he, are Jehovah’s Witnesses, and thus a blood transfusion is religiously not permitted. (While I do not agree with the Witnesses’ theology on bold transfusions, the version presented in this film is less than accurate.) Much against recommended practice (although not prohibited) Judge Maye visits the young man in hospital, they even sing a folk song together while he plays it inexpertly on violin. A bond forms, much more for him than for her. Her decision is to allow the medical personnel to force the blood transfusion (part of her ruling is that “Life is more precious than dignity”). Adam recovers, but has become unhealthily attached to the judge, to whom he writes letters, and effectively stalks. Meanwhile Jack, presumably having discovered that the object of his desire (we never see or hear them together) was not much enamoured of his permanent appearance in her life, has returned, and he and Fiona cohabit, but live very much separately.

Later (the timing is unclear, as is often the case in movies) Judge Maye is out on a court circuit in the “Provinces” (as Londoners so charmingly refer to anything not London) and Adam tracks her down on a cold and rainy night in Newcastle-on-Tyne (the implication being that he later becomes ill from this exposure) at a posh residence used by circuit judges, and confesses that he wants to live with her and her husband (not knowing the state of their marriage) and live as their son, as he has decided that because she forced his life to be saved, she cares for him more than his parents who were prepared to let him die for their religion. He then kisses her, on the pips, and it is unclear just how much she resists. But, she rejects him, permanently, and ensures he is put back on a train to London to his parents. (Here the book is much more clear than the film that Newcastle has a special place in Fiona’s early life with Jack, which is why Adam showing up has a great impact on her.)

Fiona and Jack go back to their separate in the same place existence, while she, when not busy with court, practices with a barrister friend for an annual legal profession concert, in which she plays piano and they sing together. In the film, near the end of the concert, she learns that Adam is back in hospital and dying. She changes an encore that she and her partner sing to the same song she sang with Adam in hospital, rushes to his bedside, and he dies the next day. Fiona goes to his funeral, returns home and the last scene shows Jack holding her hand while she cries. The book ends much less happily; she learns that Adam has died months before but has left behind a bitter poem which she reads as accusing her of driving him to die. The book too ends with her crying and Jack holding her hand, both film and book hinting at a future reconciliation.

This is one of those small films that stays with you, largely because of the superb acting, despite the, in the end banal subjects.



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Review (concluded)

It raises important questions about faith and law, love and life, and young and old. It's worth seeing, and the book is worth reading, in whatever order.

6559 Gerry Mueller

As always I would welcome your comments on these reviews, as well as suggestions of movies significant to you. Send these to me at gerry.mueller@sympatico.ca, and if of general interest to Mike our Editor at jinglemike@rogers.com

More Letters

6603 Dean Carriere (*Sorry Dean, I omitted you from the Fraser Flight item*) I am still alive and kicking though not as high as I used to. I thought that I would start by recounting a recent health scare because it turned into a lot of fun. I have been reasonably healthy for years except for the arthritis that Ken mentioned to all of you. Then the last week of this past October I was having trouble breathing so I walked across the street to my neighbor...the General Hospital. I was diagnosed with heart failure. I had a four day marvelous vacation there if you can believe it. The medical staff were fantastic and the cast of other characters that I met in the hospital could merit a screen play. At the time this happened I had been working on a memoir that the kids had been pressing me to finish as I did a lot of "crazy" things in my life. I had a computer glitch and had arranged for my daughter to meet with me to sort it out so I could finalize this work. We met in the hospital, sat side by side on my bed with my laptop between us and sorted out the issue. I completed the last word there and then just as the full moon passed across my eighth floor penthouse window. We were jubilant. It would have been ironic if I had kicked the bucket at the same time.

My recovery has been going very well with the aid of a bunch of little pills and Mira, my companion of many years. I had one setback which was equally as weird as that described above. Over the years I have fallen into bed a number of times but never fell out of bed. This time I had to go to the bathroom in the middle of the night which many of you may identify with. I started get out of bed and before I knew what happen I was laying spread eagled on my back having whacked my artificial knees and hips somehow in the process of descending and landing. My head was lodged under the beds steel railing which had delivered a blow to my forehead. I laid on the hardwood floor for awhile wondering how that had happened. Mira fortunately was staying over that night and sprang into action. She came to a halt when she rounded the end of the bed and found me wedged between the wall and the bed. Like a good soldier I took control and directed her to grab my ankles and drag me out into the living room where I could use some furniture to brace myself so that I could sit up on the sofa and assess the situation. All seemed to be well which was confirmed at a scheduled doctors visit the next day.

Two days later I was shingled. I didn't know that shingles could be triggered by a traumatic blow to ones body. So in between productions of The Nutcracker and some great movies I have been trying no to scratch too much. Fortunately this condition is improving quite rapidly.

I hope that you all experience great joy and have a few good laughs during this holiday season.

Thanks, Doug, for keeping us elders connected.

6600 Doug Busche: My name is Kristi Busche and I'm Doug's daughter. Dad has been in long term care, here in London, ON, for almost 1 year now. Both he and mom, Bev, had had a number of health and cognitive issues over the past handful of years that have left them unable to remain safely in their home. They were both able to be in the same LTC facility, thankfully.

Sadly, we just lost mom on November 15th. Dad is 'ok', but does have ongoing declining issues, including epilepsy, Parkinson's and dementia. I look after his email account for him and I have let him know that I'll be replying to this email thread with this little update, but won't be replying any further.



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More Letters (Concluded)

6559 Gerry Mueller: Thanks for the last edition; the pictures from your river cruise, the ones within German brought back memories. Within Germany I've travelled on land along the Danube, and then the connection that the Rhein-Main, Donau canal follows, and the Main-Rhein wine regions. My late father lived within the Main wine growing region (Frankenwein) and my late step-brother in the Rheingau (a bit west and north of Wiesbaden) and I still have two nieces and their children, and now grandchildren in Wiesbaden, so I'm very familiar with the liquids of those areas. And have done further sampling on both sides of the Rhein up as far as Koblenz and along the Mosel. Your kind of cruise is still on our bucket list, but the bucket is very full, and we may not get to empty it fully.

The surgery I had at the end of October was diagnostic in nature, and the results clarified some weird other test results. As my surgeon said, I finally make sense, which I'm glad to hear, although I don't think he was referring to my thought process. The results were not totally positive, like, nothing to see here, but also not the worst case. Thus further surgery, fairly routing, in early January, which my surgeon tells me should be the end of it, and not of me!

6396 Rod MacKinnon: Great Edition 163 Mike. Georges deserved all the kind words sent along in his Remembrance. Question: Is the WWII aircraft at the end of the Edition a Beaufighter or a Mosquito? If memory serves, I think your dad flew Beaufighters as a Night Fighter.

Mimi and I are contemplating an European River Cruise next autumn and the excellent description of your trip has got me stoked!

My Reply: Thanks Rod. Georges was indeed deserving. The aircraft filling in space at the end of the edition is a Mosquito. Dad flew Beaufighters in a night fighting role initially but switched to Mosquitos in an intruder role toward the end of the war. He was shot down by a pair of FW 190s while flying a Mosquito.

Unless you have already been to those places I described, I highly recommend that particular cruise with Viking, their so-called Grand European tour, plus the extension to Prague.

6661 Neill McRae: Many thanks Michael – an extraordinary issue. I pass them on to a friend - an RMC 1964 grad. He very much enjoys them.

Please note my new address below: phone and email remain the same. I have moved into a seniors' residence as close angle glaucoma has significantly affected my vision.



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Christmas Movies by 6533 Gord Forbes

Do you watch Christmas Movies? Do you like them? Are you sick of them yet?

My friend and I have been watching several recently, probably looking for something different in them. Most of them are your average rom com but taking place at Christmas time. You know the typical story: a young, and very attractive, man and woman with different backgrounds come together in (name the town or city) and overcoming their difference, fall in love and (supposedly) live happily ever after. Someone suggested that they could all be generated by AI with only the names and locales being changed. The other type is the many variations of *A Christmas Carol* wherein a person embittered about Christmas is transformed during the period of the movie to become a Christmas loving, loving person. In this genre the original Christmas Carol tale is told, with very little variations, with a different leading many playing Ebenezer Scrooge. My recent examples include Patrick Stewart and Albert Finney, with the Finney one being made as a musical. The third type is stories about the origins of Santa Claus, like the one we saw last night called *'The Boy who made Christmas'*. My personal favourite Christmas movie, though, is *The Polar Express* which is at least unique (so far). So, there you have it, the plot of every Christmas movie you will see this month.

While we were watching another Christmas movie last night, I realized what was missing. Nowhere in any of these movies was their any reference to the real Christmas story. You know, the one about the Jewish baby who was born in Bethlehem who went on to become the most influential man in the western world. I'm sure all Christians and many others of other faiths are at least familiar with this happening. Don't confuse this event with the biblical movies of the 1950s where a Hollywood star of the day, with blue eyes and blond hair, would play Jesus or some other biblical character. I don't mean a movie necessarily about the actual journey to Bethlehem and the birth (although a movie about this, told honestly by middle eastern actors could be compelling), but a mention or acknowledgement of why we celebrate Christmas, rather than a pagan celebration of the shortest day of the year (in the northern hemisphere). Some depiction of the religious significance of Christmas (and I don't mean praying that you'll get what you really want as a Christmas present), even if the rest of the movie is about romance, Santa Claus or redemption.

We are losing, if we have not already lost, the real significance of Christmas. You know something is wrong when seemingly the only measure of the "success" of Christmas was how much merchandise was sold or how many Christmas sales were held. Wouldn't it be nice if Christmas success were measured by the number of people who attended a Christmas church service or the number of people who discovered the biblical Christmas story.

Hallmark has done us no favours by propagating the banal offering that we now take for granted at Christmas.

"The capacity of human beings to bore one another seems to be vastly greater than that of any other animal."
- H. L. Mencken



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Closing Notes

I think this is the largest edition to date. I hope I didn't omit any submissions. Very sorry to hear of the many ailments that are creeping up on us, particularly the condition of Doug Busche and the loss of his dear wife. On a more positive note, it would seem that there are a good many of us who continue to thrive physically and intellectually despite the passage of eight decades.

Janet and I join in wishing all of you a joyful and fulfilling 2024. Keep those entries coming, I believe it is increasingly important to share our lives and experiences as we age.



Dublin Ireland 1966

HMCS Gatineau—First posting after graduation for Braham, Cale, Carruthers, Houlston & Spence