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QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY INTERNATIONAL STUDY CENTRE

HERSTMONCEUX CASTLE

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CONFERENCE ON STATISTICS, SCIENCE AND PUBLIC POLICY

AVE ATQUE VALE: FIVE CASTLE ALUMNI

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It is inevitable that a regular conference that gathers senior, experienced scientists and other professionals will suffer the recurrent loss of distinguished alumni. It has not been a tradition at Herstmonceux Castle to reflect on the lives of those who have died. Our guru, Agnes Herzberg disdains personal excess. Emotion has little part to play in pure statistics.

Nevertheless, in the two year interval since the 2016 meeting at the Castle, the Grim Reaper has gathered up five of our number. Such was their distinction that it was agreed, that, exceptionally, we would begin the 2018 conference on Privilege, Privacy and Priorities with a reflection

* Based on remarks at the opening of the 22nd Conference at Herstmonceux Castle, 18 April 2018.

on the lives of our departed friends. To remember their careers is to remind ourselves of their personalities and contributions to humanity. And to affirm the privilege of meeting in the Castle, this time without their presence.

Dame Margaret Anstee (1926-2016)

Margaret Anstee was a United Kingdom diplomat who became leader of the United Nations, a champion of peace and of women's fulfilment and leadership role in the world.

She was born in Essex, the daughter of a typesetter. The family was poor. She attended the local high school. The lady of the manor in her village declined to sign her first passport application, protesting that she did not know the family.

Nevertheless, she won admission to Cambridge University. She secured double first-class honours in French and Spanish. These were two of the official languages of the then newly formed United Nations Organisation.

In 1948 she joined the British Foreign Office and worked on the Latin-American desk. However, she was warned that she could never be appointed to a diplomatic post there in case she might succumb to the wiles of a handsome local. In 1951 she became acquainted with Donald MacLean (whom she liked) and Guy Burgess (whom she detested). Each of them was to defect to the Soviet Union, taking loads of secrets. In 1952 she married a fellow diplomatic officer who was posted to the Philippines. He took to the position "like a duck to water". However, as

she put it, he did not “stick to water” and the couple were divorced. In 1955 she was vetoed by the head of mission for a posting in Mexico.

Nevertheless, in the following year Margaret Anstee was appointed to the British Embassy in Columbia. Her skills in languages was beginning to secure her opportunities. However, she was repeatedly to be put in her place by older, less competent males. In 1960 in Bolivia, the US representative reprimanded her when she made a comment on a matter of substance. “Shut up”, he said. “You’re just the interpreter”. She returned to the United Kingdom to become the deputy head of Harold Wilson’s think tank, but she resigned when he would not overrule the refusal to make confidential documents available to her because she was a woman.

In 1969 she joined the United Nations as Chief of Staff to an Australian diplomat, Sir Robert Jackson, with whom she was close until his death in 1991. Her posting took her to Chile where she witnessed the Pinochet coup. She worked hard against opposition to secure asylum for UN staff affected by the coup. In 1982 she was nominated to head the World Food Programme. However, the position was won by an Australian candidate who was male. Her career was the more remarkable because there were many such incidents. She was constantly knocking on the door of change.

I met Margaret Anstee for the first time in 1989 when we were both participants in the new Global Commission on AIDS established by the World Health Organisation. She liked working at the cutting edge of global problems. This eventually took her to unrest in Bolivia and to the

post-radiation crisis in Chernobyl, where there were a hundred thousand homeless to be supported by ill funded UN efforts.

In 1992, she was posted to be head of the UN mission to Angola. Her challenge was to disarm the 150,000 irregular soldiers in a civil war. Increasingly she was honoured by the United Nations, the UK and countries in which she had served. Bolivia granted her its citizenship and appointed her a roving ambassador. Her post retirement activities included training of UN peacekeepers. Promoting good causes in the UK media; and protection of the vulnerable through the United Nations. In 1994 she was appointed a Dame Commander of the Order of St Michael and St George (DCMG). But she passed over four times for High Commissioner for Refugees, a position for which she was richly qualified. Margaret Anstee's autobiography, which she titled *Never Learned to Type,* recounted her hard struggle to reach the top. She was the first woman appointed an Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, in charge of its Vienna office. She was a regular attender at the conferences at the Castle. Her last attendance was in 2015. None who were here will forget her vivid description of her work to bring peace to Angola. She died on 28 August 2016. We honour her as a colleague and friend. She was quite a Dame![1]

Professor John Bailar III (1932-2016)

John Bailar was a chemist and became and statistician and who questioned national cancer strategies on the basis of statistical evidence.

[1] See Obituary, *Evesham Journal*, 29 August 2016

He was born in Illinois, USA, in October 1932. He was the son of a respected professor of chemistry who encouraged him to undertake a degree in that discipline which he did at the University of Colorado in 1950. However, he then entered the Yale Medical School from which he graduated in 1955. He returned to Colorado, joining the US public health service and the National Cancer Institute to the United States. He became the Editor-in-Chief of the journal of that institute. His new tasks made him discontented with his professional degrees.

In 1973 John Bailar undertook a PhD degree in statistics which helped him to see the realities of public health more clearly. This armed him during the 24 years when he worked in public health. During this time, he published over 300 academic papers. He moved to Boston in 1980 as statistical consultant to the famous and influential *New England Journal of Medicine*.

In 1986 John Bailar published in that journal an article that brought together his medical, statistical and public health experience. It propounded the view that progress in cancer was likely to be more rapid if there were greater emphasis on prevention strategies rather than treatment. This article proved highly controversial; but also influential. Amongst other things, it reinforced the moves to control and diminish tobacco use worldwide.

In 1986 John Bailar made himself unpopular following another leading article suggesting that “cancer treatment had been a qualified failure”. He was attacked by former colleagues. But he repeated his theory in an article published in 1997 (“Cancer Undefeated”) insisting on the need to focus on prevention. He carried this theory into work he undertook from

1989 in Montreal and from 1995 at the University of Chicago where he served as Head of the Department of Public Health. His recurring thesis, with strong statistical backing, was to prove influential worldwide.

He received many honours, including appointment in 1993 to the National Academy of Medicine. He died in September 2016 aged 83, survived by his widow and five children. One of the children was John Bailar IV who occasionally accompanied him to Castle conferences. John Bailar III was present at the last conference in 2016. He was an advocate for the vital importance of statistics in improving global public health.[2]

Peter Cavanagh (1953-2016)

Peter Cavanagh was a passionate broadcaster who believed in the communication of complex issues to the world. He lived a life of pain; but bravely overcame his burdens.

He was born in 1953 the third child in a family of five. It was a time of polio scares, including in his native Canada. Peter Cavanagh fell victim to the disease. He spent a year in the Toronto Hospital for Sick Children and later in in the family home, immobilised. He had a furious will to walk, which he later fulfilled, but with difficulty and pain.

He took a law degree at Dalhousie University, Halifax, in 1973. In 1978 he became well known for hosting the CBC morning radio program from Sydney, Nova Scotia. His work as a broadcaster eventually took him back to Toronto where he presided in a national program ("Morningside"). He would sometimes talk of the pain he suffered. It

[2] J. Easton, *Obituary of John Bailar* in *University of Chicago Medicine Science Life* (October 5 2016).

was later found that an undiagnosed congenital dislocation of his hip was a major cause. For this he underwent numerous bouts of surgery, including in 2013 when a new operation on his leg and hip helped to restore mobility. He was sustained by stubbornness and dedication. His memoir was *The Men Who Learned to Walk Three Times*.

Peter Cavanagh promoted innovation and fresh thinking in his broadcasts. He questioned all things and was an early voice against clerical abuse of children. He grew up in the Maritimes of Canada where the people are noted for probing into life's mysteries. He confronted his last struggle against cancer with his usual lifelong fortitude.

He was a regular attender at the Castle in the stream of media commentators who helped to bring science and public policy to the whole of the general public. He was a "furious intellect".[3]

Professor David Strangway (1934-2017)

If Peter Cavanagh learned to walk three times, David Strangway, one of the most faithful participants in Castle conferences, is one of the few humans who served three times as a university president.

He was born in June 1934 in a small Ontario home to parents who were medical missionaries in Africa. This led to his being taken to Angola, where Margaret Anstee would later serve the United Nations. He grew up in that country and always regarded it as his true home. But it was an arduous home in which he became infected with River Blindness, a parasitic condition. Fortunately, his parents recognised it and secured drugs that cured David Strangway of the condition. But his brother died

[3] Debbie Goodwin, "Peter Cavanagh: Author and Radio Producer", *Globe and Mail*, October 2, 2016.

of a staphylococcal disease and his mother nearly died of the plague, in an environment that was inescapably risky. The native people named him “Cikomo”: the maker of miracles. So, he was to prove in his life.

He returned to the University of Toronto in 1953 and acquired a science and a doctoral degree, finishing his studies in 1960. The science degree took him in 1970 to be Chief of the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s Geophysics Branch in the United States. He was closely involved in the recovery of lunar rocks. He was rewarded for his work on the Apollo Missions by being given part of the treasury of such rocks. He brought them back to Canada nonchalantly in his briefcase. In 1973 he was appointed Vice-President of the University of Toronto. But when in 1983 the President unexpectedly died, he was quickly elevated to President. During his time as head of that university he made a mark in several fields of science.

In 1985 he was appointed President of the University of British Colombia. He held the post for 12 years and was spectacularly successful. He expanded the University’s endowment. He also made it a premier venue for the Arts. He created links with Asian universities and students. He established many centres of excellence. On his retirement he was lauded as one of the most successful university Presidents in Canada’s history.

In 2007, ever creative, he helped to establish Quest University, a small private institution north of Vancouver. His objective was to help scholars to escape the silos of the mind so common in established tertiary institutions. He was also prominent in engagement with the first peoples of Canada. All who met him at the Castle conferences can attest to his

wide range of expertise stretching from geophysics to the scrutiny of underwater weapons explosions; the environmental challenges of the sea and ecology; and ongoing issues of tertiary education to which he had given great leadership.

David Strangway was a most devoted alumnus of the Castle. Sitting with him on trains to and from London, I had the privilege of tapping into his daunting expertise. He had a sweet and kind disposition; but a spine of steal. With sadness we note his loss.[4]

Professor Richard E. Taylor, Nobel Laureate (1929-2018)

The final alumnus whom we honour is Richard Taylor, another occasional conference attender of the Castle who died this year.

He was born in 1929 at Medicine Hat and attended the University of Alberta where he graduated with a science degree in 1950 and a Masters degree in 1952. His studies took him to Paris and Berkley's Lawrence Laboratory in California. In 1962 he moved to Stanford University in the United States eventually arriving at the forefront of research into particles that led to the discovery of quarks. These are one of the fundamental particles of the universe. It was his work in that regard that won him the shared award of the Nobel Prize in 1990.

Despite his move to the United States Richard Taylor remained closely connected with Canada, exhibiting a love of its nature. He displayed personal thoughtfulness and modesty. When asked about the Nobel Prize, and his successes, he stated that he was just "lucky", pointing out

[4] Bill Atkinson, "Former NASA Scientist Led UBC and U of T", *Globe and Mail,* January 12, 2017.

that there were 13 Nobel Laureates at Stanford University. He protested that they were “not special” there. But they are special just about everywhere else, including at the Castle.

In a letter following his death, published in the *Globe and Mail,* Peter Calamai referred to a Castle conference when both he and Dr Taylor were present. At one of these, in 1999, Calamai was delivering a paper on science reporting. He was complaining how modern technology had surpassed the ability of most people to understand it. Much less repair it. He declared that “even a Nobel Laureate could not install a SCSI drive (“scuzzy”). But from the back of the room at the Castle came a “kindly voice [of Dr Taylor] asserting “Oh yes, I can”. [5] He showed his modesty; but not excessively so. His was a fine mind.

Richard Taylor was not a frequent participant in Castle conferences, although he received many invitations from Agnes Herzberg, herself daughter of a Nobel Laureate for Chemistry, (Gerhard Herzberg, Canada, 1971). Dr Taylor’s voice was precious for its assertion of the values and necessity of science, education and research in Canada. Aim for the stars, he said, as this would take the mind into the basic matter of the universe.

We, the alumni of the Castle, who still enjoy the precious gift of life, consciousness and sentience, honour the alumni departed who have enriched our dialogues. Their words and ideas are recorded in the record of our conference meetings. Memories of them, and their

[5] *The Globe and Mail*, March 24, 2018, B1.

contributions, help us to treasure the interdisciplinary principle of the Castle conferences.[6]

[6] D.L. McClain, "Richard E. Taylor, Nobel Winner Who Plumbed Matter is Dead at 88; and Michael Brown, "UC Alberta Mourns Loss of Nobel Winning Physicist Richard Taylor", University of Alberta *Newsletter*, March 1, 2018.