



## The History of Freak Shows

Jennifer Pettit

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Our Arch Supporters ... THANK YOU !!

Bart Dailley introduced today's speaker, Jennifer Pettit. She is a Professor of History at Mount Royal University and Chair of the Department of Humanities. She joined MRU in 1997 after earning her PHD in Indigenous History from U of C. Her research interests are focused on Canadian and American Social history, with a particular interest in government policies for Canada's First Nations. She is speaking to us today on a cultural oddity, at least in today's cultural terms, the History of Freak Shows. Jennifer includes numerous subjects within her studies of American and Canadian culture. These include the history of Vaudeville, Circuses, and the development of television. Within this broad framework there is a unique area which she will present to us today.



When using the term "Freak" she is using it in the historical sense — it is no longer acceptable to use the term today. Freak shows have a long history, as they have been around since the 1700s. Even prior to that people tried to explain what were then often called "monsters". During the Middle Ages (476 to late 1400s or so — fall of Roman Empire to Renaissance), people thought they were the wrath of God or even the result of bestiality. By the Scientific Revolution in the 1600s, a branch of science known as TERATOLOGY, or the study of "monsters" emerged. Keep in mind that freaks are socially constructed ... in other words, society decides what is and what is not normal and that changes over time.

By the early 1800s, freaks were being exhibited at museums. At this point this was seen as educational, not just entertainment. Many of these early exhibits were frauds however, and one of the most significant developers of such "Freak Shows", P.T. Barnum, went on to build his American Museum. This was transformed from being a boring museum to an entertainment centre suitable for middle-class families. It was all about marketing. "Dime" museums copied Barnum's model and Freaks also became part of the circus.

When world fairs came along, the "Sideshow" also appeared (like the Columbian Exhibition/Chicago World's Fair of 1893). This meant the appearance of an amusement park industry of which freak shows became an important part. The culture grew in leaps and bounds when it came to America. It moved from pleasure gardens of Europe to actual amusement parks like CONEY ISLAND. From 1910-1940 Coney Island had more human oddities on exhibit than anywhere in the world — over 300 "little people" and over 3,800 freaks. Historians today are interested in studying freaks, since it tells us a great deal about society's treatment of people, and what is socially acceptable at various times.

Freaks were presented in various ways during these times depending on the venue and type of person involved. The emphasis was on how the person was different (inferior). They usually dressed very nicely, performed normal tasks like drinking tea, and were often shown with their families. They used science to try to explain

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**March 1st, 2016**

**Scribe: Paul Gaudet**

Our greeters today were Al Pettigrew and Jack Steen, doing a fine job making us all welcome.

President Dale started our meeting at 12:17. She introduced O Canada with Rob Wolfson providing recorded music (as Ruth was unable to attend) followed by Rotary Grace.

She noted that Paul Gaudet would be today's Scribe and then called on Jack Steen to introduce our visitors and guests. Today we had a total of 43 in attendance which included 2 guests and 3 visiting Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Calgary South, Jack Thompson, Harry Pelton and Myrna Dube.



Harry was at home recovering from day surgery so was unable to provide his regular Sunshine Report. Paul updated the Club regarding the health of Norm Moro. Norm is still in the Foothills Hospital awaiting bypass surgery and the current estimate is that his operation is to be carried out on Wednesday, March 9th. Norm remains in good spirits and would appreciate seeing his fellow Rotarians (room 832).

It was also reported that Lyle Davidson has taken a fall and has suffered a broken wrist.

Neil Sanger, beloved husband of Maureen Tynan-Sanger, passed away on February 24, 2016 at the age of 72 years. Neil lived a full life and was loved for his work, his commitment to community and his wonderful sense of humor. A Celebration will be held at the Calgary Canadian Irish Athletic Club (4343 - 18 Street NE) on March 2, 2016 at 3:00 p.m. Memories and condolences may be shared through [www.evanjstrong.com](http://www.evanjstrong.com).

Dale announced that a special meeting would be held three weeks from today so that our membership could vote on a motion, recommended by our Board of Directors, regarding support for Rotary Challenger Park. They have requested a donation of \$30,000 from our Club, to be given over three years in an annual amount of \$10,000. This is part of their major expansion and is subject to their meeting a number of other conditions.



Dale reminded us to be sure to read the monthly "Rotarian" magazine which just came out. It is full of interesting information and includes a great article on Rotary's incoming President.



Rob took the podium to introduce the birthdays and anniversaries for the month of March. Graham Boone (2nd), Gwynneth Gourley (4th), Linda Colclough (8th), Stephen Pick (9th), Rena St. Clair (25th) and Garth Plaunkett (28th) all have birthdays this month and we all wish them a very happy birthday!

Anniversaries this month are fewer but continue to reflect the marital longevity Rotary is known for. David and Margaret Irving celebrate their 47th on the 1st, Bill and Lana Worthington their 43rd on the

10th, and Joe and Maya Jogia, also their 43rd on the 11th. Congratulations to all!

## Minutemen:

- Rob Wolfson updated the Club on our Cribbage nights (held at Horton Road Legion) announcing that there would be three evenings remaining in our season. March 10th would be a regular game, March 24th would be the Lou Reid Memorial Trophy Tournament, and a final get together in April.
- Rob also took the opportunity to award the monthly Flames Hockey "Minute Scored" Pool winners. The winners of \$20 each included Paul G., Tammy, Linda, Neil, Garth S., Bart and Joe H.
- Rob asked for volunteers to perform the "Sgt. at Arms" role in upcoming meetings. While the experienced sergeants are doing a fine job, it would be great to have "new blood" and Rob encouraged others to give it a try. Just contact Rob for guidance and support.
- Dale advised that the Calgary Fire Dept. was seeking volunteers for their head shaving fund raiser in aid of Cancer Research. Anyone interested should contact Dale for details.

Our 50-50 winner this week was Terry Green.



Bob Montgomery took the podium as our Sgt at Arms and started out with a donation of his own as he announced that his daughter had finished her cancer treatment and was back at work.

He then began a somewhat lengthy Q and A session on the subject of yesterday being the 29th day of February, leap day. A few tables faced fines for not being aware of how various countries dealt with this issue (Ethiopia, China as examples). Joe Hooper was fined for answering questions meant for other tables, just couldn't stop himself. The winners of the hockey pool were also asked to contribute. Bob wound up with a tax time joke: Father O'Malley was contacted by the CRA and asked "Do you know Ted Holloran?" to which he said "Yes." "Is he a member of your Church?" Again the Father replied "Yes." "Did he donate \$10,000 to your Church?" to which Father O'Malley replied "He will!"

## Good News/ Bad News:

John Charrett announced the healthy arrival of his grandson, Benjamin Christopher, to his daughter Cindy.



Bart Dailley introduced today's speaker, Jennifer Pettit, Professor of History at Mount Royal University and Chair of the Department of Humanities. She is speaking to us today on a cultural oddity, at least in today's cultural terms, the History of Freak Shows.

President Dale closed the meeting by presenting our speaker with our Polio Plus donation certificate in appreciation of her presentation.



## Water and Sanitation Month

March 8th	Janet Brown, Public Opinion Consultant
March 9th	Board of Directors meeting — 5:30 pm, Horton Road Legion
March 10th	Cribbage Night, Horton Road Legion, regular game
March 15th	St. Patrick's Day Meeting
March 22nd	Glenn Suart, Great Ideas Guy
March 24th	Cribbage Night, Horton Road Legion, Lou Reid Memorial Trophy Tournament
March 29th	Mike Cvik, former NHL Linesman



## Maternal and Child Health Month

April 5th	Ryan Geake, Director, Calgary Scope Society
April 12th	Cindy Neufeld & Kathryn Johnson, Between Friends Society
April 13th	Board of Directors meeting — 5:30 pm, Horton Road Legion
April 19th	John Hufnagel, President and General Manager, Calgary Stampers
April 26th	Dinner meeting — Youth Services Night

## Youth Service Month

May 3rd	Jodi Hilty, President, Yellowstone to Yukon Conservation Initiative
May 10th	Calgary Bluegrass Group — The History of Bluegrass Music
May 11th	Board of Directors meeting — 5:30 pm, Horton Road Legion
May 13th - 15th	'Rising to New Heights' — DisCon 2016, Canmore, Alberta
May 14th - 15th	Casino — details to come
May 17th	J. David Clemis — The Downfall of the Popularity of Alcoholism
May 24th	Naheed Nenshi, Mayor (tentative)
May 28th - June 1st	RI Convention, Seoul, Korea — 'Connect with Korea, Touch the World'



## Rotary Fellowships Month

June 3rd	President's Dinner
June 8th - 12th	Parking at Spruce Meadows for the "National"

# The History of Freak Shows

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the abnormality (ie – Maternal Impression – hairy face caused by mother seeing lion when pregnant).

There were many types of freaks:

1. midgets (little people) - TOM THUMB
2. conjoined (Siamese) twins

CHANG AND ENG - married sisters, almost killed each other  
DAISY AND VIOLET HILTON - exhibited around the world from the age of 3 - were pretty and challenged peoples' ideas about women - didn't need a man, had each other. They became very wealthy and both did eventually marry - Daisy in 1936, Violet in 1941

3. supposed cannibals
4. bearded ladies
5. deformities
6. self-made freaks - tattoos, snake charmer
7. corpses in jars

When movie theatres emerged, places like sideshows and amusement parks began to decline in popularity. There were however some attempts to incorporate freaks into the movie industry. The best known example is the movie "FREAKS" made in 1932. It was directed by Tod Browning who also made Dracula.

Jennifer completed her presentation by discussing whether Freak Shows exploited people? Surprisingly there are two sides of this discussion. For those who say "no" to this question, they point out that these abnormal people had no way of earning money when

there was no real welfare system. Many of them in fact became rich and even those who did not received medical attention that they would not have otherwise. Many of them became famous. These shows provided a way to meet other freaks, to feel more comfortable and less isolated.

For those who take the "yes" side of the question, they point to the mistreatment of many, and that often the freaks were taken advantage of for the financial advantage of the owners. Not all freaks became wealthy, many were sold by parents and endured long hours and lots of traveling.

With changing cultural values, by the 1940s, most of the shows were no longer profitable, people wanted rides at amusement parks, not sideshows of this nature. However peoples' interest in all things "different" continues to this day as seen through the success of the many and diverse "reality" shows currently on television. Such shows as "Jerry Springer" and "American Horror Story" also reflect our continuing interest in the "odd" side of society.





Congratulations to Hank Popoff for winning our inaugural NHL Loser Pool !!

For his victory Hank will win \$ 250. Thanks for everyone's support for this little pool to kick off 2016. I will be giving \$170 to the Club in the name of our runner up Anthony Tonkinson.



The next pool will be the 2nd Annual Playoff Box Pool beginning in the middle of April.

## PARTICIPANT

Hank Popoff  
Anthony Tonkinson  
Neil Beatty  
Paul Hussey  
John Charrett  
Rob Wolfson 1  
Peter Bickham  
Wayne Wiebe  
Bev Tonkinson  
Rob Wolfson 2  
Ron May  
Paul Gaudet 1  
Bill Worthington  
Norm Moro  
Paul Gaudet 2  
George Kimura  
Dale Perret  
Barry Korpatnisky  
Alex Soutar  
Jeff Skillen  
Tammy Truman

## TEAM TO LOSE

Toronto Maple Leafs  
Calgary Flames  
Ottawa Senators  
Anaheim Ducks  
Anaheim Ducks  
Anaheim Ducks  
Carolina Hurricanes  
Columbus Blue Jackets  
Columbus Blue Jackets  
Columbus Blue Jackets  
Nashville Predators  
Toronto Maple Leafs  
Toronto Maple Leafs  
Winnipeg Jets  
Winnipeg Jets  
Winnipeg Jets  
Winnipeg Jets  
Winnipeg Jets  
Calgary Flames  
Calgary Flames  
Calgary Flames

## OPP

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## RESULT

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# Fairview School Mentoring Program

by Stephen Pick

A group of members kicked off the Group Mentor program at Fairview Junior High School on Friday March 4th. Our fantastic team leader Patricia Garner had us do a number of exercises to address the "get to know you" part of the program. There are 7 more sessions planned over the next few months, and there will be a combination of guest speakers and events to keep everyone entertained.

A great time was had by all !



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