

# Friends of the Archives Newsletter

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## An Interview with Dr. Vivian Rakoff



*Dr. Rakoff breaking ground for the construction of Canada's first PET Centre, 1989  
Courtesy of CAMH Archives*

Born in South Africa, Vivian Rakoff seemed destined from the outset for an extraordinary career. He reminisced fondly about the period of his adolescence which he feels is “one of the greatest gifts” of modern times following on from the Industrial Revolution and democratization in the West. For him it was a wonderful, extended period of self-discovery not to be taken for granted: “I was free to study what I wanted. And I did.”

He also espoused “left wing” socialist causes, even fancying himself a Trotskyite at one point (“only a little bit”) before spending a year at age nineteen in a Kibbutz in Israel. On, then, to England, expecting to do a D. Phil. in psychology at Oxford. Instead, he found himself at University College Hospital, London, reading medicine! There followed, he recalls, with affection, “eight wonderful years” getting involved in all the cultural life of London. “Oh, then I was young,” he chuckles. He came to Canada in 1961: completed

his psychiatric training at McGill University, a contemporary of Dr. Ewan Cameron. After moving to Toronto he rose to become Chair of the Department of Psychiatry, University of Toronto, and Psychiatrist-in-Chief and Director of the Clarke Institute for ten years (1980-1990).

He was “reading around,” he recalls when he realized that the most extraordinary future for brain sciences lay in the new psychiatry that visualized brain processes. He became instrumental in getting \$7 million from the provincial government to purchase a PET apparatus, the first “brain machine” in Toronto, dedicated entirely to brain function. He was “a one-man committee against all kinds of opposition,” he recalls – one can well imagine Dr. Rakoff a formidable opponent. He got his way, perhaps the crowning achievement of his career.

“I was lucky to enable it to happen,” he demurred, modestly. *Thelma Wheatley*

Dr. Vivian Rakoff presented the keynote address for the historical seminar, *From Caring to Treating*, during the Department of Psychiatry Centenary events, University of Toronto, Nov. 2007. During Convocation ceremonies in June 2008 the University awarded Prof. Rakoff its honorary degree of Doctor of Science.



**Robert (Robbie) Pos, MD, FRCPC (1927-2008)  
Archives Donor and FOA Board Member**

Robert Pos was born in the Netherlands in 1927. He received his MD at the University of Amsterdam in 1951, qualifying in the Netherlands in 1954. That same year he was invited by Professor Aldwyn Stokes to come to Toronto. Following an internship at Toronto General Hospital (TGH), he specialized in psychiatry and obtained his qualification in 1958. In charge of a maximum security unit at Queen Street, he introduced a multidisciplinary therapeutic team and patient counsels and led the way to opening the hospital to the community in close association with the Jewish Vocational Service, which was in its first year.

In 1962, Robbie Pos joined TGH as staff psychiatrist and soon became involved in research that led to a Visiting Lectureship at the University of Utrecht, and then to his Ph.D in 1963. Next he developed the Informational Underload Theory of Psychotic Decompensation for which he was awarded the National Research Award, 1964, of the Canadian Mental Health Association. In 1966, Pos attended the Psychiatric Research Institute of the U.S.S.R. Academy of Medicine in Moscow, as Visiting Scientist. In 1967 he became an Assistant Professor and in 1968, Associate Professor at the University of Toronto.

Psychiatrists at Toronto General Hospital, about 1975, including (l. to r.) Drs. Albert Leung, Ken MacRitchie, Glenn Renecker, Bob Worling (Deputy), Robert Pos (Psychiatrist-in-Chief), Gail Robinson, Peter Brawley, Harvey Freedman, Arthur Jones and John Flannery.

Photo:CAMH Achives, Robert Pos fonds, F5.1.10

As Chairman of the General Hospital Committee in the Medical Faculty, Pos played a leading role in transforming the Toronto teaching hospitals' Divisions of Psychiatry within the Departments of Medicine to independent general hospital departments. In 1968 he became the Toronto General Hospital's first Psychiatrist-in-Chief. As such he developed a staff of eleven full-time psychiatrists with an inpatient, outpatient, emergency, and community service, a research division and a division of psychology. He was also instrumental in preserving the clinical records of Canada's first general hospital neuro-psychiatric unit at TGH, 1906-27. In 1973 Dr. Pos became a Professor of Psychiatry in the University of Toronto until 1982, when he moved to Vancouver, joining the British Columbia Forensic Psychiatric Services.

Retiring from clinical practice in 1977, Robbie and his spouse, Marie Becker-Pos, an artist and counselling psychologist, moved back and forth between Toronto and Vancouver until 2004 when they settled in Vancouver. Robbie continued his longstanding service as a donor of archival material, historiographer and volunteer member of the Friends of the CAMH Archives. Subsequently completing his manuscript, *The Gender Beyond Sex*, he was awarded a gold medal in the 2007 Independent Publisher Book Awards. Dr. Pos passed away in the course of cancer treatments during May, 2008.

*John Court*

## BOOK CORNER . . .

***Psychedelic Psychiatry: LSD from Clinic to Campus*** – by Erica Dyck (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). An expert historian's account of medical researchers working in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century to understand LSD's therapeutic properties, enhancing our understanding of it as an experimental substance for medical treatment and exploring psychotic perspectives, and a "recreational drug." Prof. Dyck, from researching in part in the CAMH Archives, recounts the inside story of the early days of LSD experimentation in small-town, prairie Canada when Humphrey Osmond and Abram Hoffer claimed incredible advances in treating alcoholism, understanding schizophrenia and other psychoses, and achieving empathy with their patients.

***Protect, Befriend, Respect: Nova Scotia's Mental Health Movement, 1908-2008*** – by Judith Fingard and John Rutherford. Fernwood Publishing, 2008. <<http://www.fernwoodpublishing.ca>> For one hundred years, the Canadian Mental Health Association and its antecedent organizations have constituted a major force in the campaign to improve the prospects of people living with mental illness. This book traces the evolution of the movement in Nova Scotia in three stages, focusing on the individuals who fought stigma, institutionalization and marginalization. Often with strong views and frequently with compassion, they attacked the problems of indifference with dedication and energy. The result is a history not only of a particular organization, but also of a society's approach toward some of its most vulnerable constituents.

***Honouring the Past, Shaping the Future. 25 Years of Progress in Mental Health Advocacy and Rights Protection.*** Psychiatric Patient Advocate Office, 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Report, 1983-2008. (Free from the PPAO, e-mail:ppao.moh@ontario.ca) An informative report, its 120 original contributions include a variety of papers that are grounded in history or have historical perspectives. At least three of them are authored by CAMH staff including Lucy Costa, Gail Czukar, and David Goldbloom. A fine article, "Ancient History? The Relevance of the Past to the Present in Ontario's Psychiatric History." comes from the pen of Geoffrey Reaume, a friend and former member of the FOA. Geoffrey is outraged by an Ontario government lawyer who dismissed historical accounts of the abuse of asylum inmates from the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries as "ancient history". Relevant historical evidence must be respected by the justice system and certainly by the Ontario government in its various manifestations.

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**EVENING TO REMEMBER:** Peter Maxwell Davies' monodrama "*Eight Songs for a Mad King*" was performed Nov. 22 and 23, 2007 at the Betty Oliphant Theatre, in Toronto. This event was in celebration of the University of Toronto Department of Psychiatry centenary. The suggestion for the opera came from Cyril Greenland, FOA member and co-founder of the Museum of Mental Health. It was directed by Summer Lyric Opera's Guillermo Silva-Marin, with Jose Hernandez conductor. Canadian baritone Bruce Kelly excelled in the role of King George III with his powerful yet tender rendition of madness. The performance was followed by Grand Rounds, conducted by Dr. Anthony Feinstein, Prof. of Psychiatry, Dr. Andy Gotowiec, resident in psychiatry at University of Toronto, and Cheryl Ball, MSW, RSW at the In-Patient Unit at Sunnybrook Health Centre. *Thelma Wheatley*

## President's Message

It has been a very quiet summer, except for the day of our successful book sale at CAMH (see photograph and caption below). I spent that afternoon writing our annual application for a government grant.

Because of the downturn in the financial markets, our investments are yielding very little this year, so the outlay for the 2009 bursaries will be reduced. We are hoping to award at least one bursary from each of the Hewton and Griffin funds.

We are very sorry to lose Pat Kolisnyk, who has been our wonderful book-keeper for several years. Thank you, Patricia, not only for your hard work but for training your replacement. Now we welcome Yves Boissel, who has always done our banking, as the new book-keeper.

The initial stages of reorganization are going well. Ed Janiszewski, our vice-president, has taken over all meeting arrangements; we are self-catering for meetings. Book sales are a board responsibility. John Court is still a tower of strength but we have freed up much of his time and will do more in the future.

Finally, a Merry Christmas, Joyeux Noël, Happy Hannukah, Good Kwanza, and a really great New Year to all of you.

*Vivienne Gibbs*



*On June 26, 2008, guests flooded the street fair along the new White Squirrel Way for the grand opening of the Queen Street site's Redevelopment Phase IA treatment facilities and CAMH's 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Among the volunteers staffing the Friends of the Archives' book sale booth were (l. to r.) Cyril Greenland, Thelma Wheatley, Shirley Morriss and Syd Jones.  
Photo: CAMH Archives*

## Friends of the Archives

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