

Fall 2023



MCLL News

Couples: Pairing off at MCLL

Still in honeymoon mode

In 2001 **Margaret Linklater** noticed **Ed Appelman** in her study group on Charlemagne. “I thought he was neat”, Margaret says. Ed had noticed her too. “She was pretty and smart, and had a cute accent,” Ed recalls, referring to the lilt she’d brought from Scotland 36 years earlier.

Ed had just retired from a South Shore school board. A few years before Margaret had completed a nursing career. Both in their mid-sixties, Ed was divorced and Margaret single. Ed invited her to see a play at the National Theatre School, and the rest is history.

Within a year they married. Margaret moved to Ed’s



place in Brossard— her first house. “My children and their families adopted her,” Ed says.

“Suddenly she had eight descendants, and no stretch marks. It’s been a 22-year honeymoon.”

A bicycle built for two



In winter 2019 **Howard King** was moderating the opening session of his Whodunit? study group when a petite redhead caught his eye. **Marie Gravelle** was 60 and two years earlier had returned from California, fleeing wildfires that destroyed her home and marriage.

“I was interested right away,” says Howard, a widower nine years older than Marie. “But I had that group for ten weeks, so figured I’d better not make a move. If she turns me down, it could be awkward!”

By the time the group wound up it was spring; Howard invited Marie to join him for a bike ride along the Lachine Canal. She lived downtown, so they met in Old Montreal, rented a tandem bike and set off for Lachine,

where Howard lived. “I was on the back and definitely not in control,” Marie laughs. “I can imagine Howard’s first impression of me, screaming like crazy!” That adventure led to many others. They now share an apartment and enjoy daily walks with Rihanna, their beloved Sealyham terrier.



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More MCLL couples

Never too late for happiness

As MCLL president and vice-president in the early 2000s, **Jan Meyers** and **Nancy Grayson** would meet before meetings to discuss the agenda. Nancy became good friends with Jan and his wife. Years after Jan's wife passed away, Jan and Nancy reconnected at an MCLL garden party followed by a walk on Nun's Island.

A civil engineer, Jan arrived from Holland in the fifties. Nancy had moved from the U.S. and ran a hospital social work department. Jan was in his early 80s and Nancy in her mid-70s. They were partners for ten years until Jan's death in 2020.

They visited Jan's sons in England, Amsterdam, and New Hampshire. "All three have children, and I have no grandchildren," says Nancy, "so it was great for me." On musical Sundays Nancy listened as Jan played the flute, often accompanied by



friends on piano and cello. They cooked at his Westmount house or her NDG condo.

Jan Meyers is tops among men

In every department I give him a ten... So opens a poem Nancy wrote for Jan in 2012, which she read at his memorial service.

Thea makes a move

Years ago **Thea Pawlikowska** was doing volunteer duty at the MCLL office when "in comes this great big guy with blue eyes." His name was **Dieter Kluepfel**. He was "kind of shy, but I got him talking and soon learned that his lab assistant was a friend of a friend," the single Thea recalls. Before he left, she gave him her number: That led to a pleasant dinner at La Louisiane in NDG.

Dieter's career had been in scientific research and Thea's in organization at the McGill Department of Medicine. They both loved opera, and Dieter, recently widowed, had season tickets. For seven years they shared their love for music, cooked together at his place near Atwater Market, and visited Thea's brother in Morin-Heights.

Dieter's vision was gradually deteriorating. Then a stroke and the COVID pandemic ended his independence. "His wonderful kids took him to Ottawa," where he lives in a care home near them. "It's very sad," says Thea, "but we still talk on the phone every day."

United by love of the arts

For many years, **Rory O'Sullivan** moderated MCLL study groups on opera while **Timmy (Thelma) Cohen** moderated SGs on art. Rory also loved art, and Timmy loved opera. In the early 2000s they started to go out.

"We were very close", says Timmy. Their first date was dinner at Rory's West Island home. They attended operas together locally and, in the years to follow, visited opera houses in Prague, Budapest, and Vienna. They went on cruises, drove to art and music events in the northern U.S., and visited their children's families out west and in Toronto. Rory's grandchildren, with their Irish names, "called me their Jewish grandmother," says Timmy, now in her late 80s.

Eventually Rory moved close to Timmy in Westmount. It was great to have him closer, but "I wouldn't have wanted to live with him," Timmy admits with a laugh. They enjoyed each other until Rory's death in 2015 at age 88. 🍁

Susan Purcell



A fresh face in our Sherbrooke Street space



Editor's note: In early October, Zoe Chiu, our new program administrator, began work at MCLL. She was a good sport about answering a few personal questions:

Tell us a bit about yourself.

My name is Zoe (or 趙雪心 in Chinese), and I am 25 years old. I grew up in the Greater Toronto Area and then lived in London, Ontario for seven years. I came to Montreal in the summer of 2022 with my partner, Michael, and our two cats, Phoebe and Toby. When I'm not working, I enjoy going on hikes and learning new crafts like painting, pottery, and crochet.

We've heard you had a baking business! What's your best recipe?

Yes! I owned a bakery in London called Zoe's Test Kitchen. One of my favourite recipes that I developed was a jumbo cookie with a

browned butter base. It was filled with mini M&Ms, crunchy pretzels, toffee bits, and salty potato chips. It was the best combination of salty and sweet!

Will you be on site at our offices every weekday?

For now, I will be working from the MCLL offices all week except on Tuesdays, when I can be found on the 11th floor, in room 1171.

You're new to Montreal. What do you like about it so far?

Montreal is such a beautiful city, with the historic architecture, large urban squares, and proximity to lakes and mountains. I love the relaxed energy and all the fun festivals that happen throughout the summer. Of course, I can't forget to mention this city's fantastic cuisine!

How do you kick back at the end of your day?

After work, I look forward to watching the sunset from my window while cooking dinner for my partner and me. Then it's time to cuddle with the cats on the couch while watching TV or the latest movie. 🍁

Learners from across Canada trade ideas

In early September, 2023, fifty people from two dozen later-life learning organizations met online for three-hours to discuss important issues. Attendees from seven provinces shared tips and tricks on how to bring in members, especially in view of COVID losses, recruit volunteers, find speakers, decide between virtual and in-person classes, and collaborate with sister organizations. Networking was facilitated with a ten-minute "ice-breaker" at the start, in which attendees paired off into breakout rooms to meet one another.

The meeting was organized by three MCLL members — **Frank Nicholson** chaired the proceedings, IT coordinator **Tim Skene** acted as Zoom host and explained MCLL's hybrid model, and president **Rick Jones** offered a briefing on courses involving groups in two cities, speaker exchanges, and other outreach initiatives MCLL has undertaken. Feedback was positive, with more than 80 per cent of survey respondents rating it useful and indicating they would definitely attend another such event in future. 🍁

Frank Nicholson

New moderators

Different backgrounds, same enthusiasm

Ross Brown

Towards Sustainable Cities & Communities

Ross Brown brings more than 30 years' experience to the table as a former climatologist with Environment and Climate Change Canada. Ross is new to the moderating role and cites his awareness of the rapid pace of global climate change as one of the main motivators for being involved in this study group. Sustainable cities are critical components of a sustainable planet, and Ross is glad to help the group explore this interesting and multifaceted topic.

Russell Chapman

Loyalty, Love and Betrayal in Selected Novels of John le Carré

Russell Chapman has read all of John le Carré's novels, "a lot of them multiple times." He enjoys not just le Carré's plots but his knowledge of character and motivation, his use of language, and his observation of the social classes. A retired financial planner, Russell delayed starting his five-week hybrid study group until early October, so participants could read the chosen novels before doing presentations. "I'm not a lecturer," he said before his group started. "I'll encourage others to speak. I hope I'll learn from them."

Elizabeth Moes

Creative Writing Workshop

A former high school English teacher, Elizabeth Moes retired ten years ago from a Toronto inner-city school. A search for adventure took her to Mexico for five years and then to Montreal, where her daughters were in university. Elizabeth studied motion-picture arts at Ryerson. Later, while completing a B.A., she wrote, produced, and directed a short film on the Temagami Anishnabai land claim, which drew a positive response. While her high schoolers mostly wrote against their will, says Elizabeth, her current group of four is motivated. In this online workshop, she posts the work of two writers each week, encouraging positive feedback.

Peter Margo

A Celebration of George and Ira Gershwin

"I have always loved the Gershwins," says Peter Margo, co-moderator of this in-person study group. Music has always been a big part of Peter's life, whether listening or singing in choirs performing works such as Mozart's Requiem. At MCLL for over 20 years, this retired manufacturer and "jack of all trades" has an avid interest in history and takes great pleasure in his three children and five grandchildren.

Henry Olders

Fixing the family doctor shortage

In his many years as psychiatrist, Dr. Olders gained useful insights into how our system functions and how it can be improved. His in-person workshop looks at how diet, behaviour, and the environment can lead to chronic inflammation and heightened risk for dementia, cancer, and other illnesses. He feels that relying on doctors alone to treat these conditions over-burdens the healthcare system, a problem which could be mitigated by better patient self-care. Dr. Olders hopes workshop participants will "get the message out" as they embrace healthier lifestyles.

Jim Wyant

Rome: Foundation to Augustus

Jim's favorite historical period is the 17th and 18th centuries, but he ended up co-moderating this hybrid study group with his friend Roger Humphrey because "Roger talked me into it." Now he's enjoying the experience. Jim spent 14 years pre-retirement managing Canadian fundraising for Vermont Public Television. Raised in NDG and now living in Pointe-Claire, Jim plays a lot of golf and helps out neighbours in need by offering them drives. Word is that Roger may have roped him into co-moderating another study group next semester, this time on the Roman Empire. 🇨🇦

Susan Purcell



A warm weekly *échange*

Projet Changement matches up individual MCLL members with French-speaking counterparts from a seniors' group in the downtown Plateau. The aim is for each person to improve his or her conversation skills in their second language.

One such pair are **Liz Parish** and **Lynda Nadeau**. Liz came to Montreal from Britain and has been an MCLL member since 2003. Her partner Lynda came to Montreal from the Saguenay region.



From left, Lynda Nadeau, Liz Parish and waiter Abdel in their favourite café

Liz and Lynda started meeting up for Wednesday morning coffee on Mont-Royal Avenue in fall 2022, and they're still meeting over a year later. They've become Wednesday morning regulars at their café: As soon as they enter, the waiter prepares their coffee just the way they like it and brings it to their table.

Lynda has learned a lot. "I speak in English and Liz speaks in French," she says. "In my regular life, I don't have much chance to speak English. Now I can even consider traveling to England." Liz chimed in: "I have more confidence than before. I make a point of using French at the market, and at the ticket wicket in the métro, which I didn't before. But now that the métro is free for seniors, I don't have as many opportunities!"

The two have similar values, and both have a sense of humour. Lynda provided an example. "We had a good laugh when we realized that in French we talk about our "petits-enfants" while in English they talk about their "grand-children." Now I wonder how that can be explained?"

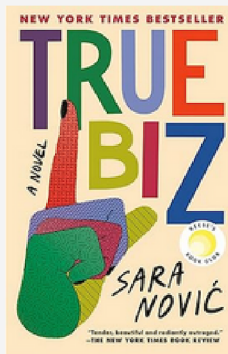
If you are interested in learning more about this program, contact Alain Lessard at convexmcll.scs@mcgill.ca 🇨🇦

Lorne Huston

Books

Teens make their way in hostile worlds

True Biz: A Novel by Sara Nović (2022)



This novel delves into the world of deaf adolescents and their families. It is the second novel by Sara Nović, who is herself deaf. *True Biz* (American Sign Language for “seriously” or “real talk”) focuses largely on a deaf teenager named Charlie.

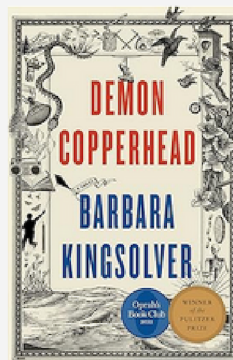
Her parents are both hearing and have had her fitted with a cochlear implant, a device surgically inserted into the skull and connected to auditory nerves. She never met a deaf person until she moved to a deaf boarding school for high school. Due to her mother’s desire to make Charlie seem “normal,” she never learned sign language, which in the deaf world means she can’t speak.

Charlie’s struggles with sudden isolation in a world of her peers contrast sharply with the happier case of Austin, who comes from a deaf family where everyone signs fluently. Adding to her rough start, Charlie’s cochlear implant is faulty. Nović aptly describes how with implants people have no way to separate background noise from speaking sounds. She makes the case that knowing sign language, not “hearing” sounds, is more useful in a deaf person’s world.

Charlie’s adjustment is helped by her school principal, February, who is hearing but grew up in a deaf family. She tells Charlie that being deaf is a cultural trait, not a disability, and purposely adds the long history of the community’s culture to Charlie’s curriculum to give her a better sense of who she is.

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Demon Copperhead by Barbara Kingsolver (2022)



A new book by Barbara Kingsolver is an occasion to rejoice. The writer of the popular *Poisonwood Bible* of 1998 now takes on Charles Dickens’s 1850 novel *David Copperfield*, retelling it as the late-1980s story of an orphan named Demon

Copperhead. (Damon Fields by birth, but called Copperhead for his red hair. “Demon” came later, an inevitable schoolyard moniker.) The setting is Appalachia, a deprived rural area of America where poverty, misfortune, and dispossession rule. Demon’s story takes him from birth in a trailer to age 18.

A failing and corrupt social system is an important theme, with a central focus on consequences of the opioid crisis in Appalachia as it affects our hero. Lightening up the grim picture is Demon’s unique narrative style: wry, ironic, and at times funny. His experiences of love and abuse, neglect and hardship are described in his own voice.

Demon’s talent for drawing and his love of art provide sanctuary from the difficulties he encounters. As a pre-teen, he gets fostered to a tobacco farmer; he later discovers his paternal grandmother who “had no use for...boys or men,” keeping him only a short while before passing him on to the local football coach and his daughter. Life improves in Demon’s teenage years, as he falls in love and excels at football. This ends when he suffers an injury requiring medication, which leads to drug addiction. Fortunately our boy is resilient and survives in the face of extreme adversity.

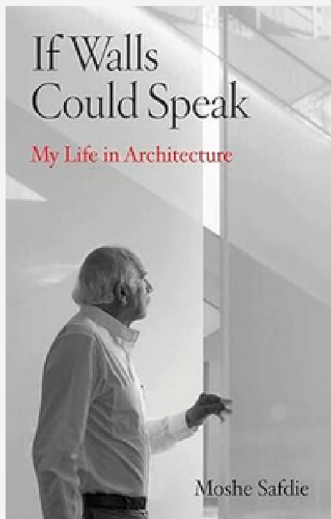
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Books

An inspiring respect for place and culture

If Walls Could Speak, My Life in Architecture by Moshe Safdie (2022)



This autobiography follows Moshe Safdie's career, from his early formative years in Israel and Montreal and his teaching at Harvard, to his latest mega-projects in Singapore and China. It is told in such a compelling way, I was hooked from the first page.

The book is laid out as a voyage through the various projects that inspired Safdie and includes a number of iconic Canadian buildings such as Habitat'67, the National Gallery of Canada, Québec's Musée de la civilisation, and Vancouver Library Square. Along the way the reader is treated to fascinating insights into how Safdie weaves the design narrative, taking into account the purpose of a building, the needs of the client, the geography of the site, the practical aspects of getting the thing built, and most important, the functionality and inspirational qualities of a building for the people living and working in it.

Safdie takes much of his design inspiration from very careful study of the geography of a proposed building site, what he terms "unleashing the power of place." This process is exemplified in the design of the Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art in Bentonville, Arkansas, that integrates the building into a series of dams across a natural water course, and the Khalsa Heritage Centre in Anandpur Sahib, Punjab, that is spread over several hilltops echoing the hilltop forts that are a part of Sikh culture.

This respect for place and culture is a common thread running through the book, and I found it quite inspiring. This book will change the way you look at buildings; I heartily recommend it. 🍁

Ross Brown

from page 6

True Biz: A Novel

Each chapter in this novel begins with ASL signs. I loved learning how ASL is a rich, full language with its own expressions, not just a letter-by-letter translation of English. There is even a different version for the Black American community, which confirms its cultural significance in the deaf world. 🍁

Marie Gravelle

from page 6

Demon Copperhead

Demon Copperhead is a great read, a satisfying page-turner at once humorous and heartbreaking.

Kingsolver was co-recipient of the 2023 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction and the 2023 Women's Prize for Fiction for this novel. 🍁

Sandra Duchow



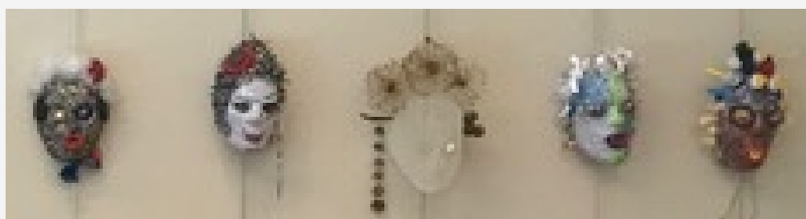
For cancer survivor, creativity promotes healing

The year she turned 70, artist **Liliane Aberman** was diagnosed with lymphoma. Hospital staff subjected her to five full hours being fitted with a mesh mask to protect her face from radiation, a failed effort redone the next day in half an hour. “They tortured me! Then they were going to throw the mask out,” Liliane recalls with characteristic cheerfulness. Rescued from the waste bin, the mask imprinted with her face became the inspiration for the colourful exhibit of five decorated masks now on display in our lounge.

At home she added organic matter to the plastic mesh from her collection of seeds and other objects from nature. Happy with the result, she asked the hospital for more masks that they would have discarded. “In working these I became more



Photos: Robert Winters



experimental, and unlike the first mask, I cut into the mesh to alter the mouth and eye areas and added collage material of different sorts.”

Having cancer has made Liliane, now 79, realize how fragile and precious life is. “The (cancer) journey taught me that I could find small pleasures along the way, humour in the least likely situations, and moments of normalcy in the midst of precariousness.” Liliane’s works remain on display until the end of fall semester. 🍁

Susan Purcell

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We’d love to hear from you!

Please send your comments or suggestions to suepurcell@videotron.ca


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