



# St. Catharines Torch Club

## October 2013 Newsletter

### Dr. Irena Michalska

Dr. Irena Michalska was born in Lwow, Poland, during World War II. She was educated in Poland and obtained her medical degree in 1964 from the Warsaw Medical Academy.

In 1965 she emigrated with her husband, Dr. Andrzej Michalska, to Boston, where she completed her residency in anaesthesia at Massachusetts General Hospital. She moved to Toronto in 1968, and continued to practise her specialty at Toronto General Hospital and Ottawa General Hospital.

After obtaining her licence and specialization she began her practice in St. Catharines in 1974, retiring in 2011.

She has three children and five grandchildren. In 2012, her husband passed away after 48 years of marriage.

### A Brief History of Modern Poland

The talk will try to outline the process of gaining independence from the Soviet sphere of influence in postwar Poland. The peaceful transition from planned and steered economy to market economy began in 1989 in the first semi-free elections.

The economic problems in present-day Poland will also be presented.

### Next Meeting

- Thursday Oct. 10, 6 pm social hour, 7 pm dinner.
- Best Western, St. Catharines.
- **Dinner:** Plated fish and rice dinner.
- Cost: \$25. (Note change from last year.)
- **Speaker :** Dr. Irena Michalska.
- **Topic:** A Brief History of Modern Poland.
- Please let your phone captain know whether you are coming.
- If you require a special meal, please contact Alexandra Fic or Merle Richards.
- If you need a ride, contact David Warren at 905-934-9765.

## September 11, 2013 Meeting

Best Western Hotel. St. Catharines  
Attendance: 47. Minutes by Peter Skelton.

### Welcome:

David Sydor introduced the new executive to attendees.

Guests: Dr. Charles Conteh and Rachel Gerow, by Tilly Chandulal; Dr. David Hunter by John Northover; Fran Tobin by Ellen Hoover; Barry Golding by Fred Bolton; Boris and Liuda Semen by Ivan Hrabowsky

### Business Meeting:

President David Sydor called for executive member reports:

1. *2014 AGM Planning*. Ivan Hrabowsky identified members involved: David Sydor (tours), Alan Wheeler (speakers); Doreen Peever (registration); Abraham Rempel (bus arrangements); and John Tordiff.
2. *IATC Website*. Robert Cooper has put some of our chapter's information into it (report by J. Northover).
3. *Recognition* of 1962 Chapter Founding Member Dr. Edgar Peer, in attendance (A. Wheeler)

### Speaker

Dr. Thilagavathi (Tilly) Chandulal was introduced by Alan Wheeler.

Title of talk: ***From Unequal Castes and Untouchability to Casteless India: My***

***Dream***. The presentation was prefaced by the recorded song, "One Person Eating Another Person's Food", an evocation of the principle that "we are all of one species", advanced by Subramania Bharati, himself of the Brahmin caste. Tilly herself has an "unrealized dream of a casteless society in India". Historically, India had been ruled by an oligarchy of three professions, including a priesthood. However, later Aryan invaders from the north moved eastward along the

Ganges River, and in assuming power, made changes to legal and social institutions which resulted in frozen mobility for all groups of people. A set of three scriptural texts provided a religious basis for the system, but the social controls encompassed one's access to education, one's servile duties to members of higher castes, one's economic status, and access to legal rights, if any. Caste status is passed on to offspring. Only Brahmin men could go to heaven, and one's only hope of escape was to be reborn into the highest caste. British rule in India made some restrictions on Brahmins, but the 5% of Brahmins in the society took hold of the administrative system and still managed to rule it, and to continue the privileged access of their children to education. Many legal and constitutional changes in India since independence have only nibbled at the caste problem, with Mahatma Gandhi proclaiming untouchables "children of God"; Gandhi, whom Tilly regards as the "father of the country," let the "untouchables" (also called Panchama or "Dalits"), be still at the bottom of the present system, which runs from bottom to top: Panchama, Sudra, Vaisya, Kshatriya, and Brahmin.

Dr. Ambedkar, a western-educated man of the Untouchable caste, was prominent in devising the Indian Constitution, but religious extremists and others have taken advantage of legal weaknesses to persecute Christians and other minorities, and Brahmins have found ways to pre-empt many educational opportunities. As Martin Luther King has said, "the oppressor will not go away without pressure", and civil leaders must arrange for caste names to be dropped for all discourse with the public.

After a brief question period, the speaker was thanked by John Northover.  
Adjournment: 9:15 p.m.