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www.idrcalumni.ca/
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The IDRC Alumni provides opportunities for former IDRC employees to maintain personal and professional links, and supports continuing dialogue on development issues.

Bulletin

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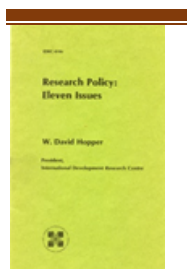
Thanks to Michèle Wilson for translation

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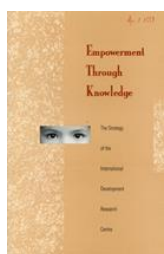
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IDRC Alumni at 20



1971



1991



1992



2015



Mr. Speaker, this measure is one of the most promising and exciting proposals to come before this house for some time. The bill provides for the establishment of an International Development Research Centre of Canada. This can be a new and dynamic element in Canada's contribution to the global struggle to improve the quality of life in the less privileged areas of the world.

We have learned that direct transfers of capital and knowledge cannot by themselves provide all the ingredients necessary for the advancement of the less developed countries. Their problems cannot be resolved by mere transfers of some of our wealth; they must be helped to develop their own capabilities of producing the wealth they require to meet the needs and aspirations of their people.

Hansard, Commons Debates, January 12, 1970 2249



Claude Paul Boivin, Jim Pfeifer, Mary Blackwell, Alison Craig, Gerry Bourrier, Angie Anton, and Jean Marc Fleury

In the beginning...

"In the spring of 2002 a group of old IDRC "hands" began to meet regularly to discuss the merits of creating an IDRC former-staff organization. ...

... polling our IDRC colleagues about a former staff group we encountered an overwhelmingly positive response. We developed a preliminary list of former staff members and organized the inaugural meeting of the group—the September 20, 2002, reception.

That evening nearly 100 of us joined the new organization—which we called *IDRC ALUMNI [Les Anciens du CRDI]*—and, after the shortest corporate meeting in history (a tradition we will maintain), the Members present decided to convert the founding committee into the founding Board, charged with the responsibility of developing a more clearly defined set of activities and a form of corporate structure."

[IDRC Alumni website](#)

20 years on....

We worked for something better, and the world still needs that Centre proposed in the Parliamentary debate in 1970. All generations of IDRC Alumni share the experience of time with IDRC as a blend of purpose and adventure to deliver on what Canada promises.

Your Executive is a mix of people from the past and the present of IDRC. This anniversary year encourages a transfer from the earliest Centre Alumni to more recent Alumni.

We'll work on this over the coming months.



Alumni News

Michèle Wilson / Pauline-Robert Bradley / Claude Paul Boivin/ Bertha Mo

IDRC Alumni to the Rescue

Internet may be great, but sometimes there's nothing like friends and colleagues to help solve an awkward problem. And so it was, recently, for our Alumni Newsletter translator Michèle Wilson, who has provided a home for a Chinese dissident for over two years and spent considerable energy finding the services and financial support he needs to live comfortably, such as Ontario Disability (ODSP) and a community health clinic. Most recently, Michèle needed to find a Mandarin-speaking dental office that accepted ODSP patients and was not too far from home, as Michèle also drives him to all his appointments.

This dissident had been involved in human rights work in China, which led to many arrests and detentions. In 2015, he was charged with Inciting Subversion of State Power and was freed only once his health had seriously deteriorated. He fled the country, ending up in Taiwan where he and another refugee remained in limbo in the airport for over four months before receiving temporary humanitarian visas, and eventually being accepted as permanent residents in Canada, sponsored by a group of Ottawa residents.

So Michèle tried her usual contacts, such as Bertha Mo and members of the sponsor group, without finding a solution to the latest problem. Then, as she was walking along the street she ran into Pauline Robert-Bradley and talked about her latest challenge. Pauline made some suggestions and reminded Michèle that Claude Paul Boivin was for some years the Executive Director of the Canadian Dental Association. Through Claude Paul, Michèle was finally able to locate the appropriate dental clinic and our Chinese friend is at last having his dental needs addressed.

Well done, Michèle and her Alumni network!

Gisèle Morin Labatut

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Vivien Chiam

At the National Day Awards in August 2021, Vivien received the Public Service Medal award from the President of Singapore, as commendation for her volunteerism and leadership. A proud moment for her, she says, but it is also a reminder that more challenges lie ahead. Given how Covid-19 has changed how societies live, work and play, a new and different set of issues and tensions are emerging on the family front. For example, one of the new areas that Vivien and her team will be looking at more acutely in 2022 would be mental wellness support for women and their families.

Vivien worked for IDRC for close to 30 years in various administrative capacities in IDRC's first Asia Regional Office (ASRO) before her retirement in 2010. She had started volunteering in her local community in the early 2000s and after her retirement she devoted most of her time to that, apart from doing some freelance communications work. She is currently chair of the Women's



Vivien (in red) with her local Member of Parliament, Ms. Foo Mee Har, after the awards ceremony on 8th January 2022.

Executive Committee in the Ayer Rajah Community Club near her home. Community Clubs are part of the public-funded People's Association, which has a mission of bringing local communities closer together to build strong social networks. The Women's Committees run programmes to support women in their multiple roles - as an important part of the workforce, as homemakers, as well as caregivers to the elderly. When Covid-19 struck, Vivien and her community volunteers joined the national initiative called "Masks Sewn with Love" to sew and distribute 2,500 free cloth masks for children in the neighbourhood, as masks for children were in short supply. It also helped these women volunteers to do something meaningful during the lockdowns.

Vivien says that her passion for supporting women was kindled from her years of working at IDRC, where gender equality was a key element in all the programmes being supported. In the mid-1990's she was seconded to work with a CIDA-funded women entrepreneurship programme based at the Canada-ASEAN Centre in Singapore. She thoroughly enjoyed that role, co-ordinating businesswomen's networking from Canada and ASEAN countries. From there she learned how to run women's networks and manage partnership initiatives between Canada and ASEAN. She became the President of the Singapore Business and Professional Women's Association from 1995-97.

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Daniel Buckles



‘Citizen’ Daniel has helped coordinate the Ottawa’s People's Official Plan project in response to the city's official plan.

Daniel says chances were slim that the project could convince the Ontario Progressive Conservative government to overturn council's decision, "but not zero." *

*[Community groups call for Ontario government to reject council-approved official plan.](#)

§

Heloise Emdon



In November 2021 Heloise was recognized as a Rhodes University Distinguished Alumni. [Click](#) here to view the “leadership conversation” with Dr Michelle Ruiters (18 mins), President of the Rhodes University Convocation entitled “Access and knowledge networks for development: [Some lessons](#) for higher education in Africa”. The video starts with the citation read by her nominator Dorothea Hendricks (6 mins), and congratulatory message Dr. Siswe Mabizela, Vice Chancellor of Rhodes University (14 mins).

Heloise obtained her BA degree in African Politics and Philosophy from Rhodes University in 1981. She later obtained an MA in Development Studies at University of Witwatersrand; and a post-graduate diploma in Policy and Programme Evaluation at Carleton University.

She was based in the satellite office of IDRC at the Development Bank of Southern Africa (after the ROSA office was closed down) from 2001-2008 (Acacia and Connectivity Africa Programme Specialist) and in Ottawa 2008-2013 as Programme Manager Acacia and Connectivity Africa, as well as Programme Leader of Innovation for Inclusive Development.

Heloise is currently Manager of Internationally sponsored research projects at Carleton University in Canada.

[Click](#) for more on Heloise's career before she joined IDRC.

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Alumni in Print

Danial Buckles

[Art, Anthropology and Activism](#), is a professional Memoir available now as a Blog.



Daniel writes: "This book is my telling of four decades of professional life, as an artist, anthropologist and activist. It highlights themes and practices of each profession while tracing my experience in these worlds with remarkable people and in unusual places."

Two chapters cover Daniel's time at IDRC: Chapter 8: [The Poverty of Food Policy](#) and Chapter 9: [Cultivating Peace](#).

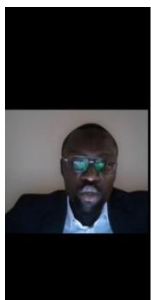
Excerpt: "In 1995 I was pulled into a different world, where research and policy advocacy occasionally collide with political activism. Only months after arriving back in Canada from Mexico with my wife and son Ryan, I left for Jakarta, Indonesia to participate in the second Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity on behalf of the International Development Research Centre."

Rachel DesRosiers Alumni Award 2021 WARO

As advertised in the November 30, 2021 issue of the Bulletin, IDRC WARO mounted a very successful webinar on the theme "Africa and COVID-19: Disinfodemic."

The webinar featured research by Ms. Penka Bogne, from eBase Africa, and Mr. Asaah Ndah Asongwed, two of the Rachel DesRosiers Alumni Award holders for 2020-2021.

The research is learning how, in the context of the COVID19 pandemic, the "disinfodemic" affects the use of research results in decision-making and creates challenges in the implementation of public policies.




Concepts and definitions

Misinformation:
False information spread regardless of intention to mislead

Disinformation:
Deliberately misleading or spreading wrong information

Fake news:
Purposely fabricated information that mimics the form of mainstream news

Disinfodemic:
Falsehoods fueling the pandemic and its impacts





Mitigation strategies

Evidence use (Policymakers)

- Constructive use of social media
- Policymakers – Research partnerships
- Evidence barometer
- Storytelling

Policy implementation (Citizens)

- Storytelling
- Factchecking platforms
- Media/digital literacy
- Train journalists and opinion leaders
- Use of local languages to communicate
- Engaging with community leaders
- Include critical thinking in school curriculum

Mr. Asaah Ndah Asongwed

5

Ms. Bogne Penka

IDRC President Jean Lebel and WARO RD Julie Crowley, in their introduction thanked the Alumni for its support through the DesRosiers Award.

Your editor attended and was impressed by the content and presentation of the young researchers and by the impressive expertise sharing their evaluation of the challenge Disinformation about COVID has for Africa balanced by a realistic assessment of where the opportunities to make a difference are to be found.

[Click](#) for a video recording of the Webinar.

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Geoff Oldham Memorial Scholarships

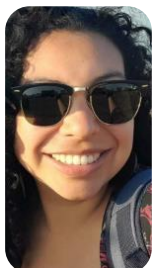
The Geoff Oldham Scholars speak for themselves.

Juan Bermudez (Colombia):

“I completed the Masters degree in Science and Technology Policy. My dissertation and internship both went really well and I received many good comments and invitations to publish my work. In October, I moved back home to Colombia and returned to my previous job. I was promoted to a new position as a Product Owner and now lead a team of nine people. I am still learning a lot, staying humble and absorbing everything I can from everyone around me.”



Sandra Delgado (Mexico):



“I ... successfully finished my Masters programme with a distinction in both the general results and my dissertation. Despite the great news, I think the grade is not as important as all the knowledge and experiences that I will take with me. I have been thinking a lot about how privileged I am for having had this opportunity. True, I have worked hard for my whole life, but there are so many people around the world who also work hard yet will never be able to have what I’ve experienced this year. Because of this, I hope to contribute to making diverse education more attainable for everyone. For this dream and so much more, I thank all of you for the inspiration.”

Anne Kagota (Kenya):

Anne arrived in October and is studying for the MSc Energy and Climate Policy. “I applied for the scholarship because of how deeply I resonate with Prof Geoffrey Oldham’s push for Science and Technology that responds to an individual country’s own needs and demands. This pioneering approach to policy is at the heart of SPRU, and it amazes me every day that I get to learn with and from the most brilliant minds in the field, many of whom have also been directly inspired by Prof Oldham.”

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Gallery



Chums, Colleagues, Coffee and Croissants

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IN MEMORIAM



Richard Paul Fuchs

1950 – 2021

*Richard Paul Fuchs passed away at the Health Science Centre at St. John's, Newfoundland on November 10th, 2021.

Rich was born in the Bronx, New York and immigrated to Canada in 1971 to attend graduate school at Memorial University. His specialty in rural development led to a career with the Newfoundland and Labrador Provincial government. He was one of the earliest advocates of the development of information industries which today are flourishing in the province.

Rich later joined Canada's International Development Research Centre and following a final assignment as IDRC's Regional Director for Southeast Asia in Singapore he made his way back to Newfoundland. Rich was proud to call Newfoundland his home, proud to be a Canadian citizen, and he will be forever missed by a global network of friends and colleagues.*

[*Full Obituary](#)

Colleagues have created a Wall of Remembrance for Rich:

[Rich Fuchs—you leave this world, and in your wake a big empty space opens.](#)

Here is the opening tribute:

Rich was a colleague and friend - an IDRC hire I never regretted. I vaguely remember his “competition” in that little soulless meeting room where Caroline Pestieau and I met the candidates. Rich WAS energy. His intellect sparkled. His ideas connected with the ground. He could tell a direct and understandable story about what we were trying to accomplish. He took us to the edge. Risks that made people’s lives on all continents better. He was what IDRC should be... smart, dedicated, inspirational, building deep real-World connections and benefits. I will miss him as will all of us, especially Claire and his beloved family.

Maureen O’Neil

You will find tributes from Nancy Smyth, Steve Song, Shaun Bona, Frank Tulus, Shafik Isaacs, Heloise Emdon, Sarah Earl, Maria Ng, Vivien Chiam...

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Clyde Sanger
1929 – 2022

Clyde died on January 20.

Clyde was an IDRC original, joining the Centre in 1971 as the first Associate Director for Public Affairs, in the Communications Division.

Clyde was an original in many other ways; for the complete story of a long full life of accomplishment visit Clyde’s [Wiki](#).

“It was that sharp wit, brilliant mind and love of all things journalistic and literary that drew so many people to Sanger over the years. He was a friend and mentor to generations of young journalists and writers, always willing to help, always generous with his time and full of questions”. Read about Clyde in a [Legendary Journalist](#), an appreciation from former colleagues at Carleton University.

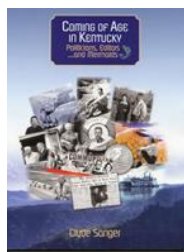


This, from the message Clyde’s sons sent to inform friends of Clyde’s passing. As others saw him...

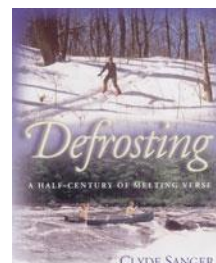
“Particularly touching yesterday was the stream of caregivers, nurses and other staff of the residence which he has called home for the past four years who have come in to say how loved he was. Certainly, getting to know them, almost all of whom come from Africa, the Caribbean or the Philippines was one of the great joys of the last chapter of his life. His curiosity, generosity and great empathy were with him until the very end.

Richard, Matthew, Toby & Daniel

Clyde loved and wrote poetry. Two of his collections were featured in the *IDRC Alumni Bulletin*’s [Alumni in Print](#). There you will find a poem for former IDRC president Maureen O’Neill when she retired from The North South Institute.



One of Clyde’s last books: **Coming of Age in Kentucky: Politicians, Editors....and Mermaids** is the story of a young journalist in 1950’s America.



“In this irrepressible account of the springtime of his life, Clyde Sanger enters the pasture of Kentucky like a pony set free. His education in romance and politics is by turns jolly, harrowing, enlightening and, surprising, and very much of its time. Less a case of a young Englishman losing his innocence than of a born writer and keen observer striking out on his rambunctious own.”

ELIZABETH HAY, author of *ALL THINGS CONSOLED*, Ottawa.

[Clyde’s Obituary in the Globe and Mail January 29, 2022](#)

A colleague recalls Clyde’s informal approach:

I knew him from my early days in CUSO and met him again in Kuala Lumpur in December 1974. He told me that IDRC could use a filmmaker and photographer and that I should look him up when I returned to Canada. On a snowy day in March 1975, I entered 60 Queen St., talked to Clyde and David Spurgeon, and ‘bingo’ – the next day I had a letter of appointment! I traveled with Clyde through East Africa in November-December 1975, and it was like having a human encyclopedia of Africa with me. On top of that, almost everywhere we went, he introduced me to old African media friends and colleagues, from his days in Africa. That really opened doors.

Neill McKee, IDRC filmmaker (1975-89)

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Linda Joanne Williams

1956 – 2021

Linda died on December 4, 2021.

Colleagues remember Linda:

“Poise, gentleness, and calmness. Above all else, her infectious laughter and friendship. All these words come to mind as I fondly remember Linda Williams.

Linda joined our small payroll team in April 2007 and boy did we need her superpowers to complete the multitude of projects that were coming our way. Linda was my supervisor for the last 10 years of my career and was an amazing colleague and mentor. She brought with her a vast amount of IT experience, communication expertise, and brilliant report writing skills. This allowed us to power our High Line payroll system (Personality) to the next level.

My best memories of Linda: Attending the Highline user group conferences together in Nashville, Tennessee and San Diego, California. It was a pleasure to travel with her (she had many years of travel experience...and I had a major fear of flying) and get to know her family through her many stories. She was a lovely person and was very easy to love. And most importantly, boy did she love a good joke and laughed whole heartedly at a drop of a hat.

Linda recently passed away at the young age of 65. In 2017, the HR team saw the early stages of what Progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP) can do to a healthy person. We did not know at this time that the unsteadiness that we saw, which resulted in a terrible fall and shoulder break, was caused by one of many symptoms of PSP. We just knew that our dear friend and colleague was struggling with her health. However, let's not remember the disorder that took our friend away. Let's remember and celebrate her smile, laughter, and team spirit that our dear friend provided during her short time with us.

A la fois drôle, brillante, douce et forte, Linda était vraiment une perle rare. Nous rendons hommage à la mémoire de cette femme que nous aimions tous et que nous n'oublierons jamais. Repose en paix ma chère amie Linda.”

Monique Perreault

It hardly fulfils Linda's honours by solely affirming her exemplary attention to IDRC's overseas-posted staff. Linda's team spirit and affable inclination towards service were always beyond reproach.

Shaun Bona Former ROSA Regional Controller

Remembering Rob Robertson

Claude Paul Boivin attended Rob's funeral and given the many expressions of sadness from Alumni on Rob's passing he believes many will appreciate the Eulogy given by Rob's daughter Devon.

Here is the link to Rob's funeral: <https://youtu.be/3fedTA51zrl>. The eulogies begin at 25:02, starting with Devon.

Introduction

My mother, my sister, and I want to thank everyone for joining us today, both online and in person here at St. Andrew's. It would please my dad immensely to see friends and family gathered together, on an occasion that just happens to be about him.

We also want to convey how meaningful it was for my dad to receive such heartfelt messages from so many different people after he shared his diagnosis. His final weeks and days were difficult, but they were also really beautiful. That's because, through your messages, he was able to fully absorb - and we were able to see - the value of a life spent nurturing relationships and caring about other people.

During those weeks and since he died, I have thought a lot about what made my dad's life one that people would say was "well lived". What I have come up with seems so simple and obvious, that I almost worry it isn't fitting for someone who I think is - objectively - quite special. But my dad would never endorse something that was more complicated than it needs to be.

So...for my dad, I think the formula was this: he is someone who did good, who did his best - always, and who enjoyed himself along the way and really wanted others to enjoy themselves too. I'll say a few words about each of these things.

Did good / service

In terms of doing good, my dad was very focused on service. This was no doubt related to his Christian faith, and that is reflected in the hymns and readings he selected for today's service.

But I think my dad's focus on service also had a lot to do with my grandparents, to whom he was extremely devoted.

My grandfather was in the navy during WW2. That form of service and sense of duty is something that my dad was always interested in and had deep respect for.

In addition, both my grandfather and grandmother grew up in families who ran general stores in small Ontario towns. My dad had a great fondness and appreciation for the central role in the community that would have come along with running those stores. I think that his active involvement in leading and participating in all kinds of initiatives to help local communities here in Ottawa was a way of honouring his parents and grandparents, and continuing the type of work they had undertaken.

But, as I'm sure you all know, my dad's service extended far beyond Ottawa. Through his career in international development and his long-standing commitment to human rights and supporting refugees, he had an impact in communities all around the world.

I think it's worth reiterating that, whether it was a small initiative in Ottawa, in Haiti, in India, in Burundi - or whether it was a large multinational funded project, my dad's interest was always in taking concrete action to help improve the circumstances of individuals.

Did his best

The next point is that my dad always did his best. My dad had many talents and was highly competent. But, for me anyway, that's not what made him special or made his life meaningful. Rather, it's that no matter what he was doing, he did it purposefully, and with just the right combination of confidence and humility.

You could see this play out in fairly trivial activities. A recent example is how he decided, at the age of 70, to try to learn to play piano. After a few months, he announced that he was not sure he would ever be able to play an actual song. But, much to my mother's delight, I'm sure, he continued to practice regularly. He said that he found the process and the theory behind the music so interesting, so it remained a worthwhile endeavour.

Another very trivial recent example is the YouTube workout videos that he started doing during the pandemic. I had told him about a fitness influencer in the UK named Lucy, who had short workout videos that I was doing and that he could also do online. He not only started doing them in increasing numbers, but he also joined "Lucy's Squad" on Facebook, so that he could really thrive as part of the online community of middle-aged British women.

But my dad's particular approach to doing his best was most meaningful on the many occasions where he was asked to provide assistance or advice to others. (You'll see the common theme that's emerging here). I wish that I had asked for my dad's advice on important issues more often. But on the occasions when I did ask, I rarely got an immediate answer. My dad would listen and then deliberate. He would take time to consider the best advice for me, drawing on his exceptional insight and experience, but stripped of any self-interest or ego. I suspect that he took a similar approach with other people and in different contexts, because I have seen how trusted and respected my dad was, and I think it's that type of approach that would have inspired trust and respect.

Enjoyed himself along the way and wanted others to enjoy themselves too

Lastly, my dad enjoyed himself and wanted others to enjoy themselves too. For somebody with a certain amount of gravitas, my dad had an incredible lightness of spirit.

He smiled so easily and so genuinely. He loved to sing and dance around to upbeat music like ABBA, the Supremes and the Beatles. He went all-in on the sports he followed and played. And, of course, he always took great pleasure in delivering (what he considered) a perfect one-liner. I don't think anyone could replicate his witticisms or sense of humour if they tried...for better or for worse.

My dad was very keen to bring you in on the fun. And he devoted a lot of energy to building repartee and long-standing inside jokes or bits of fun that were special to just you and him.

Even when I was in trouble as a kid, he would find a way to let me know of his disapproval in a playful way. For example, on more than one occasion, he threatened to change my name to Roberta Robertson if I didn't shape up.

My dad was also an exceptionally committed gift-giver. I think this probably also falls under the headings of doing good and doing his best. But mostly, his gift-giving was something he enjoyed and used to create fun and a feeling that you were special to him. December 26th was the day my dad started thinking about Christmas gifts to be opened the following December 25th. Any time something came up in conversation as an item or experience you might like, he would remember it or write it down. And every single trip he took was, for him, an occasion to do his Christmas shopping. As you can imagine, the pandemic was quite a hindrance for his pursuits. But he was not deterred. More than once, he tried to outsource his shopping to my trips. Jack - I'm very sorry, but I just didn't come across any good t-shirt or ball cap related to Cote du Rhone wine when I was in Avignon earlier this year.

I could go on about all of the ways my dad made things enjoyable, but I think everyone here knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Conclusion

I would like to finish by sharing one last reflection. In July, we accompanied my dad to an initial consultation with an oncologist to discuss the possibility of treatment. The oncologist asked my dad if he had thought about any goals related to treatment. Of course, he had his answer ready. He explained that his goal was not to avoid death for as long as physically possible. But, if he could be forgiven for the grandeur, he would like to try to inspire other people, in case it might help them. And for that, he thought he might need a bit of time.

Well, in the end, my dad didn't have treatment and he didn't get a lot of time. However, I do think he achieved his goal. I can only speak for myself, but how my dad handled his illness and his final weeks was incredibly inspiring. And, actually, it's because he handled it in the same way he lived the rest of his life.

He did good. Almost every day of the 6 or 7 weeks from the time he was diagnosed to the time he died, he thought about what he could do to make things a bit easier and better for other people. He provided guidance to my sister and me on every administrative thing that would need to be done. He had us make donations to people who were raising money for various causes. He connected people so that they could collaborate and carry on doing the good work that he believed in.

He also did his best. He moved through every physical and emotional challenge with such calm. If he was able to do something, he did it. And if was unable, he simply accepted it as a reality and not as a failure.

And, maybe most remarkable, is that he somehow managed to make things truly enjoyable. He genuinely enjoyed getting to speak with the nurses and doctors who cared for him. He listened to audiobooks of novels and podcasts, mostly about history and the world events that he found so interesting and important. He loved the talks and the visits and the correspondence that he managed with friends and family. Every single day he was pleasant and patient and thoughtful and funny with my mom, my sister and me. And that is just how we'll remember him.

Remembering Hélène Laurence Thibault

Hélène combined a bouquet of qualities that made her unforgettable – a sense of humour that was never hurtful, a fine artistic imagination, a faithfulness in friendship; she was also a welcoming hostess and a good colleague at work. I had not seen her for several years though we remained in touch. The e-mail I sent her last August remained unanswered, and I was shocked to learn the reason. She was dear to me and I will always remember her.

Gisèle Morin Labatut

Bulletin Archive on Line



Past issues of the [IDRC Alumni Bulletin](#), from the first edition in January 2003, are available on the [IDRC Alumni website](#).

Bulletins for 1 to 26 are either English or French. From 27-39 they are bilingual and from 40 on, either English or French.



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