

In the beginning... there was a committee

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Thank you, and a good late afternoon everyone. Thank you for being here. I have been asked to speak for twenty minutes, so feel free to stomp, or jeer if I exceed my time, but please not so loudly as to wake the others.

Before I begin--that is to say this is not to be counted in my twenty minutes—I wish to express my sincere thanks to the organizers of this event—to those members of the China Institute, the Department of East Asian Studies and the University of Alberta Press, who took their precious time to make this happen. Thank you.

I find it difficult to believe that thirty years have passed since the formation of the Department. During that time many fine professors and students have found, and still find, a home in East Asian Studies. Those who have chaired the department have benefited from the support of their colleagues and from a dedicated office staff. They, along with the succession of supportive Deans of Arts, deserve our gratitude.

**Now to my topic:** *In the Beginning...there was a committee, or the birth pangs of the Department of East Asian Studies.* You may begin timing me now.

I am here today, solely, by virtue of longevity. My role in the development of East Asian Studies was not as crucial as that played by others, former colleagues and old friends, some of whom are here. I

would, however, like to single out three persons, without whom the Department would not have been created when it was. They are Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada from 1968 to 1984, briefly interrupted by Joe Clark in 1979; Edgar Peter Lougheed, Premier of Alberta from 1971-1985; and Dr. H. J. Jones, Professor of Japanese History.

On taking office, Trudeau, a Sinophile, made it clear that Canadian foreign policy would emphasize Canada's role in the Pacific, to which end he negotiated the recognition of the People's Republic of China on 13 October 1970. Canadians were invited to include East Asia in their traditionally European-centered worldview. Realistically, Asia is Canada's Far West and looking at it through European eyes as the Far East is ridiculous.

Peter Lougheed had a vision for Alberta, which included Japan, Korea, and China. He established offices in all three countries and twinned Alberta with Hokkaido in Japan, Kangwon in South Korea, and Heilongjiang in China. Under Lougheed, Alberta became a leader, not only in Canada, but also in North America, in establishing relations with East Asia, even stealing a march on British Columbia. Although the underlying impetus was to develop Alberta's economy, particularly the agricultural, forestry and petroleum sectors, Lougheed was a firm believer in the need for Albertans to understand East Asian history, culture, and languages. His government was very generous in providing money for exchanges in the fields of science, medicine, agriculture, education, the humanities, social sciences, and the arts. As far as the study of Asia is concerned it was a remarkable period.

This brings me to Professor H. J. Jones. In 1961, a very forward looking, at least I think so, head of the Department of History invited me to come home to the U of A to teach the histories of China and Japan. And, you guessed it, the course was called *The history of the Far East*—after all I had done my Ph.D. in England. Fresh from my studies in Chinese history and in Classical Chinese, and with a willing guinea pig in the form of an extremely bright honours student, I created a course called *Chinese for Historians*. To my knowledge, it is the first time Chinese language was offered in any form at an institution of higher learning in Alberta.

In retrospect, it was an egg from which was hatched the department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, the forerunner of the current East Asian Studies department, with the department of History playing the role of mother hen. In 1967, I was granted a year's leave, but before I left I was assigned the task of finding an historian of Japan. I recommended that we hire Dr. H. J. Jones, an outstanding graduate of the University of Michigan, fluent in Japanese and steeped in Japanese culture from years of residence in Japan. Dr. Jones was, to my mind, the pick of the crop that spring. The Department made Dr. Jones an offer, which to our joy and surprise, was accepted.

Why would the talented Dr. Jones agree to come to teach the history of Japan at the U of A, a frigid windswept collection of buildings, (a mere skeleton of what it is today), located in a city with poor transportation connections, and no known links to Asia? Well, it was largely because the initial H. stood for Hazel, and other institutions at the time were reluctant to hire a woman. In our case, an equally

enlightened Chair had succeeded the aforementioned enlightened Head of the History department. Both men believed in hiring women, whenever possible, to counterbalance the overwhelming maleness of the department. With Hazel's arrival, the unlikely pair of Evans and Jones became the purveyors of Chinese and Japanese histories and languages to the students of U of A.

Hazel Jones was a brilliant historian and linguist. She had driven an ambulance in Korea during the Korean War, and she was absolutely fearless. While I was on leave, she introduced a course called *Japanese for Historians*, (another egg for mother hen History to hatch). Also, at the end of my leave, in September 1968, I was induced to become Chair of the History department.

The late 1960s and the very early 70s saw a rapid expansion of Canadian universities, including of course the University of Alberta. Hazel and I looked at our new colleagues in the Faculty of Arts, and saw an expert on Japan in the Sociology department, two Anthropologists-- one a Japan specialist, one a Korean, --a specialist in Japanese religion in the newly formed Department of Religious Studies, a not so specialized Political Scientist with an interest in China, and Stanley R. Munro, a gifted, dynamic teacher of introductory Chinese, disguised as an assistant to the Dean of Arts. We called them together to form a committee. Our immediate goal was to develop a specialized program in East Asian Studies, which could be taken by students as a major within the Bachelor of Arts, and our long-term goal was to establish a separate department. Because I was already Chair of History the rest thought I might as well chair the committee.

It became clear to me, as we worked toward and eventually succeeded in reaching our first goal, that although most committee members had strong opinions, it was Hazel's overall vision, which guided us. Meanwhile, Hazel, with the assistance of her friend Mrs. Miyakawa, developed the introductory Japanese language program. Together, they perfected a method of teaching, involving a number of spouses of Japanese professors as assistants. Soon we had more students in Japanese than did UBC. Through the Japanese Consul-General, then located in Edmonton, Hazel was able to tap into the Japan Foundation for teaching and library support. Stan Munro, her opposite number on the Chinese side was not so fortunate. There were few Mandarin speakers available on a short-term basis, and because Canada had no relations with Taiwan after October 1970, that source of outside funding was problematic. Moreover, there were certainly no sources within the People's Republic of China, locked as it was in the Cultural Revolution (1966-76). Eventually, both language programs were to benefit from the Loughheed government's cultural exchange funds, to send students to Sapporo and Harbin on alternate summers.

Please bear in mind that all this was developing within the History Department, but on a budget supplied by a sympathetic Dean named George Baldwin. Meanwhile, the committee was tackling its main goal, the formation of a Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures, in preparation for which the Dean allowed for the hiring of tenured staff in Chinese and Japanese. Most of my colleagues in History were quietly amused that Chinese and Japanese were being taught within the

department, while a minority was anxious for the day when History would be restored to its pristine form.

In those early years the teaching of East Asian subjects benefited from a number of temporary appointments. I will mention just two of them, both relating to China. I will introduce one of them now, and the second one at the end of my talk. Because I was Chair of a Department and teaching a full load, the Dean offered me some relief, if I could find someone to teach Chinese history on a temporary basis. We advertised, only to find there were few qualified persons available. One stood out, however. Leon Jankelevitch was already beyond retirement age, and teaching in a college in California, which was no longer able to keep him, despite his many teaching awards. He was French, a former member of the French diplomatic service. His last posting had been as Consul-General for France on Hainan Island. Trained in classical Chinese language, history and literature at the best institutions in France, Jankelevitch was a living embodiment of ancient China. I invited him to come to Alberta and I was immediately in awe of his knowledge. I signed up to read Tang poetry with him. His main assignment, however, was to teach modern Chinese history, and teach it he did. He was stone deaf and when he lectured he turned down his hearing aids and spoke at high volume. Anyone wanting a free course only had to sit in the hall outside his lecture room and take notes. He and I did not see eye to eye on modern China. I was more generous in regarding the Chinese Revolution, but I would not have missed his company for the world. It was a sad day when, as a result of budget cuts and the approaching end of my term as Chair, I had to tell him that we could no longer afford his

services. Because of his long career with the French government, he was entitled to a government pension. Yet he was very reluctant to return to France. Why? He had a famous brother, Vladimir, a philosopher teaching at the Sorbonne. Vladimir was forever demonstrating in the streets and being hauled off to jail by the police. To Leon, Vladimir had brought the Jankelevitch name into disrepute and he did not want to suffer the consequences on returning to France. But in the end he and his wife did, to help their adopted Chinese daughter and her French husband operate a restaurant called J, J, J.

While I was Chair of History I also began to serve as Associate Dean of Arts, but I soon left that position to serve for a year 1973-74 as Cultural Counsellor in the Canadian Embassy in Beijing. On my departure, Hazel Jones took over as Chair of the committee, undertaking the work of forming a Department of East Asian Languages and Literatures. I returned to campus in the fall of 1974, but left on a year's research leave two years later. By the time I returned in September 1977, Hazel had begun the process of shepherding the proposal through the various committees and councils of the Faculty of Arts, where it was generally met with enthusiasm. Then Hazel began to climb the ladder of university committees. She patiently, and cogently, answered questions and explained the great importance and potential of the Department. She encountered some minor resistance at a University Planning committee, notably from one very articulate British member of the Medical Faculty, who declared that such a department was unnecessary because soon the whole world would be speaking English. This proved to be an isolated complaint and the proposal was well on its way to the

Board of Governors, with the full support of President Harry Gunning and of his successor, Myer Horowitz, who in his previous position as Academic Vice-President had helped to move the proposal forward.

In 1977, I was elected to serve for three years as an academic member on the Board of Governors, so I was more than delighted to listen to Hazel present the case for the new department to the Board. It was approved with congratulations in 1979 and forwarded to the Minister of Higher Education for approval. Premier Lougheed could not understand why it had taken us so long, and funding was quickly put in place. By the start of 1980 the university had received the green light.

Although I had done very little of the hard work, I was asked to Chair the new Department, until such time as a full-time Chair could be found. We were assigned a house on Saskatchewan Drive, where the small permanent staff crammed in. We had one secretary, Susan Boychuk, who, along with her new baby, came to work each morning bright and cheerful.

There were two obvious candidates for Chair of the department: Hazel Jones and Stanley Munro. Each possessed a strong personality and each had a vision for the department. Unfortunately, they did not see eye-to-eye, no great surprise in the academic world. In the end, Munro was selected to be Chair for a term of five years. The following April, 1982, after swearing the Chair of History not to tell anyone until her plane was in the air, Hazel Jones left for Japan, never to contact the Department again. She had dedicated fifteen years to the building of East Asian Studies. It is very important that she not be forgotten.



Strangely, Stan Munro, on completion of his term as Chair, also left and has had minimal contact with the Department since.

In 1995, after a thorough review, the department was renamed East Asian Studies. With that change the students who were taking a major in East Asian Studies under the guidance of members of the committee, passed to the Department. The original committee lost its reason to exist, although it remained for a while in an advisory role. As I mentioned at the outset, my main contribution has been longevity.

I promised to mention one other person in relation to teaching Chinese, and I hope you will indulge me if I go a little overtime. To set the scene, I need to read a brief passage from my book, relating to my time as a student in London.

I studied Chinese language and history in England at the University of London, School of Oriental and African Studies, which we students called, affectionately, the School of Ornamental and Accidental Studies, known as SOAS for short. SOAS was a microcosm of British overseas interests from Suez to Japan and most languages and histories were taught there. During World War II it trained British civil servants and military personnel in languages. The largest classes were in Chinese and Japanese. This was true a decade later when I became a student there. Only half a dozen of us were full-time students. The majority in my Chinese language classes, was made up of military officers, and members of the Foreign and Colonial services. I believe the government contract for language training was quite important to SOAS, but in 1961 the arrangement ended.

“On 7 January 1961 a man by the name of Gordon Arnold Lonsdale was arrested outside Waterloo Station.<sup>1</sup> He was carrying a shopping bag containing microfilmed plans of the British nuclear submarine being developed at Portland Down. The bag was handed to him by a man named Houghton and a woman named Gee. In addition, a Mr. and Mrs. Kroeger were arrested in west London.

It was the Gordon Arnold Lonsdale I knew as a fellow language student six years earlier. I met him first in the SOAS student common room. He arrived the year after I did, and he was introduced as a fellow Canadian student studying Chinese. Even more interestingly, he was Ukrainian and formerly a used car salesman in Edmonton, the latter of which helped to explain why he looked older than the other students. He had weak eyes and frequently missed classes, but his spoken Chinese was good. After our first meeting, when we talked about Edmonton, he was rather cool and standoffish. I had no money to socialize and he appeared to bond closely with a young Canadian diplomat named Pope, who threw lavish parties fuelled by duty-free liquor. At one of these parties, Lonsdale was present along with Charles Elwell, who later became his MI5 tracker. Neither knew it at the time, but Lonsdale later incorrectly believed that MI5 had been on to him earlier than they were.<sup>2</sup> Lonsdale lived in an apartment in a building called the White House on the edge of Regent’s Park, a very good address. It was rumoured to be full of deep-pile Chinese carpets, beautiful scrolls, and other bits of Chinoiserie.

Lonsdale operated a small business while at SOAS. He had a number of coin-operated jukeboxes, and candy, gum, and drink machines scattered

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<sup>1</sup> In 1964, the film *Ring of Spies*, based on the Lonsdale case, was released in Britain. In the United States it was later released under two titles: *Ring of Treason*, and *Shadow of Treason*.

<sup>2</sup> I gathered this information from Christopher Andrew’s *The Defence of the Realm: The Authorized History of MI5* (London: Penguin, 2009), 485-488.

around the London area, and a small van that he used to service them. One of his regular stops was the American Air Base at West Drayton where I taught for a while. I remember Lonsdale asking around SOAS to see if anyone wanted to go into business with him, but the only known taker was a fellow from the Colonial Office. When MI5 raided Lonsdale's flat, they found Chinese scrolls with hollowed-out ends used to keep American dollars, microfilm, and micro-dots. A radio and more U.S. dollars were found in a floor cavity. MI5 touted Lonsdale as the greatest Soviet spy yet caught in the Cold War. His trial, and that of his accomplices, was set for May.”

“Lonsdale was tried, found guilty, and sentenced to twenty-five years in jail, the longest sentence in the Cold War up to then. His accomplices were sentenced to ten years. Just a few (3) years later, Lonsdale was swapped in Berlin at the Brandenburg Gate for Greville Wynne, an “innocent English businessman” whom the Soviet authorities were holding on a charge of spying. Not long thereafter, in 1965, Lonsdale's memoirs were published in Britain. One of his anecdotes from his time at SOAS is worth repeating: “In our class, we had an American named Bredt [sic]....One day...he nudged me and whispered: ‘Listen Gordon. Except for you and me, they are all spies here.’ (Of course, he was wrong about one of us).”<sup>3</sup>

As a consequence of the Lonsdale case, the British government decided to do its future language training in-house using its own resources. Among its Chinese language instructors was a fellow named Clifford Phillips, someone with an interesting personal history. An orphan, born in England in 1920, at the age of two he was sent by ship to Shanghai, where he

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<sup>3</sup> Gordon Lonsdale, *Spy* (London: N. Spearman, 1965), 101.

met his mother to be, Ethel Margaret Phillips, a single lady doctor, one of the first woman graduates in medicine from Manchester. *A Suffragist*, she was advised to go to China, where she set up hospitals in Kaifeng, and later built a medical mission near Beijing. She was known to the Chinese as *Thunder*. Young Cliff spent his youth absorbing Chinese language and culture. Just before the war, he was sent to school in England.

Subsequently, he served 22 years in the Royal Air Force, (I suspect in one of its Intelligence sections.) Meanwhile, in China his mother was interned by the Japanese. At the end of the war Cliff was among the British forces sent into China, where he was reunited briefly with his mother. Along the way, he married a lady named Enid and they had a daughter, who, in turn, married and moved to Canada. Cliff finished his career as head of the Colonial Office China desk and teaching Chinese in the government school set up after the Lonsdale incident. In 1980, upon his retirement, Cliff and Enid decided to come to Canada to be near their daughter, who lived in Sherwood Park. *In nine days I will be eighty, and there is one thing I have learned for certain in my life and which I will share with you. That is absolutely everyone has a relative in Sherwood Park.*

Finding himself with time on his hands, Cliff dropped in on me one day to ask if there was anything he could do to contribute to the program. Thus began a happy and productive relationship between Cliff and the Chinese section of the Department. He introduced a course called *Mandarin for Cantonese speakers*. It proved to be extremely popular and remained so until Cliff felt he had had enough. The course was important not just because the enrolment was high and brought revenue to the department, but because it helped to build a bridge between the department and the local Chinese community. When the Department was established there were few

Mandarin speakers in Edmonton, most Chinese spoke Cantonese or Toishanese or other dialects from the Pearl River Delta region. In 1993 Cliff published "*China Beckons: an insight to the Culture and National Language,*" and in 2003, a few years before he died, he wrote "*The Lady Named Thunder,*" a biography of his extraordinary mother, published by the University of Alberta Press. Sadly, he did not publish his own memoirs.

My time is up, but I hope that I have given you some notion of the genesis of the department, which in the beginning was a committee.

***Thank you for your time and patience. On this, its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary, I wish the Department, Wansui! Wansui! Banzai! Banzai! Banzai!***

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