

REVIEWplus

VOL. 4, ISSUE 2, 2009

The “hopeful” romantic

Andrew Westoll, Artsci'00, explores Suriname, a tropical paradise under threat



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REVIEWplus

Volume 4, Issue #2, 2009

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COVER PHOTO:

Andrew Westoll strikes an eerily *Apolcalypse Now*-like pose as he swims in the Suriname River.

JASON ROTHE PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW WESTOLL

CONTENTS

RP3 CAMPUS NEWS

Trustees unhappy with deficit budget; divers hope to prove shipwreck is War of 1812 British flagship; new Michael Ignatieff book has Queen's connection, Golden Gaels selected in CFL draft; Queen's awards eight honorary degrees, and much more.

RP3



RP6 COVER STORY

THE "HOPEFUL" ROMANTIC

The Riverbones, the first book by Andrew Westoll, Artsci'00, is a provocative account of his travels in Suriname. Writing the book was an eye-opener for Andrew, and he hopes that reading it will serve as an environmental wake-up call for the rest of us.

BY KEN CUTHBERTSON, REVIEW EDITOR

RP6



RP10 ALUMNI TRAVEL EXPLORING "THE LAND OF DISCOVERY"

Many Queen's alumni who live in Canada look forward to an annual vacation in sunnier climes. Each April, for the past four years now,

JOANNE HUNTER, ARTSCI'80, ED'81, and her husband have enjoyed the sun and hospitality of one of Europe's quaintest holiday destinations.

RP14 OPINION PARADISE UNDER THREAT

GABRIELA (SCHILLING) GRABOWSKY, ARTSCI'78, and her partner make their home in the mountains of BC's scenic interior, "off grid" and 15 km from her nearest neighbour, yet the future of their wilderness paradise is uncertain. With nowhere else to turn, Gabriela is making a desperate appeal for help from the only family she has – her Queen's family.

RP10



The traditional Portuguese donkey is becoming a rare sight

Trustees unhappy with deficit budget

The Board of Trustees has reluctantly approved the University's 2009-2010 budget. After extensive debate at its May meeting, the Board authorized a \$360-million operating budget, which carries an \$8.3-million deficit.

Said Board Chair Bill Young, Sc'77, "It's bad financial management for us to live beyond our means, and we must take the tough steps to address this."

Steep declines in the University's investment portfolio due to the global economic crisis, reduced government funding as a proportion of the operating budget, and increasing compensation pressures led the University to create a three-year plan that aims to bring expenses back into line with revenues. The budget includes the first round of cuts towards a three-year fifteen per cent cumulative budgetary cut for academic and administrative units.

"This is the first time in recent memory that the University is actually budgeting for a deficit," said Bruce Mitchell, acting board finance committee chair.

The projected deficit in 2010-2011 is \$14.6-million, and in 2011-2012, it will be \$8.4-million. Adding in the \$8.3 million shortfall in revenues for 2009-2010, the accumulated deficit by 2011-2012 is projected to be \$33-million, which Board Chair Young calls "unacceptable."

The Board's finance committee will meet with University man-

agement over the summer to adjust the deficit projections for years two and three of the three-year budget plan. "I think we need to ask the administration to go back to the drawing board," said Young. "We've got a lot of work ahead of us."

Several trustees voiced distress about the financial situation, saying that the University needs to address spiraling compensation costs that comprise 70 per cent of the operating budget, and that the University can't wait until union contracts expire. "We need to throw traditional principles about pay out the door, because the options are so brutal," said Trustee David Pattenden, Law'71, LLD'03.

Principal Tom Williams told the Board that discussions about a proposed early retirement program are continuing with the Queen's University Faculty Association (QUFA). QUFA has rejected a proposal to close down the University for unpaid days during the course of the year, which could save \$400,000 per day.

"I'm concerned by statements of the Faculty Association that they don't understand the nature of the problem," said Principal Williams. "It worries me because the clock continues to tick."

For more information on the university's financial situation, visit www.queensu.ca/principal/financialupdate.html or visit the Queen's Gazette homepage.

CELIA RUSSELL, QUEEN'S GAZETTE

Divers hope to prove Lake Ontario shipwreck is War of 1812 flagship

A Psychiatry professor who studies how disease affects quality of life will be doing research of a very different sort this summer, in the murky depths of Lake Ontario.

Along with other volunteer divers, Dr. Dianne Groll hopes to resolve once and for all whether the remains of a 200-year-old shipwreck in the waters off Kingston is a flagship from the War of 1812. One of the project's organizers, Groll will join a group of nautical historians who plan to explore the remains of what may be the *Wolfe*, the Royal Navy warship of Admiral Sir James Lucas Yeo, who commanded the British fleet on Lake Ontario during the conflict.

The preparation work began the first weekend in May, when marine archaeologists from Parks Canada's Underwater Archaeology Service ran a training course to certify divers who could help in the initiative.

"It's delicate work," says Groll, a member of the group Preserve our Wrecks Kingston, "but it will be very exciting to finally identify this ship – especially if it turns out to be [Yeo's] flagship of the War of 1812, as we hope."

Divers who completed the May course received their Nautical Archaeology Society Level One certification. In early June, they'll help other certified divers take measurements, make drawings, and photograph the wreck site.

The remains of the ship are lying in about 15 metres of water in the mouth of Navy Bay, which is near Fort Henry. Organizers expect it will take about three weeks of work to accurately survey the wreck.



PHOTO BY MIKE HILL

Dianne Groll inspects what may be the remains of the War of 1812 warship HMS Wolfe, which have been located in the waters of Lake Ontario just off Kingston.

Once the underwater work is done, marine archeologists will comb through archives at Queen's and in Toronto and Ottawa to compare data and determine the identity of the historic ship. The group is looking for a variety of volunteers who would like to be part of the historical hunt.

"We need boats, and people to coordinate on-shore activities and take videos," says Groll. "There are a number of opportunities to get involved."

With the bicentennial anniversary of the War of 1812 fast approaching, this identification could play a significant part of the celebrations.

For more information, please visit www.powkingston.org.

JEFF DRAKE, QUEEN'S GAZETTE

Queen's faculty receive NSERC Discovery grants

A total of 68 Queen's professors involved in research ranging from understanding our galaxy structure to next-generation wireless networks to audiovisual speech perception are receiving \$2.8 million in funding through the Discovery Grants program of the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC).

"These awards reflect the continued breadth, depth and excellence of the research being conducted at Queen's," says Vice-Principal (Research) Kerry Rowe.

Eighty per cent of the Queen's applications submitted were accepted this year, compared to 63 per cent nationwide, and total funding to Queen's researchers is up by \$200,000.

The NSERC Discovery Grants program supports long-term university-based research and has recently been subject to two external reviews. As a result, this year marked the introduction of an enhanced, two-step peer review process. Scientific merit is assessed first, and then a funding level is recommended in a second step of the process.

"The reviews and the resulting changes to the process are giving excellent researchers the opportunity to receive funding commensurate with their stature and quality of research as assessed by the peer review panels, and in many cases this has significantly increased their funding," says Rowe.

"However, this is a zero-sum process. While many have gained at Queen's, there are also some who have had reduced funding under this new system – and next year even more radical changes will be made to the system. We'll work with researchers across campus to help them adjust to the new system to ensure Queen's maximizes the opportunities available for funding research excellence."

Among the 2009 Queen's recipients of Discovery Grant funding are:

- **Martin Guay, PhD'96** (Chemical Engineering): "Adaptive optimization and estimation of complex dynamical systems"
- **Tucker Carrington** (Chemistry): "New computational methods for studying the quantum dynamics of systems with five and more atoms"
- **Mark Green, Sc'87** (Civil Engineering): "Fire resistance of concrete structures containing advanced materials"
- **Hossam Hassanein** (Computing): "Seamless service delivery in next generation wireless networks"
- **Steven Blostein** (Electrical and Computer Engineering): "High rate wireless communications with cooperation"
- **Kurt Kyser** (Geological Sciences and Geological Engineering): "Tracing element migration in the near-surface environment"
- **Fady Alajaji** (Mathematics and Statistics): "Joint source-channel coding theory with applications to wireless communication networks"
- **Mark Daymond** (Mechanical Engineering): "Influence of local crystallographic anisotropy on failure of metals"
- **Stephane Courteau** (Physics): "Towards an understanding of galaxy structure"
- **Kevin Munhall** (Psychology): "Audiovisual speech perception"

Ignatieff book has Queen's connection

"Loving a country is an act of the imagination. You love the country because it gives you the possibility of sharing feeling and belief. You cannot love the country alone. The emotions you have must be shared with others in order for them to make any sense at all."

So writes Michael Ignatieff in his new book, *True Patriot Love: Four Generations in Search of Canada* (Penguin Group, Canada). It begins with the story of legendary Queen's Principal George M. Grant, who set out with Sir Sandford Fleming in 1872 to

map out the railway line that would link Canada ocean to ocean. Ignatieff retraces Grant's journey, seeing the country through his ancestor's optimistic vision, and tracing how that vision filtered through his illustrious family tree.

Ignatieff and his wife, Zsuzsanna, begin their journey at the rent-a-car counter at the Thunder Bay airport and retrace the CPR route surveyed in 1872 by his great-grandfather and Fleming, who later became Chancellor of Queen's. They visit old Hudson Bay forts, traversing mile after mile of the Canadian shield, following the Yellow Head Highway through the farm lands of Manitoba and Saskatchewan and visiting Canadian landmarks from Fort Francis to Wanuskewin to Batoche, from West Edmonton Mall to the Fraser River Valley. The year after the trip, George Grant wrote an account of the journey entitled *Ocean to Ocean*. In 1877, he became Principal of Queen's.

Three Golden Gaels selected in CFL draft

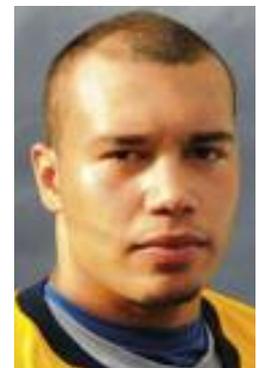
Three members of the Golden Gaels football team have been selected in the 2009 Canadian Football League entry draft. The trio include:

- Defensive lineman Dee Sterling, Artsci'09, Kingston, ON, who was selected in the second round of the draft, 12th overall, by the Edmonton Eskimos;
- Defensive lineman Osie Ukwuoma, Com'09, Mississauga, ON, was chosen by the Calgary Stampeders as the final pick of the fifth round, 40th overall; and
- Linebacker Thaine Carter, Artsci'09, Nanaimo, BC, the top defensive player in the CIS in 2008, was selected 45th overall by the Winnipeg Blue Bombers.



QUEEN'S ARCHIVES

Federal Liberal leader Michael Ignatieff's maternal great grandfather is legendary Queen's Principal George M. Grant (1877-1902).



Dan Sterling

Research shines new light on compact fluorescent bulb problem

Long touted as an energy-saving alternative for home lighting, compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) now have the potential to be even more efficient, as well as dimmable, thanks to the efforts of a Queen's researcher.

Adopted by householders as a longer-lasting, energy-efficient alternative to the traditional incandescent lightbulb, CFLs consume one-third of the power and last 1,000 times longer than incandescent bulbs. However, the Queen's researchers were motivated to solve two problems with CFLs – they don't work with dimmer switches, and, more importantly, their energy efficiency is compromised because of a problem known as "poor power factor." In effect, only part of the energy a CFL consumes is used to power the bulb, resulting in wasted power. "Consumer-grade CFLs need to be compact and inexpensive. Until now, the complicated circuitry needed to power these bulbs most efficiently has been too large and too costly for consumer-grade compact fluorescents," says professor of Electrical and Computer

Here we have a motivated researcher who saw a key problem and delivered the solution to an industry in need, in time to make a difference.

Engineering Praveen Jain, the Canada Research Chair in Power Electronics and a world expert on electronic power supplies.

"In its current form, the household CFL takes away the very benefit to the power grid that it's supposed to provide," Jain notes.

The Queen's innovation is timely since widespread use of today's less efficient CFLs will reduce expected benefits to the global power grid. Many countries, including Australia

and those of the European Union, have already begun phasing out incandescent bulbs in favor of the compact fluorescents. (Europe and Asia have established minimum standards for power factor for CFLs of more than 25 watts, but Canada and the U.S., which plan to ban incandescent by 2012, have not.) The global market for compact fluorescents is estimated at \$80 billion.

The poor power factor already has had an impact on commercial users of CFLs, who are charged for the extra power consumed by the current compact fluorescents. As for dimmability, Jain says that, too, is an efficiency issue, and not just a nuisance for consumers. "In fact, when a CFL is used with a dimmer switch, the bulb can burn out sooner than expected," he says. The solutions emerged when Jain and PhD candidate John Lam developed a compact, simplified circuitry and controller design that overcomes the power problem while also meeting consumers' need for a dimmable, inexpensive CFL. "Understanding the significance of the problem motivated me to work hard at finding a solution," Lam says.

The two main challenges were making the technology directly replaceable with existing designs and economical to produce, says Jain. "We were able to develop a more power-efficient, dimmable and cost-effective CFL technology that can truly replace the power-hungry incandescent light bulbs. This makes it very attrac-



PHOTO BY JEFF DRAKE

Professor Praveen Jain (Electrical and Computer Engineering) and PhD candidate John Lam

tive to the consumer market."

The work was carried out at Queen's Centre for Energy and Power Electronics Research (EPoWER), which tackles key problems in the area of energy conservation and brings those solutions to industry.

PARTEQ Innovations, the technology transfer office of Queen's, will work with major CFL manufacturers to bring the technology to market.

"This is an excellent example of university research providing an innovative solution well in advance of a potential market problem," says John Molloy, MBA'84, President and CEO of PARTEQ. "The key to providing useable innovation is understanding the problems of existing technology and finding elegant solutions. Here we have a motivated researcher who saw a key problem and delivered the solution to an industry in need, in time to make a difference."

Queen's awards eight honorary degrees

Queen's University conferred honorary degrees on eight distinguished individuals at spring convocations. The list includes:

- Longtime MP, former leader of the federal New Democratic Party (1975-89), and current Fellow in the School of Policy Studies **Ed Broadbent, LLD'09;**
- Musician-composer-turned computer software designer **Bill Buxton, Mus'73, LLD'09;**
- Children's literacy champion **Kathryn Knowles, NSc'77, LLD'09.**
- Aboriginal justice advocate **Patricia Monture, LLD'09;**
- Kingston businessman, lawyer, historian, and author **Arthur Britton Smith, LLD'09;**
- Physician, astronaut, aquanaut, and educator **Dave Rhys Williams, DSc'09;**
- recently retired Librarian and Archivist of Canada **Ian Wilson, Arts'67, MA'74, LLD'09;** and
- Social justice advocate and educator **Rev. Ruth Wright, MDiv'95, DD'09**



The “hopeful” romantic

The Riverbones, the first book by Andrew Westoll, Artsci'00, is a provocative account of his travels in Suriname. Writing the book was an eye-opener for Andrew, and he hopes that reading it will serve as an environmental wake-up call for the rest of us.

BY KEN CUTHBERTSON, REVIEW EDITOR

Adventurer, scientist, and award-winning environmental journalist Andrew Westoll didn't exactly know what he was looking for in the fall of 2005, when he traveled to the tiny, little-known South American country of Suriname. After all, he was retracing some of the same steps in a journey he'd taken five years earlier, when he first visited the former Dutch colony.

In 2000, Andrew was 23 and fresh out of Queen's. As a Biology major, he fancied he might pursue a career as a primatologist. With that in mind, he took a "leap of faith", signing on for a year in the Central Suriname Nature Reserve. He spent the next 12 months working in the reserve, which occupies a corner of the Amazon rainforest that's the largest tract of unspoiled rainforest left on earth.

"There were six of us working on the project," recalls Andrew. "We lived in an isolated outpost called Raliegghvallen, and we spent 12 hours a day, seven days a week, observing and recording data about a species of the capuchin monkeys that live there."

The work was exhausting and demanding. At times it was also dangerous – the steamy rainforest is home to jaguars, voracious insects, herds of wild boars, and some of the world's deadliest snakes. By the end of the year, Andrew felt like a character of out Joseph Conrad's novel *Heart of Darkness*. Worn out, physically and emotionally, he was eager to get home to Toronto.

“Idealism alone doesn't get you anywhere. Even if you believe anything is possible, you still have to keep reality in mind.”

He did so having abandoned his dream of being a scientist. However, he took something new away with him: a fascination with Suriname. "The country stayed with me. I was hooked on it," he says.

Andrew began reading everything he could find about the country and wasn't shy about sharing his newfound knowledge with family and friends. Not surprisingly, they were decidedly less enthusiastic than

he was about a place few of them had heard of, much less wanted to visit. Undeterred, Andrew continued his reading. The more he learned, the more his enthusiasm bubbled. Deciding to write about his Suriname experiences seemed to be a logical step for him.

After all, during his student days at Queen's, when he wasn't playing soccer for the men's varsity squad, he dabbled in creative writing. Andrew contributed articles to the student publication *Ultra Violet*, and he enrolled in one of Prof. Carolyn Smart's creative writing classes. Smart, who has served as a mentor and friend to hundreds of aspiring writers over the 25 years she has been teaching at Queen's, saw something special in Andrew's prose efforts. "She was the first person to encourage me in my writing," he recalls. "In that sense, it all began for me at Queen's." (Please see p. 14 of Issue #2-2009 of the print edition of the *Alumni Review* for more details).

Leaving behind his zoology days, upon his return from Suriname, Andrew enrolled in the Masters of Fine Arts program in Creative Writing at UBC. The first thing he wrote there was a

piece about his experiences in South America. The article confirmed Carolyn Smart's assessment that there indeed was something special about Andrew's prose; judges in an *Event* magazine writing competition chose his entry as co-winner in the Creative Non-Fiction category. With that success on his resume, "the dice were now cast," as Andrew recalls. He decided to try his hand at writing for a living.

After crafting a novel – "A bad one," he allows – that went unpublished, his imagination once again drifted southward to Suriname.

In 2005, Andrew found the opportunity he was looking and returned to the country. He landed a contract with an environmental non-governmental organization, Conservation International, to write some eco-travel brochures. Jettisoning his life in Toronto, he cleaned out his apartment and bid adieu to his girlfriend, who wondered aloud about what he was doing, branding him a "hopeless romantic." That label is one he understands, but doesn't quite accept.

Says Andrew, "I prefer to think of myself not as a hopeless romantic, but rather as a very hopeful one. I realize that idealism



Even following an old prospector's trail through the rainforest isn't easy going for Andrew (right) and his local guide.

alone won't get you anywhere. Even if you believe anything is possible, you still have to keep reality in mind."

He also regards writing as one of the tools he has at hand – and an important one – with which to advance his goals. "Writing isn't some divine calling," he says.

It is, he adds, a career choice that one makes. For that reason, he's fond of quoting a line from an interview with writer Jane Smiley that he once read. Smiley pointed out, "No one asked you to write." Words for any would-be scribe to live by, those.

Andrew carried them inside his head during his second sojourn to Suriname, a six-month visit that began in late 2005. This time he had the opportunity to travel the country, to meet and interact with the locals, and to educate himself on the country's murky political situation. And what good travel story doesn't have at its heart a quest of some sort?

Andrew went in search of the *okopipi*, an endangered, tiny blue frog that the tribes of the Amazon rainforest worship as a sacred creature and value for its pharmaceutical properties.

Andrew's account of his experiences in Suriname is both compelling and intriguing. That's especially true of his discovery of the ravages of industrial and mining developments – some of them driven by Canadian corporations – that are threatening to despoil Suriname's once pristine rainforest.

Going in, as mentioned above, Andrew's ambitions could only be described as vague. Short term, at least, they were also relatively modest: He planned to write a magazine article, and so he did when he returned home to Toronto in mid-2006. "Somewhere Up a Jungle River", a piece he did for *Explore*, captured a gold medal



Getting around in the interior of Suriname can be problematic, as Andrew found out when this battered old van in which he was a passenger broke down.

at the 2007 National Magazine Awards. Crafting that article also served to fire his ambition to write at greater length about Suriname.

Swirling around inside Andrew's head were visions of a book. He spent the next 18 months tapping away at his laptop as he sat in coffee shops or in a work space at the Toronto Writers' Centre. Andrew did so with a couple of elusive goals in mind. One was to write "a page-turner." The other, he says, "was to figure out some things about Suriname and about myself."

He succeeded on both counts. The 365-page book that he produced, *The Riverbones: Stumbling After Eden in the Jungles of Suriname* (McClelland & Stewart, \$24.99) has won praise from critics and readers alike and had convinced Andrew that he indeed has what it takes to make his living as a writer.

By the way, the book's enigmatic title refers to the remains of a tree canopy, which is all that remains after an area of the Amazon rainforest that was flooded in the name of "progress." Andrew saw the denuded upper limbs that claw at the sky as a powerful symbol of loss and of ecological disaster. The drowned trees stand as testament to the dangers of unbridled industrial development in this now imperiled corner of the Amazon rainforest.

Globe and Mail reviewer Charles Wilkins has lauded *The Riverbones* as "a freewheeling and vividly written essay on the mysteries and longings of what it is to be human in a world of cynicism and loss – and more significantly, what it is to be hopeful, to persevere, in the search for redemption and beauty."

Meanwhile, a reviewer for *The Irish Times*



JASON ROTH PHOTO COURTESY OF ANDREW WESTOLL

The denuded branches of a drowned rainforest – the *Riverbones* of the title of Andrew's book – are a melancholy sight as they rise above the waters of a man-made lake.

praised *The Riverbones* as “Beautifully written.... for every answer [it] provides, it raises a clutch of questions – oddly in keeping with Suriname itself”

While garnering such reviews has been gratifying, Andrew says there was another one that he finds even more memorable. What true “romantic” wouldn’t? As he explained in an interview posted on the Open Book Toronto web site, hands down, it’s the

“In recent years, as the world’s attention has been focused on events in the Middle East, a revolution has quietly taking place in South and Central America.”

one by “the 80-year woman who told my mother ... that she had fallen in love with her son-me – by page two.”

The Riverbones is now available in the U.K, and it will soon be translated into Dutch and published in the Netherlands. “I’m hopeful the book will alert people to what the situation there is in the country’s former colony,” Andrew says.

“I’m also still hopeful that things will turn out well in Suriname. Some people feel there’s a lot of money to be made exploiting Suriname’s natural resources, and that money could be made in a good way or in a bad way. There are some encouraging signs. For one thing, the Maroons, who are the indigenous people of Suriname, are now a lot more aware of their rights, and they’re starting to assert them.”

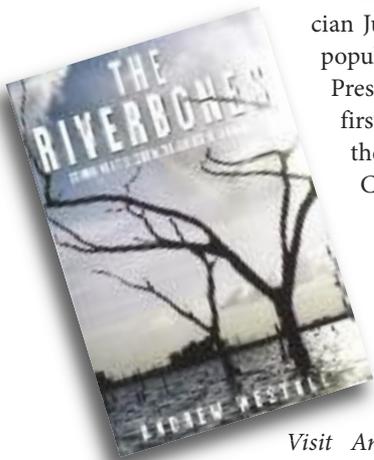
Andrew is similarly optimistic about another South American country that has captured his imagination of late: Bolivia. He’s hard at work researching and writing a book about that Andean nation. In particular, he’s focusing on how the mining industry is affecting life for people there. If you’re interested, you can read an excerpt. It’s the cover story in the first-ever international edition of *Utne Reader* (May-June 2009).

“This is an incredibly exciting time throughout Latin America,” says Andrew. “In recent years, as the world’s attention has been focused on events in the Middle East, a revolution has quietly taking place in South and Central America. A leftist wave has washed over the region, and there are some incredibly exciting things happening, in Bolivia especially.”

What’s happened is that leftist politician Juan Evo Morales Ayma – who’s popularly known as Evo – was elected President in 2006. He’s the country’s first fully indigenous head of state in the 470 years since the Spanish Conquest.

Says Andrew, “There’s an important story there to be told, and I’m excited about telling it.”

Somehow, you’d expect noting else from a “hopeful romantic.” ■



Visit Andrew’s official home page at <http://www.andrewwestoll.com/index.html>

SURINAME IN A NUTSHELL

WHERE IS IT? Northern South America, bordering the North Atlantic Ocean, between French Guiana and Guyana.

HOW BIG IS IT? 163,270 sq km (about three times as large as the province of Nova Scotia), 90 per cent of the land is covered by tropical rainforest.

WHAT’S THE POPULATION? 481,000

WHAT LANGUAGES ARE SPOKEN? Dutch (official), English (widely spoken), Sranang Tongo (Surinamese, a.k.a. Taki-Tak, the native language of Creoles and much of the younger population and is lingua franca among others), and Caribbean Hindustani.

WHAT’S THE CAPITAL?
Paramaribo

WHAT’S ITS HISTORY? Explored by the Spaniards in the 16th century, settled by the English in the mid-17th century, Suriname became a Dutch colony in 1667. With the abolition of slavery in 1863, workers were brought in from India and Java. Suriname won independence from the Netherlands in 1975. Five years later the civilian government was replaced by a military regime that soon declared a socialist republic. It continued to exert control through a succession of nominally civilian administrations until 1987, when international pressure finally forced a democratic election. In 1990, the military overthrew the civilian leadership, but a democratically elected government – a four-party New Front coalition – returned to power in 1991 and has ruled since; the coalition expanded to eight parties in 2005.

WHAT’S ITS CLIMATE? Tropical, moderated by trade winds

WHAT’S ITS ECONOMY BASED ON? Dominated by the mining industry, with exports of alumina, gold, and oil accounting for about 85 per cent of exports and 25 per cent of government revenues. This makes the economy highly vulnerable to mineral price volatility.



Exploring “the Land of Discovery”

Many Queen’s alumni who live in Canada look forward to an annual vacation in sunnier climes. Each April, for the past four years now,

JOANNE HUNTER, ARTSCI’80, ED’81, and her husband have enjoyed the sun and hospitality of one of Europe’s quaintest holiday destinations.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF JOANNE HUNTER



Here’s a view of the historic Convent of Christ in Tomar, looking towards the Charola, the original Templar Church, which the Grand Master of the Templars founded in 1162.

Carved face detail in the Imperfect Chapels at the Monastery of Santa Maria in Batalha.



After a busy winter operating our bed-and-breakfast business in the scenic Gatineau hills just north of Ottawa, it’s time for our annual vacation. Each April since 2006, it’s been the country of Portugal that has beckoned us.

My husband and I spend all winter anticipating that country’s gorgeous beaches, delicious seafood, welcoming faces, castles, convents & monasteries. In our fast-paced world, it no longer takes many weeks to sail across the Atlantic, as intrepid Portuguese explorers did in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. We can now fly directly from Toronto to Lisbon in about six hours. The time is well spent.

The spell of Portugal begins in the soft syllables of a Mediterranean language of one of Europe’s smallest and oldest countries.



In the transept of the church at Alcobça: The 14th. Century tomb of King Pedro the First: (who lies opposite a similar tomb of his murdered lover Inês de Castro)

On previous visits we had begun to discover Portugal, in our own humble way. The magic of the Moorish castle of Silves, wild beauty of the cliffs of Sagres, the evocative Temple of Diana in Evora, mysteries of Sintra, the palace of Estoi, (which recently has been turned into a *pousada*, a luxury hotel) the beauty of Queluz summer palace had invited us back to unravel more of the skein.

An ocean-view apartment in the golf resort of Praia D'el Rey is our fortress base. A small Volkswagen Polo rental car is our steed.

Off we ride to our first destination. The ancient walled town of Obidos beckons from the peak of a hill. I fall in love. It's not just the castle, the museums, the gilded churches and chapels tiled with blue *azulejos* and hung with precious artwork, the red clay-tiled roofs, the cobbled narrow streets, or the fragrant wisteria and geraniums adorning walls and windows.

Obidos has been the gift of Portuguese kings to their queens. It is a queen's dowry, straight out of a fairy tale. Obidos is also a microcosm of Portuguese history: founded by Celts, taken by Romans, then by Visigoths, and falling into Moorish hands in the 8th century. In 1148, Afonso Henriques, first King of Portugal, took Obidos from the Moors on January 11: a date still remembered each year as a municipal holiday. In 1444 the church of Santa Maria



Detail of Saint Catherine's Altar in Saint Mary's Church, Obidos: 'the Mystic Marriage of Saint Catherine', with smaller paintings of "Saint Teresa of Avila" & "Saint Francis of Assisi" by Josefa d'Obidos



The Cistercian abbey of Santa Maria, Alcobça: Central nave of the church 12th-13th. Century. The largest church in Portugal.

Saint Catherine's Altar in Saint Mary's Church, Obidos: 17th century blue-and-white tiles (*azulejos*), plus original oil paintings by Josefa d'Obidos, a famous female painter (1630-1684)



Obidos: looking over the rooftops towards the castle, now a *pousada*, a state-run country inn.



The Founders Chapel at the Monastery of Santa Maria in Batalha: resting place of King John the First & his Queen Philippa of Lancaster children. Begun in 1426 by Hugeot, an architect from Catalonia.



was the venue for the wedding of a 10-year-old prince to his eight-year-old princess. The couple later ruled Portugal as King Afonso V and Queen Isabel. Tourism is now the town's trade.

We are lucky enough to experience traditional gatherings with sacred processions and concerts for Holy Week, attended by the local populace. Roman Catholicism is the religion of more than 90 per cent of the Portuguese people, and religious events are well attended.

Portugal is historically known for Port wine, developed in the upper Douro area, initially for 17th-century English taste buds. These days, the country ranks sixth in the world of wine production, with more than 200 indigenous varieties of grapes, grown in diverse microclimates and soil-types.

Being in the heart of the Estramadura wine region, we visit one of the oldest estates, Quinta do Sanguinhal. In the terraced

field, organically grown vines are beginning to bud. Roses planted in the vineyard act as early warning devices for pests and diseases. Back at the Quinta, we sample varieties of wines, and purchase a special variety of their aromatic red wine, aged for eight years in huge wooden casks of French oak.

There are more UNESCO World Heritage Sites per capita in Portugal than anywhere else in Europe, a proud Portuguese waiter has informed us.



Joanne in the medieval town of Obidos.

We drive 100 kilometers to discover three giants of exaltation: the great Cistercian Abbey of Alcobaça, the Dominican monastery at Batalha, and the Convent of Christ at Tomar. All three sites are monumental Portuguese Gothic, with wonderful examples of Manueline architecture. Carvings of coral, shells, anchors, ships, armillary navigation spheres, twisting ropes and crosses of the Knights' Templar leap from facades and pediments. In the Dominican abbey at Batalha, we find the tomb of King John the First lying hand-in-hand with English-born Queen Philippa of Lancaster, and four of their children, including the intrepid explorer Henry the Navigator. The magnificent chapel sings of past glories. The incredible structures draw us into their history, tell their magical tales and leave us in awe.



French oak casks in the wine cellars of Quinta do Sanguinhal

To plan your own voyage of discovery to Portugal there are travel guides aplenty; *Lonely Planet*, *Frommer's*, and *Eye Witness* are our favorites. For further in-depth understanding of a fascinating country, I recommend reading *The Portuguese, The Land and its People*, by Marion Kaplan, published by Carcanet. ■

Joanne and her husband Jim Fitzgibbons own and operate *Les Trois Érables Bed & Breakfast* in Wakefield, QC. You can contact Joanne, via email her at lestroiserables@qc.aira.com, or visit her website at www.lestroiserables.com.



Architectural detail in the Imperfect Chapels at the Monastery of Santa Maria in Batalha, circa 1402

Paradise under threat

GABRIELA (SCHILLING) GRABOWSKY, ARTSCI'78, and her partner make their home in the mountains of BC's scenic interior, "off grid" and 15 km from her nearest neighbour, yet the future of their wilderness paradise is uncertain. With nowhere else to turn, Gabriela is making a desperate appeal for help from the only family she has – her Queen's family.

My copy of the latest Alumni Directory arrived the other day, and I can't count how many hours I have sat nostalgically trying to remember the last names of many of my Queen's University classmates.

I was originally a member of Arts'71. When I began my studies at the University in 1967, I lived on Ban Righ Three in "the tower room." I recall my first purchases in my new-found freedom from parents and home to be Jefferson Airplane's classic 1967 album *Surrealistic Pillow* and a carton of Rothmans cigarettes. I no longer smoke, but I still dig the old tunes.

On the same floor I lived on was Suzy Morison, Arts'71. She had a great collection of Jimi Hendrix and Bob Dylan records. We're still in touch, once in a while.

I was never one of the mainstream in-crowd. Money was never my first consideration in life; it was adventure. So in 1970, I dropped out, got married, and emigrated to New Zealand, where my son Jesse. was born.

I returned to Queen's in 1977 as a single parent, graduating as a member of Arts'78 with a degree in English, Art History, and German. I worked at the John Deutsch University Centre for a year before buying a VW van and driving across Canada to connect with Suzy Morison, who by then was living on the west coast. She now runs a dance school in Surrey, BC.

I eventually ended up in the Kootenays, where my new partner, Mick Grabowsky, and I started a business called Happy Trails Outfitters and Packers. We took people out on horseback adventures. It was hard work. We moved between the Kootenays and the Boundary Country before purchasing a remote 40 acres on Glacier Creek. We called our property Rainbow's End Ranch because of the amazing river that runs through it. The area is scenic and unspoiled, and our house is off grid with no telephone or electricity. We chop all of our own firewood and live a simple, but healthy lifestyle.

Our property is mortgage-free and we love it here. But we now have a problem: a developer called AXOR Corporation – acting through its "green power subsidiary", Purcell Green Power – wants to dam the river 13 km upstream from our property and tunnel it

six km through the mountains, the water never to return.

Mick, and I are desperate to raise awareness of what will befall our sacred wild waters if enough moral outrage is not aroused and this project goes ahead. SFU Professor John Calvert has written a book called *Liquid Gold* (Fernwood Publishing) that exposes the politics of this not-so-green (except for the money) idea of generating for-profit power using public waterways.

The web site www.saveourrivers.ca will also give you some idea of the situation. I'm no actress, but I spoke from the heart in several videos that are posted on the site. This is a true David-and-Goliath battle. I have truth, right, and a disability pension to sustain me in my battle against AXOR and the power of BC's Liberal government, which is backing the power projects. Mick and I may have our riparian rights, but we have no funds to prove or assert them in a court of law.

Glacier Creek is unique, and I believe it's a resource for future generations to enjoy, not to exploit and destroy.

I raise horses, and I'd be happy to trade some of the animals or to trade horseback holidays to any fellow grads with a legal background who might be willing to get involved and to help us in our battle to preserve Glacier Creek.

Being an only child and an immigrant from Germany, I have no immediate family, other than my Queen's family, and so I'm hoping some of my classmates, friends, and any other alumni who feel as I do will lend a helping hand. The mainstream media hasn't paid much attention to what's happening here or with similar projects proposed for other creeks and rivers in the BC interior.

I'm also in urgent need of financial donations to cover court costs in challenging AXOR on the riparian rights issue. Any and all help will be much appreciated. ■

You can contact Gaby via snail mail at RR 1 Site 5 Comp 8, Kaslo, BC V0G 1M0. To view "Rivers at Risk: Glacier & Howser Creeks", one of the videos in which she is interviewed, please visit the Save our Rivers web site mentioned above.



Gaby and her partner Mick are determined to fend off a proposed hydro development that would despoil the quality of life in their remote B.C. home

SAVE OUR RIVERS SOCIETY