

## THE BOARD MAKES A LONG-TERM COMMITMENT TO NFB CLUB ONF!

*Anthony Kent*

An historic meeting took place in the NFB Boardroom on Thursday, November 9, 2006. **Jacques Bensimon** led the complete management team from the Board, while the Club was represented at the table by **J.P. Olivier Fougères, Jean Glinn, Micheal Hazel, Anthony Kent** and **Francine Simard**.

Jacques welcomed the Club Committee and announced that the National Film Board intends to reinforce the Board's commitment to support and collaborate with the NFB Club ONF. "All we have managed to accomplish at the NFB over the past 6 decades has been thanks to the talent and dedication of people like you – and many others who came before", said Jacques. He added: "When it is time to leave the NFB, the NFB never really leaves us. That connection continues on and remains with us. This is rare and I would say 'unique' in the case of Canadian institutions. And the special bond we know is there for life..."

Jacques ended with a tribute: "Last but not least, I would like to mark and emphasis the work done by our dear and devoted friend, Ron Jones, as President of the NFB Club ONF for the past 12 years." He continued: "Our dear friend Olivier, the other tireless volunteer, we must ask you to hand over this gift from the NFB to Ron, for his devotion to the Club cause."



Anthony Kent, Olivier Fougères, Jacques Bensimon

He handed Olivier a gift package for Ron and Olivier paid tribute to Ron's years of hard work and thanked Jacques for the Board's support. The main objective of this meeting was to cement the ongoing close relationship between the NFB and NFB Club ONF, by signing a Memorandum of Agreement between the two parties.

Under the terms of the agreement, the Human Resources Branch will maintain a distinct budget, which will be established once a year for exclusive use by NFB Club ONF, to assist with the operating costs of social activities. The Club will continue to

enjoy the use of a furnished workspace at the Board's offices, including a computer, telephone services and printing and postal services for the NFB Club ONF's Newsletter. Anthony Kent thanked **Robert Paquette**, Head of Human Resources, for his work on the Protocol of Agreement and his continuing commitment to collaborate with the Club.

Jacques Bensimon, Robert Paquette and **Claude Joli-Coeur** signed the Agreement on behalf of the NFB, while J.P. Olivier Fougères, Anthony Kent, Micheal Hazel and **Janet Chapman** (later) signed for the Club.

### NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the Club's newest members:

**Jacques Bensimon**, Montreal, QC

**David Simpson**, Rougemont, QC

## THE “NEW” CLUB COMMITTEE

*Anthony Kent*

Last August Ron Jones decided to concentrate on editing the quarterly Newsletter and retired from the NFB Club ONF Committee, after 12 invaluable years as our leading member. We are all extremely grateful to Ron, for all the time and effort he has given to the Club – and we already miss his enormous input and his dry humour! Many, many thanks, Ron!

Two other committee members stepped down in October, both after 6 years of active involvement.

**Marie Fitzgerald** was the dedicated Club Treasurer and hard-working **Marie-Pierre Tremblay** contributed a large number of interesting interviews and articles to the Newsletter. Their enthusiasm, their excellent ideas and their delightful company will be sorely missed. Thank you very much, Marie and Marie-Pierre!

This is not a totally “new” Club Committee, as **J.P. Olivier Fougères**, **Micheal Hazel**, and myself are leftovers from the old Committee! We welcome four new members to our ranks: **Janet Chapman**, Translator-Reviser – now the Club Treasurer, **Colette Gendron**, former Head of the Graphics Studio, **Jean Glinn**, Chief of Marketing in the French Programme and **Francine Simard**, Sales Co-ordinator in Customer Services. Janet, Jean and Francine only retired from

the NFB in April, June and July this year!

Colette Gendron has been collaborating for the past few months with Ron, on the preparation and layout of the Club Newsletter, as well as working with **Jacques Ricard**, our new Webmaster, on the development of the updated Club website. The original website had been generously set up and carefully directed by **Guy Maguire**, for the previous 5 years.

So this is our “new” rejuvenated NFB Club ONF Committee!



Micheal Hazel, Olivier Fougères, Janet Chapman  
Jean Glinn, Colette Gendron, Anthony Kent, Francine Simard

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## HUMAN RESOURCES BATTLE

*Ron Jones*

Who would have thought that an error in a newsletter photo caption would have caused a skirmish between two former directors of the Human Resources (Personnel) Division. But that was what happened. In the last issue of the Club newsletter a photo showing **Ginny Stikeman** and **Michael Avrill** was mistakenly captioned as **Maryse Charbonneau** and **Guy Gauthier**. There were no complaints from Ginny and Maryse

and, in an E-Mail from Mike, he stated: “Well, OK, I do look a lot like Guy (except I have a better beard).”

A few days later, the following E-Mail arrived from Guy Gauthier:

“That’s enough! Mike Avrill is still trying to pass himself off as me in the last bulletin. I know that he doesn’t have more hair than me nor a beard as I once did, but that’s where the meager comparison ends. I’ve never used the two-fingered grip he uses; my sweater doesn’t bulge at the waist and I’d much rather put my arm around a woman than a sign.

Thank goodness it’s a photo and not a video,



The photo in question

otherwise people who don't know me might have thought I was a crappy golfer, whereas I play like a dream...

How much did he pay you??? It's pretty low of this Mike to use techniques like that.

Guy Gauthier, the one and only!!!!!!

But it didn't end there. The very next day, I received the following E-Mail from Mike.

OK, OK. I was trying to be nice and, in my own superbly sensitive and generous way, I had thought that lending my image to a poorly bearded, skinny-looking guy would be an act of charity. I was wrong! So I withdraw my endorsement of my photo with Guy's name under. Poor boy! Now what will he do?

Come on guys. It was an innocent error and I apologize. I think that the membership will agree that you both have excellent beards.

**Look for the final instalment of Jacques Ricard's Caribbean travels – including ten more islands – in the next Club Newsletter!**

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## THE CLUB'S ROOTS

*A number of people, including two of our newest committee members, have asked about the origin of our Club. Here is a brief history of the early days of the Club, which was written some time ago, but was never published.*

### HISTORY OF NFB-CLUB-ONF

*Ron Jones*

*(with the help of Marie FitzGerald)*

It all began in March, 1994, when the NFB offered a retirement package or, more precisely, 'a voluntary separation program'. 120 staff members, including myself, took advantage of the offer. **Nicole Chicoine**, of the Communications Division, sent out a questionnaire to all departing NFBers suggesting the possibility of 'some sort of association for retirees' and asked for interests and volunteers. I decided to accept the responsibility of organizing 'something'.

The Film Board offered us office space, screening capabilities, an antiquated computer and the cost of printing and mailing. That computer bravely held out for over a year. Many pleas went out to have it replaced, but it was not until we raised enough capital could we consider purchasing a new one

The Club really began later in November with a screening of new NFB products in theatre 3 for recently retired, and soon to be retired, employees. At this screening, **Bob Masaites**, **J.P. Olivier Fougères**, **Jean-Guy Normandin** and **Hanna Acemian** were asked to form the organizing committee. With enthusiasm, hope, and some doubts, **NFB-Club-ONF** was on its way.

Our first newsletter, designed by **Hanna Acemian**, little more than an invitation to join us, was published

in March 1995. By May, membership had grown to over 100. One of the major problems was in reaching ex-employees. (We decided early that the Club should not be solely for retirees but for anyone who once worked at the NFB). We were helped by the Superannuation Board who agreed to a one-time-only invitation being mailed with superannuation cheques.

March also saw the Club's first outing, a sugar-ing-off party at St. Eustache, near Montreal. 73 attended the opening event and, of those, 25 joined the Club. The party was a great success and began a tradition which still continues. This annual event, although not drawing a large turnout, is very much appreciated by its loyal following.

In the first few newsletters we reprinted some of the many letters received from across the country voicing appreciation for the Club. This was most encouraging.

In August 1995, members from the Montreal area bussed to Ottawa to meet with membership there and for a visit to the Museum of Civilization in Hull and a screening of the NFB's latest IMAX film, *Mystery of the Maya*.

In November, our newsletter included an interview with Government Film Commissioner, **Sandra MacDonald** which forbode the uncertain future of the NFB and which caused somewhat of an uproar with the various unions representing NFB staff.

Major cuts, the closing of Studio D, a concentration



of English production funding and manpower to Toronto and the diminishing of technical services were some of the topics touched on. Soon the worst possible scenario would be played out.

The next Club outing was to Dunham in the Eastern Townships, where 50 members shared in some Loyalist history as well as the wine and cider of the region. By January, membership had reached 204. In November, another film evening was held and, once again, it was proven that ex-NFBers put film on the top of their enjoy lists.



The original committee: Olivier Fougères, Ron Jones, Jean-Guy Normandin, Bob Masaites

## THE DARK DAYS

1996, began badly for the NFB and its staff. On January 2, **Sandra Macdonald** announced personnel cuts 'as well as changes in the way we operate'. On January 31, the Juneau Report on the future of the NFB was submitted to Heritage Minister, **Sheila Copps**. On February 12, Ms Macdonald announced the proposed recommendations to a stunned staff. The recommendations, which caught all employees by surprise, included:

The closing of the Grierson Building; the closing of the Lab; the closing of the shooting stage and its technically related services; gradual abolition of permanent creative positions; the abolition of all location staff positions (camera, electrical, sound), the farming out of optical sound tracks and Foley recording; the reduction of the research and development budget by 25%; the closing of the Technical Service Coordination office; the farming out of most

video activities, including film to video transfers for masters, video transfer of film rushes and the production of all video distribution elements; in-house projection staff to be reduced to one; the farming out of copying and shipping of video cassettes; the elimination of 21 positions through changes to purchasing, auditing, mailing and vehicle renting; the elimination of four to five positions in Human Resources, the farming out of printing and graphic services, engineering positions related to activities being closed, such as the lab, will be eliminated.

On March 13, the first day of the Board of Trustees meeting, the directors were met in the lobby of the Côte-de-Liesse building with a mock funeral. Mourners dressed in black surrounded a coffin filled with film. Candles, flowers and tomb stones engraved 'R.I.P. NFB 1939-1996'. Outside the Canadian flag hung at half-mast.

Many who had honed their skills at the National Film Board were sought out by private industry, some filmmakers and technicians turned to freelance work and many more took whatever they could find. By June, Club membership reached 221 and although some of our new members were those affected by the cuts, many employees were too bitter to want any association

with the NFB.

## EVENTS GALORE

In April, 1996, the Club held its second annual sugaring-off party, this time at St.Marc-sur-Richelieu. In August, the Club went sailing. Twenty-eight members joined a cruise down the St. Lawrence to the Sorel Islands and, for the first time, NFB-Club-ONF took over the organizing of the annual NFB Golf Tournament. In prior years, the staff of the Lab had been the prime movers behind this event but alas, no one was left to continue this tradition. The Club welcomed 80 participants in its first year at the Riviere Rouge Golf Club. This would be the beginning of an ever-growing major event. In November, a full day of screenings drew over 80 members to Côte de Liesse. Films, wine, dinner, then more films and more wine were enjoyed by all. Also in November, the Club welcomed **Pat DeSeguin**, formerly of Human Resources, as its treasurer.

Speaking of money, the Club's sole source of income is its annual membership fee of \$10, the proceeds of its annual membership lucky draw and the golf tournament which, thanks to NFB suppliers, allows us to raffle off a wealth of prizes each year. All other Club events do not come close to meeting expenses.

In December, 1996, the Club brought the year to a close with a brunch at 'le 9e' Dining Room on the 9<sup>th</sup> floor of Eaton's Department Store in Montreal. 83 members turned up to inaugurate this, another soon to become traditional, annual event.

Membership in March 1997 had climbed to 258 and, in April, we returned to Cabane du Rang Saint-Joseph near St Marc-sur-Richelieu for our third annual sugaring-off party. In May, the Club visited the downtown office of the NFB in Montreal for a demonstration of the latest hi-tech for screening video and film and then next door, to the new facilities of the Cinémathèque québécoise for a tour of its museum and a screening.

In 1997, Club events included a trip to Hydro Quebec's Beauharnois generating station, 40 kilometers southwest of Montreal, and to the Pointe-du-Buisson Archeological Park at Melocheville. At this year's golf tournament, 82 joined the tournament and 110 joined us for dinner and the evening of lucky draws.

Our December, 1997, newsletter reported on the \$10 Million renovations of the McLaren Building on Côte-de-Liesse. The project seemed insurmountable in December but eventually all came about. The Grierson Building (125 Houde St.) was abandoned and all personnel were relocated in the McLaren much to the satisfaction of most, after a couple of years of difficult working situations. A smaller staff made accommodations easier. In 1990, staff numbered 710 and in December, 1997, that figure was 320.

In October, 1997, a good many Club members visited the IMAX theatre in Old Montreal, followed by lunch at the nearby Pointe-à-Callière museum and a tour of the museum itself, which stands on the site of the first settlement in Montreal. The year ended with our annual December Brunch, for the last time, at Eaton's Ninth Floor Restaurant. The year also ended with a membership of 311.

## HOMMAGE

In spite of the disastrous ice storm of 1998, the sun shone and the skies were blue for our annual sugaring-off party at St. Eustache and, in May, the Club honoured **Clement Perron** with a presentation of the restored print of *Mon Oncle Antoine*, for which he wrote the screenplay. Attending the event were: cinematographer **Michel Brault**, sound director, **Claude Hazanavicius** and star **Jacques Gagnon**. In our September newsletter, Clement Perron commented on the evening with these words (edited)

**'It was one of the most moving experiences of my entire NFB career ('though it's been over for more than ten years now').**

So my dear friends, I would like to say a few words about what I felt that very special evening when you wheeled me down the aisle of Theatre 3 and I saw all of those familiar smiling faces, welcoming me with such warmth and spontaneity. At this screening of one of the finest NFB gems, I glimpsed in the audience many of those who, along with colleagues sadly departed or absent for one reason or another, had helped create the golden age of the ONF-NFB, before becoming golden-agers themselves. In short, it was an unforgettable experience that will stay with me like a beacon lighting up my remaining days as a writer. Congratulations on your newsletter! It's already doing what it's supposed to do. I see one name, then another, and suddenly a whole part of our life at the NFB, with its collaboration, admiration, caring and accomplishments, comes flooding back. Your newsletter reawakens our memories, where we discover hitherto unrevealed stories and facts about our primitive ways back then.'

In December, 1998, the Club began its directory of member E-Mail addresses and has, since then, published periodically lists of all members on the Web. This was a welcome addition to the Club's services and one which is widely used.

On November 9, 1998, the Club lost one of its founding members, **Jean-Guy Normandin**, who as a soundman worked on many noteworthy NFB films around the world. He retired from the NFB in 1978 and his enthusiasm helped greatly to form NFB-Club-ONF.

In January, 1999, it seemed like the crises facing the NFB would never end. That was when the results of a report, begun in February, 1998, for the Minister of Heritage on Canadian film policy, were leaked to the Toronto Star. The story was that the NFB would contribute \$5 Million to the Canadian feature film

fund. Government Film Commissioner, **Sandra Macdonald** told the media that the \$5 Million ‘**does not advocate a cut per se in our budget but a reallocation of a portion of our budget to support new and emerging filmmakers in feature film.**’

In February 1999, the Club visited the Montreal Museum of Fine Arts for an exhibition of the works of **Claude Monet**.

In August, our annual golf tournament found a new course for the event. Golf Bromont became the home for the tournament for the following years. The scenery is beautiful; the golf course superb and the dining facilities some of the best in the province. The tournament reached a new high in attendance with 144 participants and 177 attending the dinner. **Sandra Macdonald** was on hand to award a prize to the winner of a special lucky draw to mark the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Board. A survey of those in attendance showed a 98% satisfaction vote for the choice of location and, for the first time, people had to be turned down from participating because of late applications.

In 1999, the annual December Brunch moved to the elegant Hôtel de la Montagne in Montreal. Over 100 attended this year and the cuisine got top marks all around. This annual event had also found a new home.

Also in 1999, the Committee of the Club welcomed **Marie Fitzgerald (Nycz)** and **Anthony Kent** to its group. On May 25, 1999, the Club lost **Laval Fortier** who devoted many hours of his time to Club activities and was always enthusiastic in helping. In recent times, his widow **Marcelle** has been of great assistance in Club events.

In April, 2000, the Club honoured **René Jodoin** at a film evening and dinner at the NFB. Both **Roger Blais** and **Robert Forget** spoke of René’s contributions to the Film Board. On display in the cafeteria, for the event, were 31 panels of photos illustrating Club activities since its inception.

In June, 2000, we mailed our first edition of the Club’s E-Mail directory, prepared by **Marie Fitzgerald**. This directory, which is constantly being updated, now includes 100 addresses. The last Club members to join our committee were **Anthony Kent**, whose first responsibility was to organize our next outing, and **Marie-Pierre Tremblay**, who has frequently contributed to our newsletter, as well as being a driving force behind all Club activities.

Another first for the Club: In June 2000, members

from Montreal, Ottawa, Kingston, Toronto and communities in between, merged in Gananoque, Ontario, for a boat tour of the 1000 Islands and dinner at the picturesque Gananoque Inn. For the first time in the history of our golf tournament, it rained that year. In fact, it poured continuously throughout the day. In spite of impossible conditions, several groups of golfers played the whole 18 holes and spirits were high for the evening.

In October, 2000, a two-hour bus trip through the autumn foliage of Quebec and Vermont took 33 members to the Shelburne Museum near Burlington, Vermont, where, for six hours, we visited buildings dating back to the 17<sup>th</sup> Century, the steamboat Ticonderoga and incredible collections of furniture, art and Americana. The year ended with our usual successful December brunch and, for the first time, the Club was asked to take charge of the bar at the annual NFB Christmas party on the shooting stage.

## NEW LEADERSHIP

In 2001, the NFB had a new government film commissioner, **Jacques Bensimon**, a familiar name to many NFBers and particularly to many Club members. Since his nomination, Jacques has proven to be a staunch supporter of **NFB-Club-ONF** and has frequently appeared at Club events.

In May, 2001, the Club said goodbye to one of its original members, **Bob Masaites**, who chose to move to Miramichi, New Brunswick. In honour of his contributions to the Club, Bob was presented with a lifetime membership to the Club. Aside from being a founder and a devoted worker, Bob also captured on video almost all of the Club’s activities.

At the 2001 Golf Tournament (under sunny skies), **Jacques Bensimon** made one of his first official appearances as the new government film commissioner. In addressing the participants in the tournament during dinner, Jacques said (edited)

**‘My dear friends, it’s truly a pleasure for me to see so many faces I remember from my earlier days at the National Film Board and to share this reunion with many people whom I have met since returning to the NFB. I feel like I have come back home; it’s one of your own who has just been appointed Commissioner.**

**The opportunity for all of us to get together reflects the spirit of what I sincerely hope for in the coming years, that is, that we establish a closer relationship between you, former NFB**

**employees brought together through the NFB Club, and employees who are still working for the institution.**

In October, 2001, the Club organized its most ambitious project to date '**Between Ourselves/Parlez-nous de vous...entre nous**', an exposition of the talents of its members held at Côte de Liesse. For three days, almost 500 visitors savoured the works of 42 artists and craftspeople. 189 works were exhibited on the walls of the corridors around Theatre 3 (paintings, sculptures, poems, photos). 200 different items were displayed on tables inside Studio 2 (sculptures, novels, pottery, painted wood, wicker, bronze, prints, illustrated books, book bindings and texts, art furniture, homemade paper, origami, photos, woven and crocheted works).

Although the principle organizer of this massive project was **J. P. Olivier Fougères**, the exposition became an overwhelming success largely because of the hard work and enthusiasm of many Club members and NFB staff working together.

On April 24, **David Verrall** and **Jacques Drouin** welcomed Club members to the English and French Animation studios (now one) and invited them to meet several animators at work on new productions.

In June, 2002, I had the opportunity to interview the government film commissioner on his feelings after one year at the helm of the National Film Board. His enthusiasm and pride were boundless. At one point in the one-hour discussion he commented on the Club: **“For me, one of the reasons that NFB-Club-ONF exists is that without its history, without its people who created the organization, the NFB has no past.”**

Another first for the Club was the July visit to the Blue Bonnets racetrack for a day of conversation, betting and dining. Thirty-five people turned up for the day and for a special race dedicated to the Club.

The August golf tournament was again a great success, with great weather, a great turnout, a great meal, and an abundance of great prizes. 142 took part in the tournament, with another 43 joining us for dinner.

December, 2002, and January, 2003, were sad months for many, with the loss of several Club members, and perhaps this is the time to explain the newsletter's policy on reporting the deaths of



The 2005 committee:

Olivier Fougères, Pat de Seguin, Ron Jones,  
Marie FitzGerald, Marie-Pierre Tremblay, Anthony Kent.

members. A few years ago, we made a decision that obituaries would be kept to a brief notice. In this way, no one person is given special treatment and all ex-NFBers are considered as equal contributors to the Board. This is sometimes very difficult, especially when you have known the person in question well and respect his or her work. On the other hand, no one is slighted nor ignored. I have received many eulogies from friends of departed members and all written with love and respect. I too have wanted to write about friends whom I have lost, but I honestly believe that this is the only way to show respect for all whose lives have contributed to the growth of the National Film Board.



In 2002, the Club entered the 21<sup>st</sup> Century of computer technology with the help of **Guy Maguire**, whose encouragement, expertise and assistance guided us to form our own Web Site. The site was not intended to replace the newsletter but rather to complement it and to advise non-members of our existence and our activities.

Over the next few years, the Club held several memorable outings. One of these took place in September, 2005, when we were invited by **Marcel** and **Lise Carrière** for a tour of their country estate near Saint-Bernard de Lacolle, a sit-down dinner and a visit to a local craft fair.

The original committee was assisted greatly in the early days by **Laval Fortier** and **Claire Provençal**. Until recently the committee members included: **Pat deSeguin**, **Marie FitzGerald (Nycz)**, **Marie-Pierre Tremblay**, **Micheal Hazel**, **Anthony Kent**, **J. P. Olivier Fougères** and myself. With this year's resignations of **Marie-Pierre Tremblay**, **Marie FitzGerald** and myself, new members were appointed. They are **Janet Chapman**, **Colette Gendron**, **Jean Glinn**, and **Francine Simard**.

### E-MAIL

Here are the latest changes for your

E-Mail directory:

Bélanger, Lise	<a href="mailto:libelanger@can.rogers.com">libelanger@can.rogers.com</a>
Bergeron, Diane	<a href="mailto:herve.diane@videotron.ca">herve.diane@videotron.ca</a>
Gendron, Colette	<a href="mailto:colettegendron@sympatico.ca">colettegendron@sympatico.ca</a>
Kent, Anthony	<a href="mailto:akentx2@sympatico.ca">akentx2@sympatico.ca</a>
Murdock, Alex	<a href="mailto:lamurdock@sympatico.ca">lamurdock@sympatico.ca</a>
Ouellette, Lyse	<a href="mailto:oulyse@mac.com">oulyse@mac.com</a>
Richmond, Terry	<a href="mailto:terry17richmond@magma.ca">terry17richmond@magma.ca</a>
Todd, Richard	<a href="mailto:ratodd@aei.ca">ratodd@aei.ca</a>

### RECENT LOSSES

We mourn the loss of the following Club members:

#### **Mae Walsh DesRoches**

Technical Services, September 27, 2006

#### **Antonio Vielfaure**

Distribution, November 4, 2006

#### **Elizabeth Nault**

Production, December 5, 2006

#### **John Feeney**

Filmmaker, December 6, 2006



*To all of our members,*

*The NFB Club ONF Committee*

*wishes you a happy New Year*



*Health, Happiness and Prosperity!*