

THE VOICE MAGAZINE

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Volume 14 Issue 4



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We love to hear from you! Send your questions and comments to voice@ausu.org, and please indicate if we may publish your letter.

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NATURE NOTES:

from the backyard to the biosphere

By Zoe Dalton

Make No Bones About It

Ah bones, we hear a lot about them. Drink milk for your bones, exercise for your bones, and take hormone therapy for your bones. They get a lot of press, these 206 pieces of rigid material hanging out inside the human body. Of course, they are pretty handy things. Linked together with admirable engineering skill, these units became so useful a commodity that a whole branch of the animal kingdom decided to accept the common idea of the endoskeleton. Fish, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals (collectively known as subphylum *Vertebrata*) all share this internal structural feature.

All vertebrates have a similar basic body plan, with head, trunk and some sort of tail structure; a well-developed digestive system; and a similarly organized heart. But the endoskeleton, comprised in almost all cases of bone (the exception being, of course, sharks and rays, the cartilaginous fishes) is one of the most fascinating of our shared evolutionary characteristics. An internal collection of rigid units, the bones making up our skeletal systems serve essential roles -- structural, protective, and chemical -- in the vertebrate body.

Nearly as strong as steel, but a fraction of the weight, bones are highly functional from a utility perspective. However, they are much more than handy, lightweight supports for the vertebrate body. Bones also serve as anchorage points for muscles and other connective tissue, and play a vital role in some of our bodies' key chemical processes.

Beginning as cartilage in developing vertebrates, bones start early in young animals' lives to go through a process known as *ossification*. This process sees cartilaginous structures gradually transformed into bony material. Fascinatingly, in humans, youngsters' skeletons are quite different than adults, as they are made up of not only cartilaginous units that will later ossify and become more rigid, but also comprised of a greater number of individual units (300 vs. 206 in adults). Some of these 300 will eventually fuse into the more familiar skeletal layout seen in adults.

But ossification isn't the end of the story when it comes to bone development. In fact, bones are in a constant state of flux throughout a vertebrate's lifetime. Hungry osteoclast cells continuously tunnel away and break down the structure, while handy osteoblast cells simultaneously build new bone. As anyone who has had a broken a bone knows, these bits of calcified cartilage holding us up do heal, and remarkably well. Thanks is entirely due to the work of these busy cells.

Of course, no productive work gets done in this world without a good base of communication. Such is certainly true for our osteoblast and osteoclast friends. With a complex (and still little understood) communication network, these cell types send messages to one another indicating whose turn it is to do what. Where this communication becomes especially important to us is at the exact point where calcium enters the picture.

The fact is, calcium is vital to all sorts of essential physiological processes in our bodies (e.g., muscle functioning and neural communication). Bones are at the root of how well (or indeed whether) these processes work. This is because bones,

essentially a matrix of collagen (which is a protein) hardened by the laying down of calcium salts, can act as either a source or a sink for calcium in the body.

While the equation is not quite so simplistic, the story goes something like this. Where the diet is high in calcium, the constant osteoblast-osteoclast relationship results in a gross uptake of calcium. Thus, bones act as a sink for this mineral. Where the opposite is true (i.e., when the diet is low in calcium), the blood-bone communication network indicates that the equilibrium is off, and bones are broken down to release calcium until that all-important dynamic blood-bone balance is restored. Eeks! None of us likes the sound of bones being broken down.

Female humans are particularly troubled by the phenomenon of bone loss, often losing approximately 5 per cent of bone mass each year following menopause. Why? Well, like so many processes in the human body, both bone loss and bone development are controlled by hormones. With the hormonal changes following menopause (namely, the fall in oestrogen production), calcium is funnelled out of the skeleton, leading to a condition known as osteoporosis. Yep, empty pores where once there was solid, calcium-filled mass. Interestingly, no other female animals (and not all female humans) suffer from this condition, something scientists still have yet to figure out.

Rarely thought of unless we fall off the slide and hear a loud crack, or have to have therapy to ensure that they stick around for as long as the rest of our body plans to, bones do deserve a bit of appreciation now and again. So, let's raise our glasses to the ever-useful bone... *Crack* (just kidding).



Stephen Harper and the Dismantling of Canada, Bit-by-Bit

El-ahrairah Jones

Well, it's a week or so *apres*-election and the world hasn't come to an end with the handing of the mandate to the Harper Conservatives. Most of the political commentary that I've heard, in fact, is painting the election outcome as amongst the best of all possible worlds. The Conservative minority is not too strong, say the pundits. As well, a minority government has to work together, cooperatively, in order to get anything accomplished. This way of getting things done is perfectly in line with the moderate mindset of most Canadians, straying neither too far right nor too far left.

It seems that to many political observers, the most surprising and refreshing thing about the whole process was the fact that Mr. Harper appears to be, well, just one of us after all. It turns out, by all appearances, that he is not a rabid fascist. There is much continuing natter and chatter about his statesman-like demeanour throughout the campaign. Most of the pundits seem simply tickled pink that he was able to get through the whole thing without threatening to re-establish witch burning or immediately ceding sovereignty to the United States. Not even once did he or any member of his Conservative Party mention government-mandated tar-and-feather campaigns directed against "them thar hommusekkshuals found within the city limits after dark." The building of debtors' prisons and concentration camps for the homeless was not a plank in the party's platform. And whenever the issue of education was raised in debate, Harper somehow managed to assuage progressives by getting through it without promising a return to the basics of "readin', writin' and cipherin'."

Perhaps nobody played a stronger role than outgoing Prime Minister Paul Martin in the re-envisioning of Harper and his bunch of disgruntled Western separatists, Thatcherite voodoo-economists, and religious reactionaries as political moderates. The ludicrous antics of Martin and in his campaign managers in trying to paint Harper as some sort of anti-Christ dictator-in-waiting, ready to put teams of well-armed storm troopers in every city of the nation, was sort of like the reverse of "damning with faint praise." By trying to depict the Conservatives in such a grotesquely cartoonish light, they in fact managed to make themselves seem rather genteel and socially cautious.

The problem with all of this, of course, is that the Conservatives are not politically or socially moderate. The problem is that their agenda *is* to move Canada closer and closer to the sort of ultra-right wing politics we see under the Bush regime down south. Surely, anyone who has paid attention to the history of Harper and his gang can see that. It's just that they favour getting there incrementally, rather than all-at-once. Gradually, piece by little piece, they will lend their weight to the dismantling of our health care system. They will help, ever so slightly, to increase the widening gap between the rich and the poor. One step at a time, Canada will become and more intolerant and colder-hearted nation. It will be a long hard battle just to get back to where we began a few months ago. Oh boy.



Got Attitude? Alberta Ballet has.

Alberta Ballet has just launched Attitude – a new network to connect young people to the work of Alberta Ballet.

You are invited to join us for a free performance of Alberta Ballet's *An Evening with Gershwin and other works* (Calgary - February 9th 2006 and Edmonton - February 16th 2006).

Having attitude pays. Not only will you get to see the Ballet, but also there is a casual reception before the performance. Artistic Director Jean Grand-Maître will briefly introduce the program and suggest things to look for. If you have never been to the ballet before or have limited experience, this performance will change your "best guess" of what dance and ballet are.

To accept our invitation and learn more details, visit Attitude's new website www.albertaballetattitude.com. You are encouraged to bring a friend, but space is limited so please reply early. There are no catches. This event is generously sponsored by EPCOR and Big Rock. There is no cost to participate, but donations are most welcome. This is an opportunity for young people to experience Alberta Ballet, and we are delighted to be able to connect you to this opportunity.

That Seppi! See if I ever date him again! Especially since it would have been his job to clean up Puggins's cucky poops.



Finally! Here's your money you no-good filcher! Oh, Puggins, how you must have suffered! But it's alright, now! Come to Mumsy!



Heh, heh! Guess I musta spoiled 'er. She's grown awful partial to tea 'n' kippers.



WAAAH!!!

Psst! Couldn't ye've waited 'til I grabbed the loot?



The Value of Discussion at Athabasca University

Rebecca Brewer

I take distance classes because they fit into my life, but I also take them because I've attended campus-based schools and found Athabasca University classes to be as challenging and as productive. I've had to apply myself, and work as hard as a student who attends classes. There are, of course, certain elements of campus-based life that I knew would be lacking at a distance university. The biggest of these elements is classroom conversations and the interaction with other students. To counter this lack of interaction, AU classes may offer a discussion board or you may have the option, if you prefer, to take group study classes. Athabasca University professors are also available during office hours for one-on-one interaction should you need it.

Should these options fail you, however, you are left with little help and it can be very frustrating. The discussion boards are often not used enough to be helpful. The few classes that I've taken with this component have often been filled with students of past classes and the discussion borders on irrelevant. Not all classes are offered through online study, and thus we are mostly dependent on our tutors for discussion or interaction. Unfortunately, I don't live in the Alberta time zone that many of my tutors do, and often their office hours fall too early or too late in the evening for me to reach them during these times. When a tutor has hours only once a week, and they aren't quick to respond on email, it makes contacting them difficult.

Let me explain further. When I attended a campus-based school, it seemed like every class I attended had at least one student who raised their hand just to hear themselves talk. I know that not all in-class conversation is particularly educational, and not everyone has the same questions or the need for discussion. But usually such discussion offers perspective, and it can often allow for a better understanding of the material. The best part of in-class discussion was when professors taught you something outside of the texts. Professors are not there to reiterate textbooks. Professors are most helpful when they can give you an alternate perspective, or a "real-world" example of when the material being studying was applied.

I'm not expecting tutors to have time in their office hour time blocks to have conversations about the weather or trade life stories. When a student calls, it's best if that student has something to say, and can give the tutor a clear message as to what the call is for. Sometimes, however, it would be nice to just discuss the works, like you would in a classroom setting. When I've tried this, I've often been met by a professor asking me what exactly I would like to discuss and do I have a thesis prepared? I'm not looking for them to write my paper for me. Nor am I looking for them to fill my head with what I should think. It's just a discussion. A discussion that might help me understand the meaning of a concept or the relevance of what I'm studying. The reasons for the calls might vary, but I believe that most students aren't making calls to tutors because we have nothing better to do. We are trying to learn and gain the most out of our classes as we can.

For the most part, I've been impressed with Athabasca University and its tutors. AU has tried to provide students with the right mix of flexibility and interaction. It encourages initiative and independence. Students can write an evaluation on any tutor or class you've taken, and someone will read your feedback. The discussion boards, the types of classes offered, and the tutor's office hours are all attempts to make Athabasca University a better university.

Perhaps the flaws in the system could be dealt with by giving tutors less students or by making interaction part of our grade. I don't pretend to know what it takes to run a university or even a university class for that matter. I only know that as students, we should be allowed the chance to discuss, without feeling like we are wasting anyone's time or looking for an easy way out.



Compiled by Barbara Godin

*You don't get to choose how you're going to die. Or when.
You can only decide how you're going to live. Now.*

-- Joan Baez

January 23, 1789, **Frances Brooke**, author, died in England. Frances wrote *The History of Emily Montague*. She is said to be the first novelist in North America and *The History of Emily Montague* has been acknowledged as the first Canadian novel.

January 3, 1827, **Letitia Creighton (Youmans)** was born in Hamilton Township in Upper Canada. She was the founder of the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) in Canada. Under Letitia's direction, the members of the WCTU worked tirelessly to find ways to combat the evils of alcohol. As well, Letitia became an outstanding speaker and campaigner for women's rights. The WCTU continued to grow, opening chapters throughout the country. In 1885, a national WCTU was formed and Youmans became the first president, a position she held until 1889.

January 30, 1836, marked the death of **Betsy Ross**. Betsy became known as the person who made the first American flag. However, since the story was not told until 1870 and by Betsy's grandson, there is some question as to its validity. The story was first published in *Harper's Monthly* publication in 1873 and quickly became a legend that has been included in many school textbooks.

January 9, 1914, entertainer **Gypsy Rose Lee** was born. She received worldly recognition for bringing class to the profession of stripping. Gypsy had many other talents. She wrote several novels, her first one in 1943 entitled *Lady of Burlesque*. She also penned a play in 1945 entitled *Doll Face*. In addition Miss Lee became a film and television celebrity. *Gypsy: A Memoir* (1999) is the title of the autobiography of Gypsy Rose Lee. It was eventually brought to Broadway as a musical.

January 28, 1914, **Nellie McClung** along with the Political Equality League, organized a mock play entitled *Women's Parliament*, in the Walker Theatre in Winnipeg. The purpose of the demonstration was to secure the right to vote for women in Manitoba. The theater was packed with women of all ages and the play was successful in bringing attention to this important issue.

January 28, 1968, **Sarah McLachlan**, a popular singer and songwriter was born in Halifax, Nova Scotia. In 1996, Sarah founded "Lilith Fair," a female music festival whose purpose is to advance the careers of women in the music business. As a result of her ingenuity, in 1998 Sarah received the Elizabeth Cady Stanton Visionary Award.

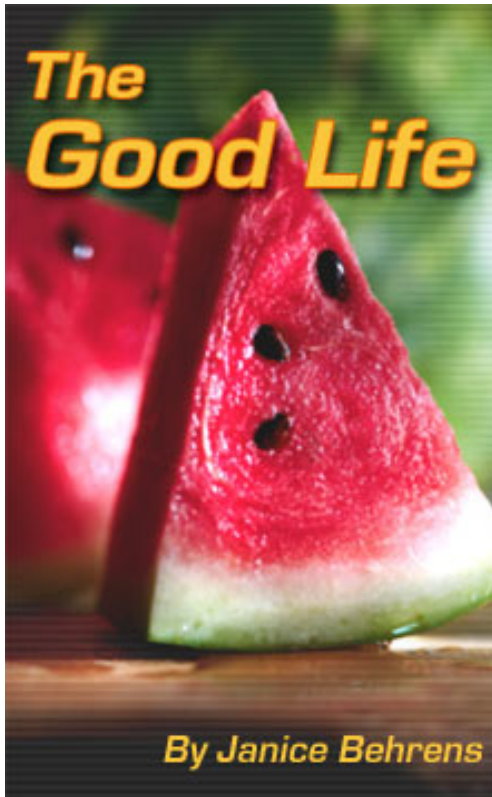
January 19, 1989, **Heather Erxleben** Heather became the first female combat soldier in Canada, following her graduation from the Canadian Forces Base in Wainwright Alberta.

January 22, 1992, **Roberta Bondar**, Canada's first female astronaut rocketed into space on the US space shuttle Discovery. Bondar's application was chosen from thousands of applicants.

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Welcoming the Year of the Dog

Last Saturday night, a group of us got together to celebrate the arrival of the lunar new with a good old-fashioned Chinese banquet. We gathered at 5:30 p.m. at our favourite Chinese eatery, a spacious dining room with red and gold veined wallpaper, crisp white tablecloths, and voluminous paper lanterns hanging from the ceilings.

From the second floor vantage point of the dining room, as we sipped our Chinese green tea, we watched the last dull red glow of the sunset fade away and the lights of the city forming constellations. As the room began to fill up with arriving diners, we began to reflect on the riches and abundance within our own lives.

Leaving it up to our savvy Chinese friends to do the culinary decision-making, we dined on things such as delectable steamed rock cod (symbolizing abundance), long chow mein noodles (for long life), plump and perfectly cooked oysters (for good fortune and prosperity in business dealings), and Chinese broccoli (a token for good health for our parents).

Throughout the evening, there was no music in the room, just the clatter of cutlery and joyful noise of conversation and laughter. At

the end of the meal, our waiter brought a silver tray bearing a fortune cookie for each of us (actually, a western addition to the Chinese meal experience, one that began several decades ago in San Francisco). When our daughter broke open her cookie, the message read, "You have a great capacity to enjoy the simple pleasures in life." I thought to myself, *if there is only one thing that I could teach her, there could be no better lesson than that.*

I love the way the Chinese traditionally greet the arrival of the New Year. Not with a wall of noise and drunken debauchery, but instead with a gathering of friends and family over a sumptuous feast. It is a way of physically and symbolically paying tribute to the cornucopia of riches that constitute the best that life has to offer. At this point in the year, right after the excesses of the Western holiday season, so many of us are feeling a dampening of the spirits brought on by the arrival of Visa bills, colds and flus, ominous politics, and the lingering effects of ill weather.

It is perhaps appropriate, with so many wolves gathering at the door, that this is the Year of the Dog. It is especially important at this time, then, to bring some true heartfelt celebration into our lives. We may be in for a rocky ride throughout the rest of this year, but as J.R.R. Tolkien once pointed out, it is always best to begin any journey in a pleasurable way, even if you suspect it won't end very well.

Words, Words, Words

Pam Pelmous



I believe it was Bernard Shaw who said "As it is impossible to say exactly what one means, it follows that it is impossible to mean exactly what one says." Aside from using this statement as a defense when someone misconstrues your declarations, it provides a good deal of insight into a question that I have been intrigued by for years. My intriguing question is, "How do we know that the words we choose are right for not only conveying our message, but also for having your listener understand it in the way that you mean?" Bernard Shaw would have you think that from the point of view of precision, it is impossible.

Though precise language is the goal of most language experts, it is one they seldom achieve. So, how achievable is the goal for other non-linguistically-minded individuals? Communication studies provide some insight into verbal/body messages, how they are interpreted, and what affects interpretation. Anthropology and history examine the social and political effects of communication. But what can we say of language, specifically words, used on a daily basis by individual persons?

We can generally see the effects of language by people's reactions. When you tell someone: "you look nice today," they often respond with a smile indicating pleasure. However, if the recipient of the compliment were to deconstruct the message to the basis of words, the word "look" could mean strictly physical appearance, general demeanor, or both, as interpreted by the outside world. The word "nice" could mean any range of compliments, from "pretty" to "cute" to "respectable." The word "today" could mean that today, in particular, the person "looks nice," or that only today the person "looks nice," or that today, like every other day, the person "looks nice." The point is, certain conventions exist in language that people generally accept and react to in a very binary way (i.e., accept it or don't accept it). What I wonder is what, exactly, people mean by the words they choose, how often people pay attention to their word choice, and what exactly *do* words mean, separate from the expected reaction.

This internal debate arose when I was struck by the word "courage." I have often heard people label themselves or others as "courageous" or at times "non-courageous." This led me to wonder what the word meant apart from the implication that "courage" is a good quality to have. A gander into my handy *Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, provided the following illumination (ahem): "courage: n. 1. the ability to do something that frightens one. 2. strength in the face of pain or grief." (Soanes, 2001).

My problem with this definition of courage is that humans will never do something that frightens them, unless doing otherwise frightens them more. That is my understanding of fears. I am, I admit, terrified of heights. I will not climb tall ladders, look over the side of tall buildings, or do anything that will cause me to see the ground 10 meters or more underneath me. I will never do this because of cowardice or whatever. However, consider the hypothetical situation of my daughter being in grave danger and the only way I could help her is by overcoming my fear of heights and I did so. I would not call this courage. My courage would be the result of weighing consequences. I would be more frightened by inaction than by action. Another hypothetical situation is if I decided to overcome my fear by climbing a tall ladder to prove to myself and to others that I can do it. In this case, a fear of ridicule or a fear of loss of honour would be stronger than my fear of heights. As it stands to this day, I have not been courageous with heights, but I have shown strength in the face of pain or grief. Does this make me courageous? Or are the acts courageous in of themselves? Is there really a distinction? Or perhaps it is not courage at all that I possess, but some other qualities that may appear to others as courageous? Stubbornness can certainly be among those misconstrued qualities.

I conclude that words are primarily emotional. Separate from their denotative meaning is their connotative meaning, which produces reactions. Words can wound, they can please, they can soothe, and they can destroy. Words elicit learned reactions, and people use words based more on these reactions since, in the end, denotative meaning is incomprehensible. After all, we have to use words to define words.

Take what you want from this article; I did not say it as I meant it anyway.

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INTERNATIONAL NEWS DESK

What's new here and around the world

Mandy Gardner



Rabenmutter or Hausmutterchen?

Mandy Gardner

A recent poll has revealed that Germany is the world leader in childless women, a statistic the country is not proud of. 30% of German women have chosen to remain childless, a fact which has prompted some radical proposals for a population boost and exposed some underlying tension in women of child-bearing age.

Emma Pearse of Women's eNews cites two major categories for mothers in her country: *rabenmutter* and *hausmutterchen*. Translating roughly to "uncaring mother" and "subordinate housewife," these terms affect how women feel about their career and family choices. A woman is only an "uncaring mother" when she has a job, however a woman without a job who stays home with her children "implies being a little stupid" (Kirstin Klopp-Koch, *Germany in Angst Over Low Birthrate*). What's a girl to do? It seems that more and more women are deciding to complete their education and find jobs rather than start families. In fact, the percentage of highly educated German women who choose

not to have children is a whopping 40%. Professor Norbert Schneider of Mainz University has said that the "classic family picture is still very much alive in Germany. Women are expected to look after the children while men go out and work" (*The Guardian*). While that may be true, it seems that a huge number of women are going against convention and becoming self-sufficient.

Ursula von der Leyen is not one of them. An ally of German chancellor Angela Merkel and a mother of seven, von der Leyen has proposed progressive child-care laws that she thinks would persuade women and "deeply uncertain men" (*The Guardian*) to have families. Her ground-breaking idea? Two month's paternity leave in return for state funded child support. She wants men to shake off their traditionalised views and step up when it comes to being fathers, and says of the sexist views held by many Germans, "I'm astonished that women still have to justify themselves when they want to work. No father has to do this."

The Christian Democrat Party (currently leading Germany's coalition government) has made child care reforms a priority in retaliation to remarks that inadequate daycare, a short school day (ending at 1:00pm) and uninvolved fathers with classical beliefs will cause the German population to dwindle to nothing by 2020.

Family practise business consultant Erler says, "We are a nation that is shrinking. Perhaps some people will be happy about this, but it is true that the German people will become extinct if we don't deal with this problem of how a woman can have a child and continue working."

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Women's eNews; Emma Pearse, *Germany in Angst Over Low Birth Rate* - <http://www.womensenews.org/article.cfm/dyn/aid/2253> - 01/11/05

AUSU THIS MONTH



AUSU Election, Now Under Way

The 2006 AUSU election is now open, and members can expect to see campaign materials from candidates on this website and in our forums. Below is the candidate sheet, as approved by our Chief Returning Officer, Bevan Iwaskow. Candidates will be invited to create campaign posters for you to view, and as they become available you'll be able to access them by clicking on each candidate's name. If the name is blue and underlined, then there is a poster ready for viewing. We hope you all turn out to vote this year, for the council that will provide student services through March 2008!

This year's candidates are:

MacDonald McInnis - Calgary, AB
Joy Kryz - Edmonton, AB
Jamie Czerwinski - Sherwood Park, AB
Sarah Whaley - Surrey, BC
Lisa Priebe - Calgary, AB
Karl Low - Calgary, AB
Tania Davies - Carlsbad, CA
Alica Robichaud - Saint John, NB
Zil-E-Huma Lodhi - Waterloo, ON
Barbara Rielly - Westport, ON
Megan McIntyre - Niagara Falls, ON
Angele Gaudette - Sudbury, ON
Real Beaulieu - Nepean, ON
Peter Tretter - Greely, ON
Lonita Fraser - Hamilton, AB

AUSU Course Evaluations

Would you like to know what students have thought of an AU course? If so, you are not alone. Many students find the input of their peers invaluable when selecting courses or a program of study. AU students may not have cafeterias and hallways in which to share this knowledge, but AUSU has provided an alternative: AUSU Course and Program Evaluation surveys. Accessible through the "Course Evaluations" link on the right side of the top bar of AUSU.org, these surveys ask a series of questions about AUSU courses and programs. Students may rate each course or program only once, to ensure the validity of the results, so you must be logged in to access a survey form. Anyone, however, may view the results. If you haven't already, please rate some courses you have taken so that others may benefit from your experience. Note: these surveys are not the ones that AU distributes with their course manuals. No AU staff or faculty member has access to the AUSU website, nor can they determine who has filled out a survey. Your anonymity is assured.

AUSU 2005/06
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Dear Barb:

Another year has begun and I find myself at a loss for how to do my taxes. I am a single mother and do not have much money. I cannot afford to have someone else do my taxes for me. Do you have any tips? My taxes are very basic. I have student loans, scholarships and tuition. I don't know where on the tax form to put the amounts. Thank you so much Barb.

Anonymous - Alberta

I guess it is that time of year again. I'm sure there are lots of people who feel as you do. There are a couple of ways to do your taxes that are quite reasonable in cost and easy in process.

You can go to the Intuit website (<http://www.quicktaxweb.ca/content/index/index.php?b=intuit>) and do your taxes online for under \$20.00 and get your refund in as little as eight days. QuickTaxWeb is a product from Intuit Canada, which

also produces Quick Tax Standard. Quick Tax Standard can be purchased through many retail outlets and comes on CD. One of the features of Quick Tax Standard is that you can do an unlimited number of tax returns for individuals with an income of less than \$25,000. Therefore, you may be able to do tax returns for your friends or family members.

Both products have step-by-step instructions, to make sure you are able to maximize the tax credits to which you are entitled. You simply input your information when prompted, such as tuition, rent, child-care expenses etc. The program will put your information in the proper areas on the tax form and do the calculations for you. I personally have used Quick Tax Standard for several years and I have never had a problem. As well, when using this product, you can NetFile your return (i.e., submit the completed form to Revenue Canada over the Internet). You may receive your refund in as little as two weeks.

If you do not have a computer, or you just do not feel confident enough to do your taxes yourself, there is another option. Providing you have a simple tax situation and your income is low, you may be able to get your tax return done free of charge. Canada Revenue Agency provides Volunteer Tax Preparation Clinics throughout Canada. To find out if there is one near you, call Canada Revenue Agency at 1-800-959-8281 or visit their website at <http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/menu-e.html>.

I hope this information helps.

E-mail your questions to advice.voice@ausu.org. Some submissions may be edited for length or to protect confidentiality: your real name and location will never be printed. This column is for entertainment only. The author is not a professional counsellor and this column is not intended to take the place of professional advice.



How Shall We Judge

Pretend you are born in the dark of night in a cold room in the shadow of an overpass. Pretend there is a single naked light bulb hanging from the ceiling. Say your mother is always pulling the thin pink blanket over your shoulders with hands still shaking from delirium tremens. In the room next door, your father is yelling about what he will do to her if she tries to pack that battered blue suitcase she has underneath the bed. What would you learn to live without? The sound of cellos in a darkened concert hall? The smell of books in the library? The taste of sweet black grapes eaten on a blanket in the sun?

Or what if you were the son of busy parents who never had a moment's interest in you. Say you spend hours, days, weeks, months, years, perfecting the magic trick of becoming completely invisible. Could you feel the atoms inside you spreading themselves apart? Could you walk through airports and shopping malls without ever being seen? Could you take enough pain-killers to turn back the clock? Many years later, lying in bed with your wife beside you, could she make herself big enough to ever fill up all the spaces inside of you?

Say you were once an ordinary kid in class, building frontier forts out of popsicle sticks and bringing in your Green Lantern comic book collection for show and tell. How about if you woke up one morning with voices inside your head, and everything in the world has become slightly off-kilter? What if you spent years of your life fighting off invisible demons in sterile waiting rooms? What if the most terrible sound in the universe was the sound of the doorbell ringing in the middle of the day, when you just cannot seem to find the energy to get out of bed?

What if your daughter's great destiny is to decipher with a scalpel the mysteries of the human brain, or write the saddest love songs ever written, and yet she is born in a hut in the mountains, just as the bombs are released from planes overhead? What if this girl, whose hair you are brushing back, has ten seconds to live? If you lived then, if you walked away from the burning village, what choice would you make between vengeance and love?

Given these possibilities, who would you be?

AU E-LETTERS UPDATE

AU launched the e-letters project on December 15 to enable undergrads to view registration, withdrawal, extension, exam and final grade letters online. The response to the program has been monitored by AU staff in these initial weeks.

The response rate so far has been high. Business Analyst Patricia Soluk reports that so far 6120 students have opted to receive e-letters, while 3080 have chosen to continue receiving their letters by postal mail. AU staff are also impressed with the new program as they note that this allows them to send out letters much more quickly and alert students to important changes immediately. However, AUSU notes that students must make certain they log in to MyAU regularly to check for letters if they wish to receive new information as soon as it is released. A primary benefit of this new program is that e-letters will be retained online so you can retrieve the information any time you need it without waiting to call the university during business hours.

AU hopes to convert more letters to e-letter format and to bring the graduate centers on board as well.

Random Acts of Kindness



From
Where
I Sit

Hazel Anaka

Lost in the retail waves of red Valentine's Day merchandise is the fact that Random Acts of Kindness Week will be soon upon us. I tried unsuccessfully to research this topic on the Internet. Like so many Internet searches for information, there were dead ends ("this page cannot be displayed" messages) and just downright misleading results. Life's too short for some of this stuff!

Instead, let me rely on a little book on my shelf called "More Random Acts of Kindness." The inscription on the front is dated December 1995 and reminds me that the book itself was a random act of kindness. I received it from an acquaintance that knew I had just lost my father in late November. Ten plus years later, it reminds me that someone cared about my pain. That's the beauty of kindness. We remember it with warmth and fondness long after it happened. Although some people have turned the act of remembering hurtful things into an art form, even if it kills them.

According to the book, in 1982 Anne Herbert scrawled the words "practice random kindness and senseless acts of beauty" on a placemat in Sausalito, California. From there, it grew to bumper stickers, a 1993 book, articles, radio messages, and a university class assignment to do random acts of kindness. Twenty-four years later, it's still alive and kicking.

In a growing climate of rudeness, incivility, mindless hurts and deliberate acts of hatred, it's more important than ever to recapture the simple essence of the message. Ella Wheeler Wilcox's words at the beginning of the book say it all:

"So many gods, so many creeds,
So many paths that wind and wind,
While just the art of being kind
Is all the sad world needs."

My reading of this poem tells me there are many religious practices and beliefs and many well-intentioned but round-about plans that exist to fix this world. There need not be royal commissions, task forces, religious leaders, research projects, budgets or legislation. Maybe, just maybe, simple acts done one-on-

one will turn the tide.

Letting the guy merge into your lane when you'd really rather ram his SUV into next week may be a start. Using your cell phone only when it doesn't negatively impact the people around you may be another idea to try. Pay for the coffee for the guy behind you at Tim Horton's. A few years ago, my daughter's high school president spearheaded a project whereby every kid from grade 5 to grade 12 anonymously wrote one kind thing about each other person in their class. Those comments were collected and collated. The children then received all of these warm words directed specifically at them.

Maybe this February re-think the chocolates and plush bears, the diamond jewellery, flowers and dinner out, instead try some tender words, heartfelt smiles, genuine patience and random acts of kindness both with strangers and the ones you love. Well, maybe jewellery would be okay, from where I sit.

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SCHOLARSHIPS & AWARDS

Contributed by Zil-E-Huma Lodhi

TALK ABOUT CANADA SCHOLARSHIP QUIZ

Value: \$500 - \$5,000

Number of Awards: 61

Application Deadline: February 20

Description: For Canadians or permanent residents. Must be eligible to attend a post-secondary institution by September 2006 and participate in the online Talk About Canada Scholarship Quiz from January 23 - February 20. Must achieve perfect score on the quiz

Instructions: For further information, please visit the website posted below

Contact Information:

Judy Anderson

Program Manager / Directrice

Operation Dialogue / Opération Dialogue

Web Site: www.operation-dialogue.com/index.html

Email Address : janderson@operation-dialogue.com

GM'S "DRIVEN TO SUCCEED" SCHOLARSHIP GIVEAWAY

Value: \$2,000

Number of Awards: 5

Application Deadline: February 28

Description: GM is offering up a total of \$10,000 in awards, plus giving you the chance to score a new set of wheels for a whole lot less than you might think. So you could be one of 5 lucky winners and get \$2,000 with GM's "Driven To Succeed" Scholarship Giveaway!

Instructions: Click here for your chance to WIN \$2,000 in GM's "Driven To Succeed" Scholarship Giveaway: <http://www.studentawards.com/campaign/GM/landing.asp>

CANADIAN SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF RELIGION UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT ESSAY CONTEST

Value: 1st prize \$200; 2nd prize \$100

Number of Awards: 2

Application Deadline: April 18

Description: Must be enrolled in undergraduate studies at a Canadian university or college and submit 10-a 15 page essay on a topic related to religious studies. Essays may be assignments from a religious studies course.

Instructions: Letter from religious studies department required. For further information, please visit the website posted below

Contact Information: Canadian Society for the Study of Religion (CSSR) / Société canadienne pour l'étude de la religion (SCÉR)

Web Site: www.ccsr.ca/CSSR/index.htm

Voice Events Listings

On and off campus events worldwide

To list events in your area, e-mail voice@ausu.org with the word "events" in the subject line.

alberta

LIFE & TIMES OF THE MOTORCYCLE

Now until September 17, 2006

Wetaskiwin, AB - Reynolds-Alberta Museum

10:00 AM - 5:00 PM

Adults \$9; Seniors \$7; Child \$5; Family \$25

under 6 is free - 1-800-661-4726 - ram@gov.ab.ca

<http://www.reynoldsalbertamuseum.com>

Visit 'Life and Times of the Motorcycle', an extraordinary exhibition featuring 150 of the most influential motorcycles in the past 100 years of motorcycling.

905-546-4848

childrensmuseum@hamilton.ca

McMaster University science students provide hands-on science activities for children and families. Venture Physics and

Let's Talk Science Team bring along "the phunky physics roller coaster" and other creative science demonstrations and

activities.

DATES:

Saturday, January 22, 2006

Saturdays, February 5 & 12, 2006

Saturdays, March 12, 19 & 26, 2006

Saturdays, April 16 & 30

Saturdays, May 21 & 28, 2006

6 yrs and up

british columbia

12TH ANNUAL VICTORIA INDEPENDENT FILM & VIDEO FESTIVAL

January 27 to February 05, 2006 - Victoria, BC

Capitol 6 and Odeon Cineplex

\$8.00 per film plus \$2.00 membership (one time purchase). Festival Box office located at 808 View Street, corner of Blanshard and View Sts.

250.389.0444 - info@vifvf.com - <http://www.vifvf.com>

SPRING THEATRE CLASSES

February 06 to May 01, 2006 - Kelowna, BC

Kelowna Actors Studio

Ticket Prices

Call venue (very reasonable)

Kelowna Actors Studio

250-862-2867

info@kelownaactorsstudio.com

<http://www.KelownaActorsStudio.com>

maritimes

ST. JOHN'S CIRCUS: GROUP PRACTICE

St Johns, NF - Tuesdays - Mun Athletics building - FREE

<http://nick.wirelesszero.net/cgi-bin/juggling/YaBB.cgi>

Everyone's a Star! Juggling, Unicycling, Magic, Clowning,

Poi, Diabolo, Fire, and whatever YOUR skill(s) is!

Tues At 7:00 PM - Thurs At 7:00 PM - Sat At 2:00 PM

Sessions usually run about 3 hrs...

123 SENSE

St Johns, NF - Saturdays - 12:00 PM - 5:00 PM

Eastern Edge Gallery, 72 Harbour Drive

free entrance

709-739-1882 - <http://www.easternedge.ca>

Jean Klimack (Winnipeg); Dave Yonge (B.C); Tania Lewis (NY/Newfoundland)

These three artists present in different mediums (video, drawing and photography) odd senses of the everyday, urban myths and gentrification.

ontario

SCIENCE SATURDAYS WITH MCMASTER UNIVERSITY

January 22 to May 28, 2006 - Hamilton, ON

1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

Hamilton Children's Museum

Adults - \$1.00 - Children - \$3.00

To list events in your area, e-mail voice@ausu.org with "events" in the subject line.

Conference Connections

GEOLOGY FOR NON-GEOLOGISTS - HOUSTON

March 6, 2006 - March 9, 2006 - Houston, Texas, USA

<http://www.peice.com/eventdetails.aspx?event=102400&ref=Allconferences&frfi=16734>

This popular four-day course will provide non-geologists with a practical understanding of the principles used by petroleum geologists in the search for oil and gas. The session will include both the scientific background and the practical applications of geology. The tools, techniques, and vocabulary of the petroleum geologist will be emphasized throughout the course. A complete set of course materials and lunches are included.

Delivery Method: Classroom Training

Fee: \$ 1995 USD

CEU: 3.2 Continuing Education Units

PDH: 32 Professional Development Hours

NASS SPRING BREAK: BACK TO THE EVIDENCE

March 8, 2006 - March 11, 2006 - San Diego, CA, USA

<http://www.spine.org/06SprgBrk.cfm>

NASS Spring Break will be a high-energy interactive meeting focusing on controversial and non-traditional topics. Look forward to interactive symposia and debate sessions. NASS Spring Break will provide physicians an opportunity to share current information and concepts relating to spinal problems in an open, interactive relaxed atmosphere.

ON-LINE METHODS IN CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE PROCESSING

March 21, 2006 - March 22, 2006 - New York

Understanding how children process language, in real time, is necessary for building comprehensive theories about language acquisition. This workshop is the first scientific gathering specifically dedicated to a new field of research that explores such issues, experimental developmental psycholinguistics. This workshop provides a forum in which scholars from different areas of expertise (psycholinguistics, language acquisition, and cognitive neuroscience), particularly those interested in applying on-line methods to study children's language processing, will discuss how current and developing empirical approaches can inform about language processing mechanisms in children.

RISK MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE 2006

March 24, 2006 - March 26, 2006 - Mont Tremblant, Quebec

<http://www.mfrc.mcgill.ca/?section=Conferences>

A conference fee will be charged to cover expenses (C\$250 for academics, C\$500 for practitioners and C\$100 for students). Presenters, discussants and chairs will be provided with free accommodation. Conference participants are responsible for their own travel and accommodation expenses. Conference participants are eligible to pay discounted hotel rates starting at C\$199 per night, for arrival on Thursday March 23rd and departure Sunday March 26th.

The conference will be held at the Fairmont Resort Hotel situated at the foot of Mont Tremblant in Quebec's Laurentians.

Know of a conference that is not on this list? Contact voice@ausu.org with the details and we'll list it in Conference Connections.



Prairie Universities Biological Symposium
40th Anniversary Conference
BY students FOR students

University of Calgary
Feb 23-25, 2006
Registration \$22, Banquet \$20



Banquet at the Calgary Zoo
Guest speaker: Dr. Robert Barclay

SUBMIT YOUR ABSTRACTS NOW!
Deadline: Jan 10, 2006

Registration & information:
<http://homepages.ucalgary.ca/~pubs/>

classifieds

Classifieds are free for AU students! Contact voice@ausu.org for more information.

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EssayExperts.ca will help you with editing, writing and researching your essay topic. Our professional editors and writers will help in all subjects and levels. Over 10 years experience. Call Toll Free 24 hours a day at 1-877-974-8398.

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