

# Remembering a Grand Duchess

My mother belonged to the generation that knew girls who had danced with men who had danced with girls who had danced with the Prince of Wales. Edward, that is, not Charles. The mystique attached to the descendants of the tightly inter-married families that once ruled Europe, most of them for the past century grandchildren of Queen Victoria, endures. A woman snapping pictures of Prince Harry at New York's Ground Zero a couple of weeks ago enthused, "You don't get to see many princes back in Omaha".

These are some memories from one who waited for an hour or so with his parents on Toronto's Lakeshore Boulevard in 1939 to see King George VI and Queen Elizabeth (later the Queen Mother) pass by and then moved north to see them at closer range as they entered Hart House. Years later, in 1973, I stood with my wife and children by the gate of Sir Joseph Flavelle's mansion on Queen's Park Crescent to hail the Queen Mum as she was driven past. My goodness, she looked right at us and gave us that gracious wave.

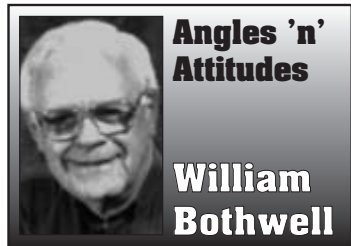
Because of an absence from town I had to decline Principal Cedric Sowby's invitation to be present when Elizabeth II visited Upper Canada College. I missed that closer encounter with royalty. And then there was my conversation with the Grand Duchess Olga. That happened at Toronto's Russian Orthodox Cathedral, then in Glen Morris Street, one Julian calendar Christmas Eve in January. I was introduced by Fr Gordon Hearn, rector of St Mary the Virgin (Anglican) parish. He was a Russophile, once a member of the Canadian force that landed at Vladivostok in 1921 to reinforce the White Russian resistance to the Leninist Reds.

The fragile woman whom I met that night was the youngest sister of Czar Nicholas II who, with his family, was massacred in 1917. Sixty of her letters to her mother and her sister during the course of the Russian Revolution are to be auctioned this week in London at the Olympia International Art and Antiques Fair. The reserve bid is \$163,500.

Olga was a nurse in Kiev when

the revolution was in its early stage of bloodletting that went on until Joseph Stalin's death in 1953. She last saw her brother and the 12 year old Czarevich Alexei in May, 1916. Thereafter she lived with tragic memories of her family's fate until she died in Clarkson, Ontario.

Before I chatted briefly with the Grand Duchess that evening, I had spoken to her son, one of the Koulikovsky boys - Tikhon, I think - who worked at the Art Gallery in Eaton's-College Street. He, like his uncle the last Czar,



**Angles 'n' Attitudes**  
**William Bothwell**

bore striking resemblance to the (young) George V with whose picture we were all familiar and whose image was still on many of our coins. King George and Nicholas II had been cousins.

Olga had married Col. Nicholas Koulikovsky in Russia and escaped with him to exile in Denmark. In due course they came to Canada and established themselves on a small market garden farm in what is now Mississauga.

Fr Hearn often spoke about the Grand Duchess. I remember, especially, him recounting her memories of her brother's coronation in 1894. Through some terrible negligence one of the outdoor stands built to hold spectators collapsed on the day of the great event. Many people were killed. Olga remembered that some of the guests who approached the Uspensky Cathedral in the Kremlin actually had to step over dead bodies. Then, during the coronation service, the imperial chain that had been placed upon the new emperor's breast, broke and fell to the floor. Afterwards, in a crowd pressing for free food and souvenirs in Khodynka Field outside Moscow, a thousand people were trampled to death and many more injured.

His sister said that from that day the Czar had a sense of foreboding. The disastrous Russo-Japanese war of 1904, his deter-

mination to be an autocrat in spite of nagging fears that he was unequal to his responsibilities and then the fiasco of his country's participation in the First Great War sealed his fate and that of the old Russia. It was all grist for the mill of a Greek tragic dramatist.

My other knowledge of the Grand Duchess Olga came from the Reverend Llewellyn Graham of St Barnabas Church, Ottawa, "the church of the Governors-General". "Weldy" was an irrepressible raconteur and among his stories was that of one of Olga's visits to the nation's capital. One Sunday, after she had attended a Eucharist at St Barnabas, Fr Graham and his wife were her hosts at luncheon. The rectory had had some recent 'redoing' and Margot was particularly pleased with the new drapes in the living room. The Grand Duchess, allowing that they were agreeable, went over to touch them, rubbed the fabric between her thumb and forefinger and said, "Yes. Cheap but nice".

The Grahams spent some time at St Augustine's College, Canterbury, where I got to know them. The story of the window drapes was told to other Russian emigrés who visited there. Ever afterwards, my late wife and my daughters looked at new acquisitions for one or other of our homes and said with a smile, "Cheap but nice".

I have not read Ian Vorres's 2001 biography *The Last Grand Duchess* but intend to do so. Meanwhile, selections from her letters will be appearing in papers and magazines. Col.

Nicholas Koulikovsky died at Clarkson in 1958. Olga may subsequently have moved into a flat in Toronto but I never heard either Hearn or Graham mention her doing so.

There is no doubt, however, that her last days were spent in poverty, perhaps with one of her two sons.

As many seniors do, Her Imperial Highness took up painting, landscapes and flowers. I saw only one of them, a memory of her family's former summer property at Ljivadia Palace, site of the 1945 Yalta Conference. The others, I think, did not make it to Eaton's or any other gallery. The gentle, aristocratic artist died in 1960, aged 78.

## What is 'normal'?

I am currently reviewing events throughout my life. My friend Constance Scrafield Danby (a frequent contributor to the Citizen) is preparing a life history picture book for me. In the process I am realizing that I have lead a rather unusual life, different from that of anyone I know. That means I'm unique. Does that mean my life differs from normal? Or more to the point should I consider myself, being other than average, as 'abnormal'?

Society appears to need to categorize people and characteristics. This is particularly so in the educational field. Two of our children grew up with dyslexia. Which meant that the authorities had to deal with them differently. There were strong indications that they would experience somewhat abnormal lifestyles.

Colin particularly would never be able to achieve any kind of academic level. (He is currently teaching English as a second language in a Tokyo university having completed a masters degree with honours from Birmingham University.)

Beth is an artist in Los Angeles with amazing skills in Celtic painting. Robin, another success story, is dealing with loss of sight and hearing.

Mathematicians have developed a bell-shaped curve to describe a distribution of statistics in such fields as heights, weights, speeds, etc. Normal data fits nicely into the main part of the curve, with the peak being average.

Typically about 66% lie within 3 standard deviations of the mean. Unusual data occupy the area to the left or right of the mean. In our schools the most efficient use of teachers is to deal with normal students while spe-

cial education is needed to help those who have learning 'disabilities' (society's term) and advanced classes for exceptional students.

We as a society continue to find means of helping others or even ourselves achieve our inherent potential.

I remember one student who struggled with reading, writing and arithmetic but was brilliant in playing chess against even the brightest students. Others learned the use of Chinese symbols (pictorial) much more quickly than those trained with Roman letters. Music and art appear to be effective tools in learning situations. Many students with high academic capabilities on the other hand find it difficult coping with life-skills and the inter-relationship with other people.

The logical alternative to this is the word unique. Each person brings his/her own characteristics into this world and chooses whatever experiences are appropriate to a personal life plan.

No two people are alike (normal?). Each and every one of us is his/her own story. Statistics note that most normal relationships are between people living within 8 blocks of one another whereas I found my life's partner half way around the world. We had five children, all similar but completely different.

It is interesting to note that we have been blessed with friends of which there are no two people the same.

All are interesting and unique. They would all defy categorization.

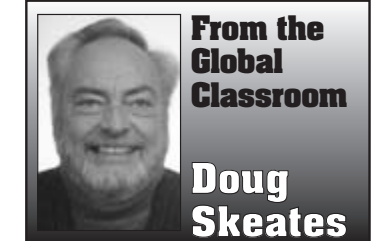
The wide range of personalities and especially their life experiences make each and every one fascinating. Conversations are never dull as each talks about events in his/her past and plans

town. Dr. Riddell, who was unseated through irregularities in the municipal election last January, when he was declared elected by a majority of two, again had for his opponent, Mr. T. H. Hewson. This time the doctor was elected by the handsome majority of 94, having large margins in each ward. The total vote cast, 663, was three less than at the last election.

Friday evening last, Dr. E. C. Campbell, Deputy District Grand Master of Georgian District No. 9, A. F. & A.M., paid his official visit to his own lodge, Lorne Lodge No. 377, Shelburne.

In addition to the large turnout of local members, several brethren from Orangeville were present, including Chas. McKeown, MPP.

Herbert Denton, of Toronto, has been appointed third junior judge of York County. Mr. Denton is a native of Mono Township and was educated at Orangeville High School, Collingwood Collegiate Institute and the University of Toronto, where he was an honour graduate in law. Mr.



**From the Global Classroom**  
**Doug Skeates**

for the future.

Inasmuch as each of us is unique what is the point in fitting people into a mold? Obviously this is impossible anyway because none of us fits what would be classified as normal. It is diversity that makes people interesting.

A TV program was based on picking people at random and finding out who they really were. Even the most unassuming person eventually exhibited characteristics or events in his/her life that made the person unique.

It is the differences between people that adds so greatly to our own interesting lives. An article from many years past was based on an enquiring mind. "What is the Purpose of Life? It is searching for the purpose of life". This is a lifetime challenge and one that is fascinating to hear about in others as well as discovering for oneself.

'Normal' in fact is a diversity of abnormalities. Much like the expression 'the only constant in life is change', the only thing we have in common with others is the fact that we are all different. The only thing normal in life is abnormality.

## Your Weekly Chuckle . . .

By KEITH HUNTER

TEACHER: Could you tell me about the Iron Age?

STUDENT: I'm sorry. I'm a little rusty on that one.

## Dipping Into the Past

### Riddell won byelection forced by irregularities in municipal election

Denton is the author of a valuable legal work entitled "Municipal Negligence," and for six years was a member of the Toronto Library Board, being its chairman in 1904.

Says the ORANGEVILLE SUN: Forty-three years ago yesterday, Orangeville's soldier boys left for the front to repel the Fenian Raid, leaving the then village in charge of Messrs. Joseph Pattulo, Sepha Downer and Robert McKeown, whose special duty it was to look after the women and respective orphans. It is pleasing to note that this interesting trio are still in our midst, although the two latter gentlemen are getting along in years.

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## Good for the goose, good for the gander

To hear U.S. President Barack Obama tell, Sonia Sotomayor, his nominee for the Supreme Court, simply "misspoke" and opted for a "poor choice of words" when she said a woman or Latino would make a better and more compassionate judge than a white man.

She didn't really mean it. Perhaps. Except that we now know she has made the same claim in at least five speeches - this, while sitting as a judge - and the notion that people are better judged as members of a group rather than individuals - an idea which should be anathema to a judge - was the theme of all those speeches.

Some Obama apologists go even further. Nobel prize winning New York Times columnist Paul Krugman, for example, dismissed Sotomayor's comments as a "joke" - she clearly wasn't joking - and said her critics are all essentially nutbars.

The Globe and Mail's John Ibbitson accused Newt Gingrich of being "evil" for saying that Sotomayor's comments are just a new form of racism.

So here's a question. If a white male judge had given speeches and instead of speaking about women and Latinas had said, "I would hope that a wise white male with the richness of his experiences would more often than not reach a better conclusion that a Latina female who hasn't lived that life," how do you think the liberal press and political class would respond?

The answer, of course, is obvious. He'd be branded a racist.

Well, what's good for the goose, as they say, should be good for the gander too.

But, in this world of identity politics, it isn't. And the trick is that instead of Sotomayor being seen as taking a "racist" view, anyone who dares question her is smeared as being "racist." Neat.

The very fact that Obama made a major point out of the fact that Sotomayor would be the first Hispanic on the Supreme Court and only the third woman, underscores the point.

Nothing wrong with either being female and/or Hispanic, but shouldn't legal qualifications trump both race and gender, particularly for what is arguably the most important position in the U.S. apart from the presidency itself?

Indeed, as an undergraduate at Princeton, Sotomayor wanted the government to force the school to hire more Hispanic faculty members and at Yale Law School she railed against a court ruling against racial quotas. As a judge, she has constantly cited her own "special" background and insights as a reason to put more Hispanics on the bench.

Yet, when a law firm partner at a recruiting dinner at Yale asked whether law firms did a disservice by hiring minority students based on race rather than qualifications, she was so offended - rejecting his personal apology to her - that she filed a discrimination complaint against the firm with the university.

So it's fine for her to advocate race-based politics, but pity the poor sap who dares to question her wisdom. Is this the kind of person who really should be a Supreme Court justice?

There's more. You likely already know that one of her recent controversial decisions - expected to be overturned by the very court she's been nominated for - involved Frank Ricci, a dyslexic Philadelphia fireman who studied for several hours a day for several months to prepare - and score well on - for a civil service exam he needed to pass in order to become a lieutenant.

Ricci and several other firefighters passed but, alas, since no black firefighters taking the test achieved passing grades, all the results were thrown out. Ricci thought this was unfair.

Perhaps because it is. But Sotomayor thinks it's just fine and she upheld the decision from the bench.

In his weekly radio address on the weekend, U.S. Senator Jeff Sessions, the senator leading the Republican Party's review of Sotomayor, asked, "if a judge is allowed to let his or her feelings for one party in the case sway his decision, hasn't that judge then demonstrated a bias against the other party?"

He went on to ask, "Do I want a judge that allows his or her social, political or religious views to impact the outcome, or do I want a judge that objectively applies the law to the facts? That is the central question around which this entire nomination process will revolve."

No doubt. But then again, Sessions is a white male. How can he possibly understand, eh?

## PC leadership looking a lot more attractive

Ontario's Progressive Conservatives need to inject some optimism into a leadership campaign that has gone badly off track, and the governing Liberals suddenly are providing it.

The Conservatives' race has produced a few policy ideas worth considering, but been dominated by unnecessary backbiting over an issue that cannot help, but only hurt their party - a push by two candidates to scrap or severely restrict powers of the Ontario Human Rights Commission and tribunals that investigate alleged abuse.

Extreme right-wingers have been worked up over this, but few in the public care about it.

The Commission, starting half a century ago, and tribunals with a few aberrations, have done worthwhile jobs protecting against discrimination and the party needs to move on quickly to other issues and hope voters forget that it flirited with this one.

The race also has struggled because of widespread feeling that the Liberals under Premier Dalton McGuinty, despite the economic recession, have enough support (47 per cent) in polls to win a third successive election, and whoever the Conservatives choose will not matter anyway.

But the Conservatives are fortunate in having an issue that could help invigorate them dropped in their lap - revelations that the health ministry has spent hundreds of millions setting up a still unfinished electronic records system, and wasted money spectacularly at a time it lacks money to fund real health care, including reducing hospital wait times.

The ministry paid \$2,700 a day to individual consultants who were mean enough to charge the taxpayer an extra \$1.39 every time they bought a muffin and \$1.59 for a can of pop, this at a time when many residents are particularly hurting through losses of jobs. It's the sort of waste taxpayers easily relate to when overspending millions is so remote from their lives it sometimes goes over their heads.

Parallels were seen in the uproar over nannies, hired to look after children, being forced to work unpaid overtime washing an MP's car, and an environment minister building Ontario's biggest garage

at her home for her family's gas-guzzlers, for which she lost her job - these are down-to-earth failings people can recognize and do not accept.

Most residents had not blamed McGuinty for the economic recession that has cost tens of thousands of jobs in Ontario, because they saw this happening elsewhere and attributed its start particularly to financial institutions pushing credit on people in the United States who had no hope of repaying.

But the waste on electronic health information has started to focus attention on the whole issue of Liberal spending, some aspects of which have been overlooked.

The Liberals first said their deficit this year would be \$14 billion and most residents appeared to accept this extraordinary shortfall was necessary to preserve jobs, but it has jumped to \$18 billion and prompted a wave of charges that they cannot be relied on and are dithering.

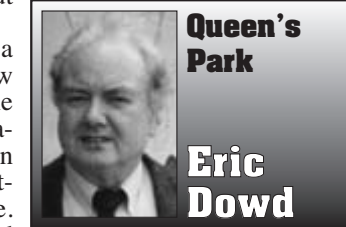
The Conservatives have an opportunity to remind everyone that the Liberals lost more than \$100 million investing in the shaky sub-prime mortgages forced on U.S. residents - a huge error of judgment that's never been fully explained by them on any level.

The Tories will be able to recall that the Liberals were caught letting children's aid societies pay for top-of-the-line, gas-guzzling SUVs for employees to drive in their jobs, and \$2,000-a-year gym memberships to relieve their stress, while they did not have enough to pay for programs children need.

The Conservatives can remind us that David Caplan, the health minister responsible for making sure those overpaid consultants got free muffins, not long ago was the minister in charge of lotteries, failing to protect ticket buyers from cheating retailers.

The Conservatives are demanding that McGuinty fire Caplan this time and the premier, struggling to defend the indefensible, must wish he had done so earlier and may have to put him in a less visible role when the heat cools down.

The Conservative leadership that once seemed to be a booby prize is looking more like a job worth having.



**Queen's Park**  
**Eric Dowd**

### 125 YEARS AGO Thursday, June 12, 1884

Some big catches of the speckled beauties have been made during the last few days. The brooks are visited almost every day by sportsmen who return laden with them, sometimes to the extent of 25 or 30 pounds, as did Messrs. D. Fisher and Wesley Shields on Friday last. On the same day, Joseph Allen caught 257 by actual count. Some heavy weights have been taken from Horning's Mills Lake and Reid's Pond.

The Shelburne Band of Hope was organized last Thursday evening with a membership of between 40 and 50. It meets every Thursday evening at 6:30 sharp in the hall over Laidlaw's store.

### 100 YEARS AGO Thursday, June 10, 1909

The by-election to fill the vacancy created by the unseating of Orangeville Reeve Dr. W. P. Riddell, took place Monday and was the hottest contest in the history of the

Liberal House Leader in the last election on Thursday will be open 8 a.m. to 7 p.m. Locally, the candidates in Dufferin-Simcoe riding are Conservative (Rev.) W. A. Downer and Liberal Robert Wales and in Jamieson, Conservative of Collingwood, and Dr. Wilfred Smith, Liberal, of Creemore, were nominated in Dufferin-Simcoe riding.

### 25 YEARS AGO Wednesday, June 13, 1984

A bylaw to execute an agreement with Union Carbide for the firm's major expansion was passed at a special meeting of Orangeville Council Monday night. The 39,500 sq. ft. addition will represent close to a 50 per cent expansion.

A public meeting is planned for a proposed zoning change to permit a second separate school for Orangeville near Blind Line.

Shelburne's Linda Ferris has volunteered to help Orangeville's Tourism Development Committee get off the ground with a successful marketing study. The work will earn her a credit in her two-year tourism management course at Georgian College.

### 50 YEARS AGO Wednesday, June 10, 1959

Reeve Eric Gray turned the first sod Monday as construction started for the new Shelburne and District community swimming pool.

Public school teachers and ratepayers from all over Dufferin County gathered in the auditorium of Centre Dufferin District High School on Friday evening to do honour to Mr. W. Lawrence Lovell, of Orangeville, who is retiring after 30 years' service to education in Ontario, the last 17 of which were in the capacity of Inspector of Public Schools for Dufferin.

### 75 YEARS AGO Wednesday, June 15, 1934

The Ontario elections will take place Tuesday of next week. Official nomination meetings were held last Tuesday. Edward G. Boyd, Conservative and Dr. George McQuibban,

