E.E. CUMMINGS, UNITARIAN POET

This year, we have a fairly recent event to commemorate – 03 September marked the fiftieth anniversary of the death of the man known to most of us as ‘e.e. cummings’. While it turns out that he never wrote his name that way, the format seems to fit his singular style of poetic writing. Cummings was not just a ground-breaking poet, however, as he also produced essays, novels, plays and even paintings.

Edward Estlin Cummings was born in Cambridge, Massachusetts on 14 October 1894. His father, Edward Cummings, taught sociology at Harvard University and later became minister of the South Congregational Church (Unitarian) in Boston. His mother, Rebecca, had an artistic bent and was a descendant of the early Unitarian minister, Pitt Clarke. The younger Cummings was known by his middle name to avoid confusion with his father.

Young Estlin’s talents were evident early in his life, drawing competent freehand sketches when he was four and reportedly writing poetry daily between the ages of 8 and 22. After an unhappy time in a private school, he attended the progressive Agassiz School, where he liked to memorise the poems of Longfellow and Emerson (both Unitarians). In high school, he greatly enjoyed geography and languages (including Ancient Greek) but philosophy and logic did not engage him.

Cummings entered Harvard in 1911, where he developed a solid knowledge of Greek and English classics, also getting many poems published in campus periodicals. He graduated with honours in 1915 and gave the commencement address on the work of such contemporary artists as Matisse, Duchamp, Stravinsky and Gertrude Stein. In graduate school, he spent a lot of time with the Harvard Poetry Society and embraced the free verse styles of Ezra Pound, William Carlos Williams and Hilda Doolittle.

After obtaining his Master of Arts degree in 1916, Cummings spent three months working for a publishing firm in New York City, the only civilian job he would ever hold. Despite his profound opposition to World War I, he sought to avoid conscription by joining an American ambulance corps and went to France in 1917. After an enthralling month in Paris, he went to the front lines – only to be jailed five months later for criticizing the war effort. It took the personal intervention of President Woodrow Wilson to obtain his release and, once home, he was conscripted so near the end of the war that he never left the US. His first publication, *The Enormous Room* (1922) was a fictional account of his imprisonment in France.
Two of Cummings’ friends from graduate school, Scholfield Thayer and J. Sibley Watson, purchased a foundering liberal magazine, The Dial, in 1919 and used it to feature the works of emerging poets and artists. This provided a steady outlet for his poems and drawings, even after he moved to Paris for two years in 1921. On his return to New York, he settled in Greenwich Village and published his first collection of poems, Tulips and Chimneys, in 1923. By then, his poetry had acquired such trademarks as the absence of capital letters, unusual spacing and creative (though sometimes incomprehensible) placement of punctuation. However, the publisher had only accepted 86 of the 152 poems in Cummings’ manuscript, so he put the rest in two books, XLI Poems and & (yes, that was the full title!), which he published on his own.

In 1924, Cummings married Elaine Thayer, the ex-wife of Scholfield. Their daughter, Nancy, was his only child but the marriage didn’t last long. He travelled to Paris a number of times in that decade, as well as to other parts of Europe, North Africa and Mexico, meeting such people as Ezra Pound and Pablo Picasso. A second marriage, to Anne Barton in 1929, was also short-lived. For all his personal trials, this was the time of his greatest productivity, including the collections, is 5 (1926) and ViVa (1931), and an autobiographical play entitled Him (1927).

In 1931, Cummings travelled to the Soviet Union, recounting his experiences there in Eimi (1933). While the content was factual, the writing style was akin that of James Joyce’s Ulysses. In 1932, he met Marion Morehouse, a professional model whose career melded with his own (in the sense that they weren’t conflicting) and they lived together, apparently without marrying, for the rest of their lives. He then self-published No Thanks (1935) after fourteen printing houses had rejected it and, in the same year, wrote a ballet based on Uncle Tom’s Cabin that was never produced.

Despite these setbacks, Cummings was increasingly recognized in literary circles and the next decade clearly established his reputation. He produced 50 Poems (1940), J x J (1944) and, after finally seeing his daughter again, he wrote a play called Santa Claus (1946). He won a number of literary honours – the Guggenheim Fellowship (twice!), the Shelley Memorial Award, the Bollingen Prize and the Fellowship of the American Academy of Poets. He was also given a guest professorship at Harvard in 1952, delivering the Charles Norton Lectures between then and 1955 (later collected as i: six nonlectures).

Cummings produced three more books of poetry in his final decade: XAIPe: Seventy-one Poems (1950), Poems 1923–1954 (1957) and 95 Poems (1958). Two more, 73 Poems (1963) and Fairy Tales (1965) were published after his death. He spent the last decade of his life travelling, taking speaking engagements and retiring to a holiday farm in New Hampshire that his father had bought when Cummings was a boy. He died of a stroke on 03 September 1962 and his cremated remains were interred at the Forest Hills Cemetery in Boston. His funeral was conducted by Dana McLean Greeley, then president of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Marion Morehouse died in 1969 and was buried in an adjoining plot.

**SERVICE DIARY**

Meetings every Sunday from 10.30 – 11.30 a.m.

(followed by coffee, tea and food)

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* These will include PowerPoint presentations.

[Please check the church website (www.sydneyunitarianchurch.org) for updates. The program for the month of December will be available from the beginning of November.]
We light this chalice, symbol of our free faith, so that we may be reminded to nurture and care for one another, and to encourage the spiritual development of each person so we may grow in strength and courage in order to transform the world through justice and compassion. May it be so. Blessed Be. Amen.

Submitted by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations; English words by Arlene Bloom but it is not known who did the Spanish translation.

Like the burning flame that shines, like the passionate feeling of love that glows, we are together again; to sing and to pray, to give and to receive the burning passion that we’ve celebrated and shared in our coming together as one.

Sama sa kainit sa kalayo nga misidlak, sama sa kainit sa gugma nga migilak nia na usab kita; aron sa pag-awit ug pag-ampo, aron sa paghatag ug pagdawat, sa kainit sa gugma nga atong gisaluhun ug gipakig-ambient sa atong panaghiusa.

Submitted by the UU Church of the Philippines; English and Cebuano words written by Rev. Susan Quisel.

[These are the Chalice Lightings from the International Council of Unitarians and Universalists for the months of September and October.]

Arlene Bloom is a member of the Conejo Valley UU Fellowship in Thousand Oaks, California, to which Lorella Thomas Hess, who compiles and circulates the ICUU Chalice Lightings, also belongs.

Rev. Susan Rubia Quisel is the Director of the UUCP’s Religious Education Department, which position she has held for some years. She was ordained in 2004 as the third female minister in the history of the UUCP. Cebuano is the language of the eastern side of Negros and the neighbouring island of Cebu.

Further with the Philippines, here are some pictures just in from the Nagbinlod congregation showing the completed work on their little church building. With their own labour, they have rendered the inside walls, concreted the floor and painted the building inside and out, also installed two toilet cubicles in their hall – all that and more for just $500! The congregation expresses their deepest gratitude for our donation and they plan to use our next donation to build a concrete footpath from the road above the church. This mountain village is a very rainy place and the existing path gets dangerously muddy, at times.
MORE ON PRIMATES

By Peter Crawford

A grim fate of imminent extinction appears to await some of our primate relatives. While human numbers increase, driven by arrogance, greed, religious fundamentalism and economic growth philosophies, the numbers of chimpanzees, for example, continues to plummet dramatically.

“All over the world, it’s mainly habitat destruction that affects primates the most” explains Christopher Schwitzer, head of the Bristol Conservation and Science Foundation and one of the authors of a key report on threats to primate survival. “Illegal logging, fragmentation of forests through fires and hunting are big issues in several African countries, and now in Madagascar. In Asia one of the main problems is trade in hearts for the traditional medicine market in both China and Vietnam.”

Russel Mittermeir, a primatologist and president of the Conservation International has said: “The purpose of our top 25 list is to highlight those that are most at risk, to attract the attention of the public, to stimulate national governments to do more, especially to find resources to implement desperately needed conservation measures. We have the resources but so far we have simply failed to act,” Mittermeier said.

Along with gorillas and orang-utans, chimpanzees are also dying out. This is tragic given that chimpanzees have a close affinity with humans. According to seminal geographer Jarred Diamond, 98% of human genes we share with chimpanzees. Diamond calls humans the ‘third chimpanzee’. “The chimpanzee not the gorilla is our closest relative. Put another way the chimpanzee’s closest relative is the human not the gorilla,” Diamond says.

Scientist Jane Goodall, famous for over 50 years for her pioneering work on chimpanzees, says she greatly fears for their continuing survival and that urgent measures are now required to save them. “The survival of chimpanzees requires a dramatic change to how we think about the natural world, as well as advances in science and technology,” Goodall wrote in an opinion piece published in the July 2011 edition of Nature magazine.

She first visited what is now Tanzania’s Gombe Stream National Park on 04 July 1960 where Goodall discovered new facts about chimpanzees. She learned how they made tools, how they physically show affection to one another, and how they can be very violent, fighting one another – even committing infanticide and cannibalism. This important new information, direct as it is, changed our thinking about chimpanzees and their relationship with man and nature.

But Goodall ominously warns us that, as our knowledge about chimpanzees has increased, so has the threat to these fascinating and important animals. In the last twenty years between 1990 and 2010, their numbers have fallen dramatically. There were more than a million in the wild in 1990 now there can be no more than 300,000 at large. Some scientists believe they will be extinct in the wild within three decades.

The main causes for this catastrophic decline include massive deforestation but also the emergence of human diseases such as flu and polio. Illegal hunting for the disgraceful bush meat trade also takes a terrible toll. In Gombe Stream National Park, for example, deforestation has reduced 35 square kilometres of valuable forest to a small patchy area surrounded by bare land. Needless to say, the chimpanzees have largely vanished.

Chimpanzees elsewhere in Africa face similar perils. “I am finding the same sorts of problems in Senegal,” says primatologist Jill Pruetz of the Iowa State University. “One of the biggest threats is large scale mining – something that stems from the developed world’s insatiable need for such things as automobile parts.”

Hunting of primates is a major problem, not only throughout Africa, but elsewhere. In 2011, the Jakarta Post reported that at least four of Indonesia’s forty species of primates were threatened. “The major reason is their being hunted for meat which people falsely believe has medicinal qualities,” reports the animal protection group, ProFauna Indonesia. Its chairman, Rosek Nursahid, said the four species most at risk were the Sumatran orang-utan, the Javanese slow loris, the Siau Island tarsier and the Simakubo pig-tailed langur. “They’re still being traded. Only a few are intended for domestication, most are consumed, especially their brains and meat,” Rosek said, adding that “thousands of [primates] were traded in Indonesia annually.”
Another major threat is the destruction of forests due to logging, reports Kompas.com, an African on-line news website. It states that chimpanzees will die out in the wild in fifty years if the present rate of hunting and damage persists. The plight of the Nigerian-Cameroonian subspecies of chimps is particularly dire. Today, only around 8000 chimpanzees of that sub-species are still alive in the forests, mainly on the Nigerian side of the border.

The Pan African Sanctuaries Alliance (PASA) provides preliminary research results in Johannesburg, South Africa. The environmental group, which runs chimpanzee sanctuaries in South Africa, had hired scientists to investigate ways to help apes survive. At the present rate that their population is falling, the subspecies will die out within twenty years the PASA study says. Its environment is also being deleteriously impacted by deforestation and urbanization. Hunters also threaten the last sanctuaries of chimpanzees and diseases spread in many areas.

While the Nigerian-Cameroonian sub-species is the most threatened, the other three remaining sub-species could die out within 50 years, PASA warns. The western sub-species, which lives in the areas of the Ivory Coast and west to Sierra Leone, is also vanishing. The plight of the central sub-species, dwelling in Gabon to Congo, is serious too. The situation facing the eastern sub-species, from Tanzania to Ethiopia and South Sudan is less serious but it faces terrible human population pressures in the coming decades.

PASA has 16 primate sanctuaries that were set up as a ‘crisis management’ effort to help orphaned chimps and apes. These sanctuaries also look after injured, stolen or unwanted apes. It has figures on how many sick and orphaned chimps are taken to sanctuaries in Africa. Professor Norm Rosen, an anthropologist with California State University in Fullerton who works with the ongoing PASA study, said that for every orphaned chimp reaching the sanctuary ten others die. “The situation is much more critical than we thought,” Rosen said.

The sanctuaries set up by PASA held around 670 chimps in 2011 – a 50% rise over the last three years. The increase in orphaned and injured chimps is worrying conservationists. PASA was set up in 2000 in response to these growing concerns and its work remains deeply problematical.

On a positive note, Associated Press reported that, in January 2012, scientists working in Indonesia have rediscovered a large grey monkey thought to be extinct. They were astonished to find Miller’s grizzled langur in an area well outside its traditional homeland. The team set up camera traps in Wehea Forest on the eastern tip of Borneo Island in June 2011, hoping to catch images of clouded leopards, orang-utans and other wildlife known to congregate at several mineral salt-licks.

The pictures that came back surprised them since they presented a group of monkeys that had not been seen before. With few photographs, it was initially difficult to identify them, said Brent Loken, a doctoral student from Simon Fraser University in Canada and one of the researchers. The only images of the grizzled langur were museum sketches. Loken said, “We were all pretty ecstatic, the fact that, wow, this monkey still lives and is in Wehea”!

The monkey once lived in the northeastern part of Borneo, Sumatra, Java and throughout the Thai-Malay peninsula. Fears were expressed some years ago that they might have died out. Areas where they once lived had largely been destroyed. Scientists would now like to make findings on the approximate numbers of these creatures, which may still exist, and publish them in the American Journal of Primatology.

In our next issue, we shall publish some notes as to what exactly are primates. For the time being, we shall simply say they are all animals that are genuine monkeys and apes. The primary member of the genus is Homo sapiens or human beings.

But I would like to complete this article with my usual mantra. I believe it is, in the end, a waste of time lamenting the fate of these and myriads of other species without clearly and unequivocally pointing to human population growth as the primary cause, both direct and indirect, of these environmental and specie declines. I believe it is highly irresponsible and delusional to believe, as do the major political parties of Australia and the governments of nearly all the world’s countries, that policies of population growth can be pursued and at the same time we can have good long-term policies of conservation.

Isn’t it time we woke up?
[To the tune of ‘All Creatures of Our God and King’.]

All creatures strange come to our church,
Come with the truth and come to search.
We can use ya; we can use ya.
Come, followers of left and right,
Come, come to switch and come to fight.
We can use ya, in the pews, ya,
We’ll confuse ya, not accuse ya. Alleluia!

Come to stay silent, come to speak,
Come, come to give and come to take,
We can use ya; we can use ya.
Come shake your head or come and nod,
Come atheists, come to praise God.
We can use ya, in the pews, ya,
We’ll amuse ya, not refuse ya. Alleluia!

Come early to arrange the flow’rs,
Come late to join the coffee hour,
We can use ya; we can use ya.
Come, come to sleep, come to take notes,
Come seeking wisdom, or misquotes.
We can use ya, in the pews, ya,
We’ll enthuse ya, not excuse ya. Alleluia!

Come join our church for many reasons,
Church of all people, for all seasons,
We can use ya; we can use ya.
Diverse we seem, but we are one,
There’s nothing new beneath the sun.
We can use ya, in the pews, ya,
We would choose ya, and not lose ya. Alleluia!

Rev. Christopher G. Raible

MESSAGE OF WELCOME TO THE UU CHURCH

As we welcome our new members and visitors, it is only fair to let them know what we Unitarian Universalists are like and what we expect.

- We are friendly. If you are not friendly, out you go!
- We are genuine people. Even our phonies are real phonies.
- We are always sincere, even if we have to fake it.
- We aren’t sure how ambivalent we should be.
- We believe in tolerance and cannot stand intolerant people.
- We are optimists. Anyone who doesn’t look on the bright side depresses us.
- We are more non-competitive than other groups.
- We believe in equality; everyone is as good as the next person and a whole lot better.
- Every Unitarian is a feminist, so he has to watch his language.
- The organization is run democratically because the president insists on it.
- We have our critics, but they are paranoid.
- We are prompt about being late to meetings.
- Dogmatism is absolutely forbidden.
- Freedom of belief is rigidly enforced.

And to this wonderful place we joyfully welcome you.
[Please see ‘Acknowledgements’ on last page for background information on these items.]
if everything happens that can’t be done

if everything happens that can’t be done
(and anything’s righter
than books could plan)
the stupidest teacher will almost guess
(with a run
skip
around we go yes)
there’s nothing as something as one

one hasn’t a why or because or although
(and buds know better
than books don’t grow)
one’s anything old being everything new
(with a what
which
around we come who)
one’s everyanything so

so world is a leaf so a tree is a bough
(and birds sing sweeter
than books
tell how)
so here is away and so your is a my
(with a down
up
around again fly)
forever was never till now

now i love you and you love me
(and books are shuter*
than books
can be)
and deep in the high that does nothing but fall
(with a shout
each
around we go all)
there’s somebody calling who’s we

we’re anything brighter than even the sun
(we’re everything greater
than books
might mean)
we’re everyanything more than believe
(with a spin
leap
alive we’re alive)
we’re wonderful one times one

e.e. cummings

* shut-er; i.e., more shut

This poem’s original title was just ‘XIV’, so it was probably published in Tulips and Chimneys or one of Cummings’ private publications. Despite the typically erratic style, it has a consistent rhyme scheme and stanza structure. (I think the latter has the cadence of a skipping-rope song.) It appears to express the exhilaration of love, the oneness of the loving couple and of the world, the freedom of nature experienced at first hand, and more that is best left to professional analysts (see ‘Acknowledgements’ on the last page).
PARIS STREETS (PART 1)

By Patrick Bernard

The Passy-Trocadéro area only began to be urbanized in the 19th Century. In fact, Passy itself used to be a hamlet, well outside the walls of medieval Paris. Aristocrats and wealthy merchants used to stay there overnight on the way to their country estates, or they would go there for short holidays. In the 18th Century, the nobility used to go there to rest, sample local wines or find a discreet refuge to conduct de rigueur extra-marital affairs in all tranquility. Until the early 20th Century, this semi-rural community surrounded by vineyards and vegetable gardens had retained some of its pastoral charm. Even during the Second World War, there were still some vineyards and vegetable gardens left in the area, which is now the upmarket Avenue Paul Doumer. The last remnants of this past village life were still evident in the 1950s.

On the aptly named Rue Vineuse (which could be loosely translated as ‘Wine Street’) itself, little Maurice would stand with his mother on the ornate balcony of their second floor apartment to watch the unending parade of a street life which does not exist anymore. Every so often, this tough looking female singer with a stentorian voice would appear on the pavement and, with hands on her generous hips, she would belt out these stirring melodramatic French ‘chansons’ in Edith Piaf’s style, accompanied by her male companion, wearing a proverbial béret, who played a plaintiff piano-accordion. All these songs were invariably tragic love stories set in the poorest part of town and they always ended in tears.

Thus, for the first time, Maurice was exposed to what may be called the ‘aesthetics of poverty’. At the end of each song, appreciative listeners would applaud and throw coins wrapped up in little pieces of paper, for safe landing and easy spotting, from their open windows and, after expressing their gratitude, this couple of street musicians would move further down the road to perform once more to similar acclaim. It was considered mean-spirited to give nothing to these entertainers, who somehow personalised the very soul of Paris even though it was so far removed from the wealthy 16th Arrondissement.

In the 1950s, there were still several itinerant tradesmen and artisans roaming the streets, howling for odd jobs. There was the glazier, pushing his specially designed wooden cart carrying panes of glass in various sizes, ringing his bell intermittently and offering with his foghorn voice to fix broken windows. There was a miserly looking old individual, whose gender remained unclear to Maurice, yelling out some obscure mantra about collecting rags, newspapers and cardboard for recycling, decades before this industry became a policy for local governments around the world. According to Maurice’s father, this character who inspired so much pity and was thought of as a scavenger became a millionaire through this humble activity.

A strong Auvergnat (person from the Auvergne region) covered in black dust regularly delivered coal down a chute into the cellars of every building to fuel the boilers that pumped hot water into the hydraulic central heating systems that provided indispensable warmth through the long harsh winters. Curiously, that same man also doubled up as a wine merchant delivering bottles by the dozen in large wooden crates to various households and, upon departure, he collected the empties. This dual activity seemed to have been a ‘closed shop’ industry reserved for Auvergnats only, who were nicknamed ‘Bougnats’ all over Paris.

Another muscular man, wearing a surgical white blouse and driving a large insulated truck, stopped at every building, thus blocking the street which did not matter too much as there were not so many cars then, and would climb up and down the stairs tirelessly carrying huge blocks of ice used to cool every family’s food and drink storage cabinet, as refrigerators were still a very rare appliance. A thin and bespectacled middle-aged man wearing a grey blouse appeared sporadically, riding a tricycle equipped with an eclectic variety of grinding and filing equipment, blowing a bugle to invite residents to have their knives expertly sharpened.

A permanent fixture of the Rue Vineuse was the friendly local grocery shop of Monsieur and Madame Manteau, who knew everything about everyone in the neighbourhood, did home deliveries and offered many services outside the strict confines of their commerce. They would, for instance, watch the local children return home safely from school and ensure the youngsters behaved themselves, sometimes even gently chastising them if necessary and reporting any misdemeanours to parents, who always sided with the Manteaus and would then follow this process up with some sort of punishment in the privacy of their apartments. None of this could be done today, of course, for fear of legal ramifications and, in any case, it would be a waste of time because parents now always side with their children against figures of authority. In 1950s Paris, everyone still felt responsible for everyone, or so it appeared to young Maurice who was at the receiving end of such uncompromising discipline. Neither was good behaviour negotiable, nor was the retribution incurred by any breaches.
Further down the street, there was also the smaller grocery shop of the younger Monsieur and Madame Tonneau, who took their job very seriously and never talked much apart from exchanging the usual greetings before promptly taking their customers’ orders and serving them with great efficiency. Their shop was always cold and, as a consequence, their hands and cheeks were always red. For various reasons, the clientele of those two corner stores were quite different. The modern, liberal minded, left-leaning, agnostic and introverted progressive types preferred to shop at the Tonneaux’, who seemed to be the precursors of more individualistic and politically correct times to come. The Tonneaux’ customers believed in children’s right to misbehave. By contrast, the traditionalists, conservative Catholics and loquacious types went to the Manteaus’, which was also Maurice’s parents’ choice. Needless to say, the Manteaus and their customers were staunch De Gaulle supporters from 1958 onwards and, as far as children were concerned, they all firmly believed in ‘the stick’.

Down at the Passy end of the Rue Vineuse was the fragrant Boulangerie-Pâtisserie of Monsieur and Madame Pigné, whose eldest son later became a reputed neurosurgeon whilst their youngest eventually took over the business, with great success simply and thankfully because he kept it exactly as it was. On his way home from school, Maurice would often stop there to indulge on delicious eclairs-au-chocolat, clafoutis or other such delicacies.

Halfway up the Rue Vineuse was a stylish cocktail bar, which had been intriguingly named ‘My Sin’ in English, a language that Maurice did not yet understand – in fact, for many years he believed ‘My Sin’ was a Vietnamese or a Chinese name. Elegant and sometimes attractively louche individuals came and went discreetly at all hours of the day, and even more at night. Behind its sleek glass and steel Art Déco façade with large curved bay windows, thick velvet curtains were always drawn so that one could never hear or see what was going on inside. Sometimes, when the front door was briefly opened to let patrons in or out, a few notes of jazz escaped into the street like nefarious black birds flapping their wings into the night. ‘My Sin’ and this semi-clandestine smoke filled jazz scene fascinated Maurice from an early age. Later he thought it could have been the type of bar where a doomed Alain Delon carried on his underworld activities in Jean-Pierre Melville’s existential Le Samourai, which is still one of Maurice’s favourite films.

In the 1950s, jazz was always sulfurous and evocative of late nights, oversize American cars, foreign cigarettes, whisky, lascivious women and dubious men of no clear professions. Jazz was frowned upon by the good citizens of Passy, who feared like the plague anything that might have challenged conventions and stability. Respectable bourgeois perceived jazz as a symbol of decay and debauchery, dissolve lifestyles, a breakdown of family values and the decline of French civilisation. As a consequence, jazz quickly became Maurice’s favourite music and it changed his worldview radically and irreversibly, as it did for many of his generation. This was the time when De Gaulle piously attended church with his dutiful wife, Yvonne, and when various inventive forms of corporal punishments were still copiously meted out to schoolchildren for even looking sideways at teachers or other figures of authority. In this austere environment, for Maurice and many of his peers, jazz symbolised freedom from adult oppression and subliminally promised the unknown delights of maturity so evocatively described by that silent neon sign imitating cursive writing: ‘My Sin’!

A few doors up from ‘My Sin’ stood a magnificent Beaux Arts style private mansion, where scenes from one of the early Claude Chabrol’s Nouvelle Vague (New Wave) films, Les Godelureaux (called Wise Guys in English) was shot in 1961. The building was eventually sold and, to this day, it is still the Embassy of the Republic of Senegal in Paris.

At various stages of his childhood, Maurice would have some illustrious neighbours in the Rue Vineuse. There was, for example, a brilliant engineer, Monsieur Bardot, who was an internationally renowned authority on the liquefaction of gases. As an enterprising businessman, he founded a corporation called Air Liquide, which still produces and delivers liquefied gases around the world to a multiplicity of institutions, such as hospitals. Later on, Monsieur Bardot’s beautiful daughter, Brigitte, would grace the world screens and fire millions of young men’s feverish fantasies. Mademoiselle Bardot would appear in real life as a goddess who was Maurice’s preferred fantasy. Every so often, she was visited by her equally beautiful but seemingly more accessible sister, Françoise Dorléac, who had kept their original family surname but who died so tragically soon afterward at such a young age in a horrific car accident. Predictably, Mademoiselle Deneuve did her grocery shopping at the more aloof Tonneaus’.

Another local celebrity was the ice queen Catherine Deneuve, the otherworldly, ethereal and untouchable goddess who was Maurice’s preferred fantasy. Every so often, she was visited by her equally beautiful but seemingly more accessible sister, Françoise Dorléac, who had kept their original family surname but who died so tragically soon afterward at such a young age in a horrific car accident. Predictably, Mademoiselle Deneuve did her grocery shopping at the more aloof Tonneaus’.
In the first mansion on the Rue Vineuse, close to the Place du Trocadéro, lived a recluse and now forgotten “Immortal” (as members of the Académie Française are called), Jacques de Lacrételle, who had been a personal friend of Marcel Proust and André Gide. Monsieur de Lacrételle’s track record was somewhat patchy, considering his unfortunate collaboration with extreme right-wing publications such as Le Flambeau (The Torch) in the 1930s and his cautious support for Gobineau’s racist theories. This being said, Monsieur de Lacrételle’s record was no more tarnished before and during the Second World War than it was for many of his compatriots during the same period.

This remains a dark and shameful chapter in French history, which is so easy to judge now from the safe distance of time when one can, without risk, take the high moral ground seventy years later. If, for example, Britain had not been spared from the Hitlerian hordes simply by its good geographical fortune of being an island, is it doubtful that everyone there would have been heroes? In fact, as we know, many there, including luminaries such as Lady Astor, Lord Lothian and Unity Valkyrie Mitford (who was ironically conceived in the town of Swastika in Ontario, Canada), would not have been so patriotic and were also quite prepared to collaborate enthusiastically with the Nazis under the sinister leadership of Oswald Mosley, who had incidentally married another Mitford sister, Diana.

Next door to the Académicien de Lacrételle’s mansion was the multi-storied garage and parking station that belonged to the Délémieux family. Maurice used to look forward to going there with his father, as it was the inner sanctum of masculinity. Venturing into the world of cars and serious tools was a rite of passage he gladly endured. It was his first exposure to a raw and uncompromising manliness that was at the antipodes of his mother’s cushions, chocolates and afternoon teas. Raunchy calendar girl posters, roughly pinned to the workshop walls, confirmed that this was an exclusive male zone. Although Maurice was certainly no petrol sniffer, he enjoyed that slightly nauseating fragrance of hydrocarbons which for him was the scent of freedom. Sparks produced by screaming metal grinders and blue flames spewing out of oxy-welders were all magnificent fireworks in Vulcan’s mythical forge. He was proud of his father, who could hold his own and speak fluently with mechanics in their arcane technical language, as lawyers and doctors do to mystify their clients.

Amid this prestigious or, at times, notorious neighbourhood, Maurice’s family struggled to maintain a semblance of normality while occulting its own financial woes. Lavish dinner parties were still regularly held, maids and cooks were employed, generous hospitality continued to be offered to many guests, charismatic relatives and mysterious refugees from beyond the ‘Iron Curtain’, which name alone conjured up images of irresistible danger in Maurice’s mind.

In those distant times, the good bourgeois of Paris stayed home at night or they drove somewhere quickly and safely in their shiny black cars. (All cars seemed black then.) By contrast, in daytime the Rue de Passy was always swarming with hordes of elegant people, uniformed unimaginatively in the latest bourgeois fashion and marinated in expensive perfumes. Far more colourful and also far less constipated were their exuberant maids, chauffeurs, cooks and various other imported domestic personnel, who either followed their employers diligently carrying a multitude of bags or who shopped meticulously on their behalf, ticking off handwritten lists as they went by. Regardless of this very stratified social order, there was a joyous buzz all along the serpentine Rue de Passy, particularly on Saturdays or Sunday mornings after church, when everyone was rushing around organising and preparing for the anticipated gastronomical pleasures to follow later on that day. Pleasure, for the bourgeoisie, is a serious business that requires meticulous planning and a strict observance of well-established codes and rituals that have to be adhered to. In this hive of activity, the Rue de Passy and its adjacent streets was the gravitational centre of Maurice’s universe until about 1965.

Like many metropoles in the world, Paris is less a city than a conglomerate of villages, each with its own separate history, its tribes, its rituals, its accent, its sounds, its architecture, its gastronomy and even its fragrances or its stench, depending on your olfactory sensitivities. The Passy area was one such village. In a child’s mind, going from the 16th Arrondissement to, say, the 18th was like venturing to a foreign country with all the excitement, curiosity and anxiety that precedes such an apparently perilous voyage. Even the ostensibly bourgeois Rue Vineuse, like most Paris streets in the 1950s, still had its own village-within-the-village atmosphere, which has since vanished like a lost civilisation. Surprisingly, the area did not yet display much of the pretensions one might have expected from such a privileged neighbourhood. This unpleasant development only came about in the late 1960s. This, at least, was Maurice’s impression since he knew no other parts of the French capital and, in any case, in the first few years of life in such a sheltered milieu one seldom thinks of one’s environment in terms of class divisions, social iniquities and other similar considerations. Instead, everything appears to be in the natural order of things. These are the years of blessed ignorance and innocent bliss, for as we all eventually find out: “in much wisdom is much grief and he that increases knowledge increases sorrow”.

[Part 2 of this instalment will appear in the next issue.]
The Health and Unitarian Growth in Europe (HUGE) Consultation was over 31 August–03 September, the first ever regional gathering in that part of the world. The meeting included participants from Austria, Bulgaria, Denmark, EUU (European Unitarian Universalists), Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania and the United Kingdom.

The event was hosted by the newly-merged Hungarian Unitarian Church in their historic headquarters in Kolozsvár, Transylvania. The program focused the health and sustainability of Unitarian and Unitarian Universalist communities in Europe, exploring Community Capacity Building tools and models previously used with emerging ICUU groups to help member groups focus on: quality of religious life; strength of organizational structures; spiritual leadership; and resources, including finance and sustainability.

U*U groups in Europe operate in different contexts and are at different stages of organization and development. The intent was for participants to leave the consultation with a shared understanding of their groups’ current strengths and opportunities, an action plan to build on their strengths and address challenges, and a clear idea of how groups in different countries can assist each other.

The Consultation proved to be an excellent meeting. There was very good participation and discussion, including somewhat new awareness between European groups of their similarities, differences, proximity, and shared characteristics. Participants included a mixture of people with long-term involvement in international UU life and some for which this was their first such event. Notable was the attendance of several young adults – from 18 to early thirties.

It was discussed several times in the Consultation that the differences in size and structure among European groups is notable – from very large organized institutions to emerging groups. Several of the long-time member groups can still be regarded as emerging, according to the ICUU’s definition of that category. These differences present both challenges and opportunities for collaboration between European U*Us.

The list of major needs and wants for strengthening connections in Europe, and for strengthening U*Uism in Europe included: exchanges of basic information and theological literature; translations of basic U*U information and materials; leadership and other training in worship, capacity building, dedicated volunteers, lay leaders, pastoral care and social media; connecting with individuals who don’t have a local church and responding to seekers; greater visibility; religious education materials and camps for youth and children; clarification of U*U identity and purpose; continue international sharing, more partnering, larger groups supporting smaller ones, exchanging and sharing ministers and teachers; stability within groups through exchanging methods of fundraising, budgeting and financial planning; and the formation of a European faculty for regional classes, training and on-line seminars.

The action plans focused on web-centric and electronic tools as a frame for further contact and development. There was very good understanding of what the ICUU can and cannot provide and what groups themselves must work together to provide. The ICUU was asked to assist in a coordinating and supporting function through website development, directories and support through webinars. A comprehensive report of the Consultation including proposed action plans, photos and the charts produced during the gathering has now been produced and should appear on the ICUU website (www.icuu.net) in due course.

The UU Society of Kitengela in Kenya has launched an impressive website (www.uusk.org) with details and pictures of their many activities and industries. This is an important step, as it is only the second such website in the whole of Kenya. The UUSK has also founded Dignity International, an advocacy group for the welfare of their nomadic/pastoral Maasai neighbours, especially women and children. DI has obtained the support of the New York-based Global Justice Institute, which has agreed to help them build a website. Please see the next issue for a detailed report.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The ‘hymn’ on p.6 was first published in Rev. Christopher Raible’s *Hymns for the Cerebration of Strife* (1990) – a play on the UUA’s *Hymns for the Celebration of Life*. Other funny songs of his have appeared in this journal over the years and more of them can be expected in the future. Rev. Raible is Minister Emeritus of the UU Congregation of Jamestown, New York, and one of three minister children of Rev. Robert Raible.

The words of ‘All Creatures of Our God and King’ are from St. Francis of Assisi’s ‘Canticle of Brother Sun’, which was written shortly before his death but not published for 400 years. It was rendered into English by Rev. William H. Draper of the UK in the early 1900s and set to the music of a 17th Century German hymn. Search the title on YouTube (www.youtube.com) and you can hear it performed by the choir of St. Mary’s Episcopal Cathedral in Edinburgh or see some impressive video renditions.

The only Google results for the ‘Message of Welcome’ piece cite the www.commonplacebook.com blogsite of Stephanie Mineart, a web designer who lives in Indianapolis. It has sections featuring photographs, jokes, news commentary and even recipes, but there is no apparent Unitarian connection.

Anyone brave enough to want an in-depth analysis of the poem on p. 7 should go to: www.shmoops.com and search ‘cummings everything’. It’s a huge academic website that covers a range of English literature.

In case anyone doesn’t know, Patrick Bernard’s article on pp. 8/10 is the continuation of a series that started in the February/March issue of this year.

COMMITTEE NEWS

The next Committee meeting will be held on Thursday, 06 December 2012. If members have any matters which they would like to be placed on the agenda for discussion, they should contact the Secretary on 0423 393 364 or email: michael_j_spicer@yahoo.com.au.

Membership renewals for 2012 should have been paid by now but it is never too late. Those wishing to join our church can use this form by way of application but should not send payment until their membership is accepted.

MEMBERSHIP/RENEWAL FORM

I, (name) ___________________________________________________
of (address) _________________________________________________

________________________________ Postcode _________

Phone(s): (home) ________________ (other) _______________

Email: _____________________________________________________

I apply to join/renew membership in (delete one) the Sydney Unitarian Church and agree to abide by the rules as set down by the Constitution and management of the church.

Signature: ________________________________ Fee enclosed: $____ *

Cheques should be made payable to: Treasurer, Sydney Unitarian Church. Membership will be valid for the calendar year 2012.

* Annual membership is $20 and includes the SUN journal; subscription to the SUN only is $15.
Got a story? Contact our newsdesk on 02077824100 or