

# Jobs, dipsticks, and pregnancy?

By James Connolly

FOR THE FIRST time in weeks I had a couple of hours free. Rather, I thought I had some free time. As I was leaving the Cass building, an unobtrusive memo was trying to

## History, Anyone?

HISTORY, FOR A LOT of people, is something that happened a long time ago and should be left forgotten in the past. These people would surely change their minds if they attended, as I did, Father Bolger's classes of Prince Edward Island History. He instructs the most interesting and yet informative classes that it has yet been my pleasure to attend.

After being away from studies for twenty years, I was entertaining the thought of attending University night courses. A friend suggested that I might enjoy taking a History course from Father Bolger. She advised, rather than trying a course that might be tedious and might discourage me from taking future courses, I should begin with his. She assured me I would enjoy the History course even though it would be a fair amount of work.

I took the plunge. History had not been one of my favorite subjects in High School, but I trusted my friend's recommendation. I also felt that it was a great opportunity for me to learn about Prince Edward Island as I was not, as so many Islanders are quick to point out, a native Islander. I approached my first class with anticipation but also with just a little reluctance. I wasn't sure if I was capable of handling what lay ahead.

Here I was: Me attending University! Father Bolger immediately impressed me with his intelligence and his great sense of humour. I marvelled at his ability to remember everyone's name within the first two classes — in such a large class — approximately one hundred students. Not only could he remember the names but he also knew most of their parents and where they lived. He guided us through the pages of "Pre-Confederation" History as if we were taking a stroll down memory lane. We took many side trips as we learned personal little stories about different individuals in History; stories that never got printed in any history

hide from me on the bulletin board. Curious, I read about a lecture that afternoon about "business opportunities in modern diagnostic chemistry." Well, I couldn't resist. I said to myself, "If I'm going to study chemistry, I should know

book!

The younger students took great delight in Father Bolger's teasing them about their romances and their favourite hangout, "The Smuggler's Jug". He had a special way of alluding to "The Jug" that always made us laugh. He would really exaggerate the enunciation as he raised his voice. It was very effective.

I'll never forget the day that Father Bolger announced that we had to do a term paper of approximately ten thousand words. My face must have shown my dismay as Father immediately asked, "Rita, what's wrong?" I said, "Ten thousand words! I don't even write to my mother. How am I going to write ten thousand words?"

He mimicked, "You don't write to your mother! What do you do?"

"I phone her," I said.

"Well, phone me," said Father Bolger. I laughed along with the whole class even though I couldn't help but feel a little embarrassed. I sure am glad "red" is my best colour!

Not only did I complete the term paper assignment quite successfully, but I also enrolled in the Post-Confederation History course the next semester and wrote a second term paper. I came away from those two History courses a more confident person with a lot of knowledge about Prince Edward Island.

The nice thing about it was that I had enjoyed the learning experience and appreciated the privilege of having had one of the best teachers there is. It was such a positive experience that I am now a full time student completing my sophomore year this semester at the University of Prince Edward Island.

How's that for History?

where the money is." Along this line of thought, my eyes skipped down to the bottom line of the notice "coffee and donuts will be served." How could I refuse?

I arrived five minutes early — in time to get a good seat in the back of the room where my confused or far off expression wouldn't be noticed by the guest lecturer, Dr. Regis Duffy, president of Diagnostic Chemicals Limited. Dr. Duffy, among other things, was Dean of Science here at UPEI from (if I understood well) 1969 until 1980. In 1970 he started DCL, his chemical firm, of which he is president.

He told the small crowd of twenty that chemistry is taking a new twist. No longer are chemical tests (i.e. those you take in a hospital) as difficult as they were before. The field of diagnostic chemicals (tests in general) is a big one. Some years ago, to have your blood sugar levels tested, you would have given a blood sample that would have been sent to a lab and analyzed in a couple of days. Now, your finger is pricked and a drop of blood is squeezed onto a specially prepared piece of paper. The paper is actually a thin plastic film with an absorbant layer of paper that has been treated with chemicals which react with the blood's sugar. The amount of sugar will determine the color the paper turns — and a simple color chart tells you the result. Even pregnancy tests can be performed in less than a half an hour by dipping a treated strip of paper into a urine or saliva sample.

Why is this important? North American consumers want results

— accurate results — fast results. Research labs across North America are looking for better ways to test for everything from blood types to AIDS. If better, easier tests can be found, the public will jump for them. Many of today's tests are just right — they are highly sensitive and highly specific. A highly specific test is one which will give an indication if and only if the substance being tested is present. The breathalyzer test used by the RCMP is a test specific for alcohols. The test won't (or better, probably never will) show positive for someone who has no alcohol in their breath.

Much of the lecture dealt with a new field of diagnostic chemistry involving monoclonal antibodies. A certain protein is found which will complex (latch on to chemically) to a desired compound. The desired compound could be a protein only found in pregnant women or only found in people with a certain disease. A sample of this desired disease is injected into a mouse. The mouse produces antibodies for this compound and the cells are removed from the mouse. These cells are carefully selected to find some which are producing only the chemical to complex with the desired compound. These few cells are then fused with cancerous cells which never cease growing. The end result is a whole colony of cancerous cells on a petri plate (or some other medium) which produce the desired antibody. The good thing about it is that only the protein which finds (complexes to) the pregnancy chemical is produced — the cancerous cells produce proteins which are very specific.

Dr. Duffy explained that these identified proteins are put on the testing paper or on a dipstick with some other chemicals and there you have it, a simple, fast effective test. Question: Where does business fit into this myriad of chemistry?

It is clear that people with knowledge of these new techniques are going to have a place in the future of chemistry. Dr. Duffy went so far as to say that if the chemistry you want to do or the chemistry you are interested in is unavailable, you may have to start your own lab to do the work. In fact, that's what Regis Duffy did in 1970 when he created Diagnostic Chemicals Limited. DCL is one of two labs east of Montreal in which monoclonal work is being done. In the future, he joked that this kind of lab equipped for monoclonal work will be as common as washrooms in chemistry buildings. (Which brings to mind that Cass has a unisex washroom on the first floor and two water closets on the fourth floor — by far the least washroomed building on campus).

I'm certainly pleased that Dr. Duffy spoke to us about some of the possibilities for young chemists. It's one thing to know your chemistry, it's another to use it (and earn a living). I thank the Chemical Institute of Canada and the UPEI Department of Chemistry for providing lectures to interested people from time to time.

The one thing that stands out about the whole affair is that I and two other students who attended asked, "who ate all the donuts?"

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