Editor's note

With most APE social activities suspected by the COVID pandemic, this issue of Epilogue has little to report. Only a few of our interest groups are operating, with Zoom; Jan Murie provides a report on the Fall readings of the Book Club. Sadly, the In Memoriam box this month has fourteen names. To fill out this issue, three of the members of the APE Executive have written up travel adventures. Gordon Rostoker describes trips to a scientific conference held in Russia in 1971, and Ruth Gruhn follows with an account of memorable incidents on an archaeological field excursion in Siberia in 1990. Jan Murie relates a sequence of mishaps in field research on penguins in New Zealand. Finally, an old photo of tulips on my kitchen table provides hope for an early Spring.

Ruth Gruhn

Notices

Due to the continuing COVID-19 pandemic, and the ensuing safety protocols of the University Club, all of the usual social gatherings of our membership are cancelled for this spring-- no monthly Lunch With … events, Emeritus House is still locked, and interest groups who wish to carry on must do so by Zoom. We are hoping that our social gatherings may resume in the Fall; and perhaps we may even be able to hold a picnic together some time this summer, depending on conditions.
Book Club Report
To provide a little more content for *Epilogue* during this time when many APE activities must remain dormant, I agreed to summarize our Book Club reading over the last few months.

Our September meeting dealt with the two books that were scheduled for last spring but were cancelled as COVID shutdowns arrived. The first, *Unsheltered* by Barbara Kingsolver, had two story lines that were presented in alternate chapters. Both dealt with families that dwelt at the same address, one during the late 19th century, the other in the early 21st century. Both families struggled financially, and coped with inadequate houses. As in many of Kingsolver’s books, there was a strong biological thread running through the 19th century story line, this time centering on the conflict between religion and the then new Darwinian view of evolution, including a trial reminiscent of the Scopes trial. The modern story line entailed the schism in U.S. politics at the onset of a Trumpian era. One unusual feature of the book is that each chapter title is the last word in the preceding chapter... maybe a device to provide some continuity between the two story lines? Or perhaps a too-cutesy literary device?

The second, *The Bad Ass Librarians of Timbuktu* by Joshua Hammer, describes the unsettled times when Al Qaeda militants took control of much of Mali after about 2008. Although there is a lot of description of the movements and activities of the militants, the emphasis on the heroic efforts of librarian/museologist Abdel Kader Haidara and others to transport thousands of ancient manuscripts from museums in Timbuktu to safety farther south. These manuscripts, mainly salvaged by Haidara from across central Africa during the previous decades, were potential targets of destruction by the jihadists. I certainly learned a lot about the recent turmoil in Mali, but found the details of the activities of various militant factions a little tedious.

For October we read *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins. Written in 1859 and first published in serial form, the novel is considered to be the first mystery novel with the “hero” using sleuthing techniques akin to those of subsequent fictional detectives. There are numerous characters, the plot has twists and turns, and the ending is satisfyingly unexpected. I found it a much easier read than books by Dickens and other contemporary authors, but maybe that was due partly to the more engrossing plot.

In November we discussed *The Plague* by Albert Camus, an appropriate selection for these COVID times (or maybe not). I found it a little depressing sometimes to read about a situation so similar to what our current one could become. Nonetheless it had too many positive attributes to not appreciate the book: excellent writing, a cast of characters with interesting philosophical perspectives; and, amazingly, some humorous elements. And the pandemic did end!

Our December book was *The Testament* by Margaret Atwood, the much-ballyhooed sequel to *The Handmaid’s Tale*. Although a number of critics and readers panned it as disappointing, I wonder if the critique was largely because the novelty of Gilead had worn off for those who had read *The Handmaid’s Tale*. The establishment of Gilead and the origin of aunts, who seem to be an anomaly in the male-dominated society, were highlights for me. And the main storyline was an interesting, if maybe a little contrived, way to presage the downfall of Gilead.

I’ll say a bit about our four after-Christmas books in the June edition of *Epilogue* as long as I’m not laid off owing to the current shutdown.
In Memoriam

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Department</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scott Allison</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Bosley</td>
<td>Philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peggy-Anne Field</td>
<td>Nursing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ruth Frantz</td>
<td>Education Library</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raymond Grant</td>
<td>English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bill Jones</td>
<td>History</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fenton MacHardy</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jonathan Mohr</td>
<td>History (Augustana)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ralph Nursall</td>
<td>Zoology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Otto</td>
<td>Music</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Henry Pabst</td>
<td>Pediatrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jim Redmond</td>
<td>Law</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Rozeboom</td>
<td>Psychology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael Williams</td>
<td>Chemical and Materials Engineering</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Also of note: the passing of Lillian Green, widow of Lesley Green (Political Science); and Virginia Rozeboom, widow of William Rozeboom (Psychology).

Travel Stories

A 1971 Voyage to the Soviet Union

In 1971, the quadrennial meeting of the International Union of Geodesy and Geophysics (IUGG) took place in Moscow, and I was scheduled to attend it and have my first (but not last) experience behind the Iron Curtain. Prior to my departure, my oldest brother had visited the Soviet Union in 1958; and had sent home a brief postcard on which was written “It’s different!” My second oldest brother had also visited; and commented that
when he flew out of Moscow, when the plane lifted off, there was a general feeling of pure relief that washed over the plane’s passengers.

Anynow, along with the Moscow meeting, I was also invited to attend a much smaller and specialized meeting in Irkutsk a week in advance of the IUGG. My only knowledge of Irkutsk was from a book by Farley Mowat entitled “Sibir”. In it, he commented about the Angara Hotel in which he stayed. There was a tree in front of the hotel that was going to be ripped out to make way for a balcony overhanging the entrance. The environmentalists made such a fuss of it that they left the tree in place and built the balcony around it. So, off I went on my own, with my wife Gillian scheduled to meet me in Moscow after my return from Irkutsk. My Air Canada flight was late getting into Heathrow Airport in London, but they hustled me through all the nooks and crannies of Heathrow to try to catch my connecting flight to Sheremtyevo Airport in Moscow. I was late getting to the desk and was informed that the aircraft door had closed, and I would be unable to catch the flight. Unbeknownst to me, as they were rescheduling my flight for the next day, the aircraft door opened; and they let out a passenger who decided that he or she didn’t want to go to the Soviet Union after all. Then they shut the door and left without me!

The next day, I boarded a Japan Airlines flight to Moscow; and after a pleasant flight we approached the Sheremetyevo airport. I looked out the window and saw the darkest cloud bank I had ever seen. Suddenly the pilot took the plane into a steep dive and we touched down on the runway faster than I thought we should have. As the plane taxied up toward the terminal, the storm hit; and for an hour we sat on the runway with the plane violently shuddering in the gusty wind and intense rain. Finally, the storm abated, and we deplaned onto the tarmac. Before exiting the terminal, I had to present my visa to a stony-faced young man behind a glass window; and then fill out a list documenting how much money I was carrying and any jewelry that might be in my possession. We were told not to lose our copy of this piece of paper under any circumstance, or our exit from the Soviet Union might be in doubt. Happily, there was a delegation waiting for me after I had retrieved my baggage; and I was whisked off hastily to the domestic airport, Domodedevo. On the way, we were stopped once at a “check point Charlie” and everyone produced their documents, after which we were allowed to proceed to our destination. There I was led to a large waiting room, full of distinguished scientists, most of whom I knew by reputation. [I was young then!] After a couple of hours, we saw a plane pull up on the tarmac, and a long line of people formed near the stairs to the front of the plane. Then we scientists were all mustered, and we trooped onto the plane ahead of the lineup of ordinary folks. I was to learn later of the power of the USSR Academy of Scientists in terms of privilege. [Could you imagine that happening with Air Canada?] Our flight on a plane that resembled the old British Comet was uneventful. The most impressive part of the plane was the washroom, with porcelain fixtures and a spacious anteroom where you could wait your turn.

On arrival at the Irkutsk airport, I was whisked off to the Angara Hotel, where I was installed to recover from jet lag. Yes – Farley Mowat’s tree was still there at that time! Aside from the usual experience of a scientific conference, this time with earphones and simultaneous translation, the most interesting experience came on the weekend when we had a day off. Some of the attendees took the opportunity to take a flight to Bratsk to visit a huge
hydroelectric facility, while others decided to join a picnic in the countryside. I was part of the latter group, and it turned out to be a great experience. Along with the food came a chess set and a clock, and a number of attendees took turns playing speed chess. I was not exactly a novice when it came to speed chess; and when I took out the local women’s champion, I suddenly got a lot of attention. In fact, I was invited to another hotel room later, for more chess and a chance to really talk with some of my Soviet colleagues. The evening that I returned from the picnic, I had my hotel room radio on, trying to see if I could pick out anything with my extremely weak knowledge of the Russian language. I happened to hear the word “catastroph” and “Irkutsk” in the same sentence. Sure enough, the next morning I learned that a passenger jet had crashed at the Irkutsk airport; and 173 people had lost their lives. In fact, the plane carrying the delegates back from Bratsk was turned away before landing at the Irkutsk airport, and our colleagues had to overnight in Bratsk before being able to return to Irkutsk to following day. My picnic in the countryside was far less stressful!!

The time came to return to Moscow, and fortunately the flight was uneventful although the crash at the Irkutsk airport was somewhat unnerving. More unnerving was the ride from Domodedevo to the Ukraina Hotel in Moscow where I was to stay. My Japanese colleague Masahisa Sugiuera and I were treated to a white-knuckle ride in a car with no shocks on a bumpy highway at breakneck speed. I arrived alive, if not shaken, at the hotel; and waited next day for my wife Gillian to join me after taking a flight to Sheremetyevo from Amsterdam. It was a great relief when she showed up at the hotel, late but in one piece.

Our host colleagues treated us very well during our stay at the conference. We stayed at the Ukraina Hotel in downtown Moscow (which nowadays is a five-star luxury hotel). In those days, sitting down in the hotel to eat, we found that most of the things on the menu were unavailable. Part way through the stay, our colleague and hostess Madam Valeria Troitskaya took Gillian and I to a seafood restaurant. When we got there on a rainy evening, there was a lineup in front of the restaurant, but Madam Troitskaya ushered us in ahead of everyone – another example of the preferential treatment given to people with the Academy of Sciences on their side. Wonderful food was available to us at that restaurant! From time to time, Gillian and I took a walk around the neighborhood of the hotel. Things seemed a little run down; and on the walks we took, the only people around seemed to be old “babushkas” sweeping the roads with straw brooms, and what looked like policemen with red stars on their headgear. There were no homeless people on the streets. Later, we were to learn that you needed a permit to live in Moscow (or Leningrad); and if your ID was checked out by one of the policemen with the red star on their hat, and you didn’t have the permit, you were on a train to the Far East pronto.

Following the IUGG meeting, Gillian and I set off for Finland by train via Leningrad. We stayed in a nice hotel in downtown Leningrad (now St. Petersburg). However, on the first night I decided to take a bath. By the time the tub was half filled, one couldn’t see the bottom thanks to the murkiness of the water. There was no bath that night; and from that time forward in Leningrad, we drank only beer. We spent only a couple of days touring Leningrad, and were more than happy to get on a train heading for the border with Finland. When we arrived, I began to realize what a border can really look like. The concrete machine
gun tower was the first clue that it was not friendly! Then armed security people came through the cabin to check our credentials. I was actually a bit scared because I had a few kopeks in my pocket, and we knew the rules that no USSR money was to leave the country. Fortunately, we were not really inspected (although I couldn’t say the same for the compartment behind us, which they went through with a fine-tooth comb with much noise). When the train left the station, relief washed over us. As a passing thought, after we reached our hotel in Helsinki, we sat down in their restaurant and ordered a meal starting with a bowl of tomato soup. It probably was no better than a can of Campbell’s soup here in Canada, but it tasted soooooooo good. I can remember it to this day, 49 years later!!

Gordon Rostoker

A Scientific Conference in the Soviet Union Twenty Years Later

In 1990 my late husband Alan Bryan and I attended a conference sponsored by INQUA, the International Quaternary Association, held in the science centre of Novosibirsk, with a post-conference field excursion to Upper Paleolithic archaeological sites in the area of Irkutsk. Preceding the main conference was a tour of several days duration in Moscow, as guests in a special hotel run by the powerful Russian Academy of Sciences (that had not changed). Here are some of the incidents of the trip that impressed me.

I must first relate my prior feelings about the Soviet Union and “the Russkies”. I am from a U.S. military family, and from 1947 to 1950 we were posted in Heidelberg in what was then the American Zone in west Germany. 1948-1949 was the time of the Berlin Airlift, when Russia cut off Western land contact with the city. It was a very tense time. I remember that my mother was ordered to keep suitcases packed and ready; and if a Soviet military move began, to drive at top speed to the Swiss border. Now here in 1990 I was right in Moscow, and walking through the gate into the Kremlin itself. That day, and in the weeks that followed in Russia, the Cold War seemed well into the past.

Our walks through downtown Moscow showed that the Soviet Union was then in tough economic times, with long queues in the shops. Yet the organizers of the conference put out their very best for us. On the field excursion out of Irkutsk, the exposures in archaeological sites visited were well cleaned and the explanations of the stratigraphy very clearly presented. We were put up in bare but comfortable quarters in the small towns near the sites. In one small town the community kitchen staged a banquet for us, and it was a magnificent feast. When the time for toasts came, we visitors insisted, “Bring out the cooks”! Out they came, a group of ladies in aprons and babushkas, to a standing ovation.

I must relate one more incident inciting admiration for Russian people. Since the field excursion was a large group, we travelled out to the archaeological sites in a bus. One site lay in the woods a kilometer or so by a narrow muddy road on a slope. When the bus got in to the site, there was no space for it to turn around. The bus driver backed out, all the way on that long muddy road, without once losing the track. When we were finally back on pavement, there were cheers and applause. At the end of our excursion, one thoughtful member of our party took a small bottle of perfume out of her bag of small gifts and
presented it to the bus driver, “for his wife or girlfriend”. What a smile from the delighted driver! We all added our thanks and appreciation and congratulations to the Irkutsk organizers of the field excursion.

*Ruth Gruhn*

**(Mis)adventures with penguins**

In July 1990 I found myself sitting in the passenger seat of a tiny 2-person helicopter, clasping a couple of full bags on my lap; and feeling good about having a seat belt on, as there was no door to my right. This was my first ride in a helicopter, and we were over the Tasman Sea off the west coast of New Zealand. I was nervous—what the heck was I doing here anyway. But we were only a minute or two from our destination, an island about 5 kilometers from the coast; so my anxiety was short-lived. I would spend two weeks here studying Fiordland crested penguins with two of my former graduate students. Some 10 years earlier I had asked them separately to come up with a research project, preferably on penguins, that I could participate in. They had come through. Ian, now teaching at University of Canterbury in Christchurch, had supervised two M.Sc. students who worked on these penguins on Open Bay Islands (Taumaka is the Maori name for the largest one)—one was Colleen St. Clair, former undergraduate and now professor at the U of Alberta—and he wanted to continue the study. Lloyd, at the University of Otago, usually studied Adelie penguins in Antarctica; but now in the austral winter he was available to join us to investigate extra-pair paternity in Fiordland crested penguins.

Our expedition encountered its first difficulty in Dunedin. When Lloyd and I began packing our food supply in plastic buckets, used to prevent unwanted biota from travelling to the island, we discovered that I had collected the buckets I had brought on the bus from Christchurch but had neglected to get the lids. Considerable panic ensued as we called the bus company, to learn that they didn’t have them but may have sent them to the university. Lloyd began tracking them down there, and finally discovered them in the Zoology storeroom where the stores people were wondering what they were supposed to do with them. I breathed a big sigh of relief.

The next day Lloyd and I drove to Wanaka, a ski resort village in the central mountains of the South Island, enjoying the scenic drive and feeling good about getting through the bucket lid fiasco. We met Ian, who had driven from Christchurch, only to learn that he had forgotten the generator we needed for the centrifuge used for spinning blood samples from the penguins. Ian had already arranged to have the generator sent by bus, which should arrive later that night. The bus arrived on time at 10:30 but did not stop where we were waiting for it. We finally searched out the bus driver at a local pub, but the generator was not on the bus. Maybe it would be on the overnight bus, he suggested; so we went back to the hostel and to bed. The next morning, still no generator; but it should definitely be on the afternoon bus, we were told. Well, that threw off our schedule; but the silver lining for me was Lloyd and Ian deciding to show me Queenstown, just a couple of
hours south of us, a scenic drive through the mountains. On the way we stopped at a bungee jump above the Shotover River, where the boys offered me $50 to take the jump. I declined, not taking kindly to heights at the best of times. After a look around the town and a fine lunch, we returned to Wanaka, collected the newly arrived generator, and drove to Haast, our jumping off place just north of Fiordland National Park. After locating the helicopter pilot and arranging for departure for the island at 8 the next morning, we headed to the motor camp (motel) where we pieced together a meal of bread and cheese before turning in.

At 8 the next morning we drove to the pilot’s hangar, and learned he had left at 7:30. After waiting a couple of hours, we drove back to the motor camp, to hear that the helicopter had been there just after 8 and would return around noon. Back we went to the hangar, reloaded all our stuff, and arrived at the motor camp just as the helicopter touched down. Chaos followed as we unloaded, packed stuff into a cargo net, until away it went with Ian. Fifteen minutes later the copter collected me and the cargo net and then Lloyd on the third trip. Finally assembled, and despite the glitches, our research could begin. It seemed that the logistics of a penguin expedition was the most difficult part. After these problems, sitting in the rain watching penguin nests, crawling into caves to capture penguins, or struggling to hold a penguin immobile while Lloyd tried to extract some blood from a flipper vein was a piece of cake!

On my second trip to the island two months later, I began to think maybe I was wrong about the logistical vicissitudes of penguin research. Our trip went smoothly, and we had done well collecting blood samples from penguin chicks. We were heading back with a somewhat overladen VW Beetle in midafternoon when the VW wheezed, rattled, and ground to a halt. The engine had seized on a road with little traffic. At last a car came along and took one of us to the next town to arrange a tow. An hour or so later the tow truck arrived; and off we went to Hawea, where Ian decided to exchange the VW for the $110 cost of the tow (it was an ancient Beetle). After scrounging a ride to Wanaka and spending the night at the hostel, we caught a bus back to Christchurch the next day. My previous opinion was reinforced.

Jan Murie