

2022 OHS AGM Keynote Address Transcript  
Steve Paikin  
“John Turner: An Intimate Biography of Canada’s 17th Prime Minister”

**Michel Beaulieu:** So it's with great pleasure that we'll move on to our keynote address, and hopefully we have not lost you, Steve.

**Steve Paikin:** No, I was waiting for the big intro before...

**Michel Beaulieu:** We're about to give the big intro, but just want to make...

This is a man, I think, that needs no introduction. But it's a great pleasure that I'd like to introduce Steve Paikin. He's been a journalist in Canada for over 40 years, the last 30 of them at Ontario's provincial broadcaster TVO. He's the anchor of *The Agenda with Steve Paikin*, now in its 17<sup>th</sup> season. He's an Officer of the Order of Canada and a member of the Order of Ontario.

In 2016 he was awarded the Ontario Historical Society's Donald Creighton Award for the best biography or autobiography highlighting life in Ontario, past or present, for his fantastic book, one that I would say that I've used in a number of my university courses, *Bill Davis: Nation Builder and Not so Bland After All*.

He's here with us this evening, though, to speak about his latest book, *John Turner: An Intimate Biography of Canada's 17<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister*, published by Sutherland House Books. So please join me in welcoming Steve Paikin.

**Steve Paikin:** Michel. Thank you so much, and it really is great to be with you all tonight. I feel like I'm with brothers and sisters who love history as much as I do.

And this is a great day to be talking about John Turner because I think my book is just out today. I think today is the day that it's actually available for people to get. So I'm, you know, I'm glad to be able to talk about this tonight with people who love history as much as I do.

Let me do a little behind the scenes stuff first. I know when I was looking through the people who are participating in the Zoom feed, I saw the name Jan McQuay and I was wondering, is that the same Jan McQuay I know from Manitoulin Island, because I got a cottage up on that island. And sure enough, I heard from Rob's speech that it is. Hello Jan, I can't see you right now but it's good to know you're out there, and maybe I'll see you next summer at Gore Bay at the flea market again.

Kae Elgie. Is it Elgie or Elgie? If it's Elgie, I want to know if she's Kae Elgie related to the famous Bob Elgie who was a cabinet minister in the Ontario government of Bill Davis for the longest time. So maybe someone could get me that information before long.

And I noticed Caroline De Cocco is part of your team there, and I certainly remember her from Queen's Park where she was a member of the Ontario legislature.

Hi Jan, thanks for the note. Good to see you too.

I want to congratulate you. I want to congratulate everybody who's doing this very important work. You know, I had some sense about what the OHS does because, as Michel indicated, you've graced me with one of your important pieces of recognition in the past. So I'm obviously aware of your organization and the work it does. But Rob, holy cow.

Oh, what is that? Yes, first cousin once removed to Dr. Bob Elgie! Okay Kae, good to know. That's great. This is a trick I've learned over the last two and a half years, how to speak and yet keep one eye on the chat at the same time, so I can see the notes as they come up.

Had Rob not gone through that list of things that your organization has achieved, I would be much more ignorant about what you've accomplished over the past year, and I'm really glad – boy, you've been around a long time too – I'm really glad the historical society is there to do this important work and keep the public's love of history and keep champions of history going because we need it.

We have too much living in the moment and living of today and not enough appreciation for what's come before us. So thank you for doing this good work.

I'll mention one little thing that I was involved in in the past and that is, I'm sure you're all aware of the Premier's Gravesite Program, which I guess has been around for a little while now. But I remember when they were starting to put the plaques and the flags by all of the grave sites of the former premiers of Ontario and their plan was to have events recognizing these plaques and flags in chronological order.

So they were going to start with John Sandfield Macdonald in eastern Ontario and then go all the way down the list, all the way to whoever the last deceased premier was. We'd guess would be, well today it's Bill Davis, but back then it would have been John Robarts.

And I remember calling somebody at the ministry and saying, you know, I know Harry Nixon is sort of halfway down your list, but his son is alive. And you think maybe we should go out of order so that Bob Nixon who's, you know, also got a pretty fair time in public life as well, can actually...

I mean, he's 90. Wouldn't it be nice if he were able to be alive – or maybe he was only 87 then or something – wouldn't it be nice if he could be alive and actually preside over this ceremony? And they said no, we can't do that. We have to go in chronological order.

And I remember just thinking, I'm in journalism, I don't lobby government, I don't get involved in these things, but this is stupid, and I'm going to get involved.

And I remember calling Dave Levac, who was the MPP, who's the Speaker and the MPP for Brandt where Mr. Nixon lives, and I said Mr. Speaker, I understand what they want to do and I understand they got to roll it out in chronological order, but don't you think they should make an exception for Bob Nixon?

I mean, we have a living legend of Ontario politics here and wouldn't it make sense that he'd be able to attend the Premier's Grave Site ceremony for his own father? If we wait for Harry Nixon's term to come up, he may not be with us anymore. And fortunately, Dave Levac has a lot more schlep than I do because he made it happen, and there we go. And it did happen, and that was good. So that's my little bit of insight into the kind of work that you guys do.

I'm gonna take a wild stab here at the notion that, after two and a half years of COVID, you have all heard far too many 40 and 45 minute long speeches on Zoom and probably can't take another one. I think I'm on solid ground in saying that.

So what I'd like to do here is something a little different and a little more Interactive. What I'd like to do is, as opposed to just sort of tell you what my book is all about – *John Turner: The Intimate Biography* – I would rather tell you a little bit about what went into it behind the scenes.

This is not stuff you're going to read in the book and this will give you, I think, some insight into how this book came about. And then I'll speak for much shorter than – because they asked me to speak for half an hour, 40 minutes, and I don't want to put you through all that – I'm going to speak for a shorter period of time and then I'll take questions for as long as you guys want. And that way we'll get more of what's on your mind and on your agenda as opposed to what might be on mine.

So, let's start with this. I want to take you back to September of 2020. September 19, 2020, John Turner dies. He's 91 years old. He's one of the very few Canadian prime ministers to make it into his 90s. I think maybe only four did out of the 23 we've had.

And there's a funeral for him. But, of course, we're sort of neck deep in COVID and so at a funeral where you would have expected 1,000, 1,500, people to show up, 150 are allowed to go. And this man who I think is a great Canadian with a singularly important story to tell, he really doesn't get the send off that he has earned, that he deserves.

A few weeks after his death, maybe this prompted it, a couple of his colleagues who worked with him on Parliament Hill approached me like this on Zoom. We were all, of course, locked down at the time and we were not allowed to be with each other. So they approached me on Zoom and they said, we think there needs to be a good book on John Turner and we think you're the guy to write it.

And I said to them, well, look, I just wrote 550 pages on Bill Davis, which the Ontario Historical Society loved, and I don't really have any energy left to undertake a new book right now. I got a very full-time job. I got lots on the go. I only ever wanted to write one book. The Davis book was my seventh book. I don't really want to write any more books, which I've said to my wife five times over the years. I'm not going to write any more books, don't worry. I said it again after the Davis book.

And they said, and I said besides that, some guy, a Carlton University professor named Paul Lit, just wrote a book on Mr. Turner not 10 years ago and I interviewed him on *The Agenda*, and I read the book, and it was a pretty good book. So I don't know that the world needs another book on John Turner.

Well, they said that's true, Paul Lit did write that book. But no disrespect to Paul, they said, but it focused very much on the sort of legislative and political life of Mr. Turner and he never met with Mr. Turner. And we think that the sort of guts of the man, who he was as a human being, as a guy, we're not sure that that book got to that.

And we think you can get to that because, number one, you covered him in 1984 when Mr. Turner came back to public life, ran for the leadership of the Liberals and won it. I was at that convention and I covered that convention and his victory. And I've sort of, you know, it's a bit presumptuous to say we became friends over the years, but we certainly became decent acquaintances. Our birthdays were two days apart and so we used to go out for lunch together on our birthdays for many years. And, you know, I guess we did become friendly over the years. I guess we did become friends.

And they also assured me that the archives in Ottawa where Mr. Turner has so many of his private papers, which the previous author did not get access to, they said to me we can assure you you will get access to those papers, even though they don't become available to the public for another few decades. We'll talk to the family and we'll make sure you get access to those papers.

And they said beyond that, you know, his family don't give interviews to the media. They had a very tempestuous relationship with the media when Mr. Turner was in public life. And they also said to me, we'll make sure that the family is available to talk to you so that you can really have a better understanding of, you know, John Turner, the guy, which is what the book really should be about.

I said all right, leave it with me. Let me think about this. And the fact is, I guess, the more and more I thought about it, the more I thought, you know, I guess I was lying to my wife five straight times when I said I'd never write another book. Because each time I think I'm done, something sort of lands on my plate which I think, oh boy, that's kind of interesting. I think maybe I'd like to do that after all.

And the more I thought about it, the more I thought John Turner has a singularly unique career in politics. I can't think of anybody else who has experienced the high highs and low lows that he had. This, a guy who started off in 1962 as our JFK. Remember John Kennedy's sworn in as President in 1961. John Turner sworn in as a Member of Parliament from Quebec in 1962. He's an opposition backbencher. The next year the Liberals take over. He has to bide his time waiting to get into cabinet. He eventually does, gets into Lester Pearson's cabinet, first ever Consumer Affairs Minister.

Then Pierre Trudeau takes over in 1968, defeating Bob Winters and John Turner for the Liberal Party leadership. It's so ironic. At that leadership convention in 1968. John Turner is a young guy – he's only in his high 30s – and he gives a speech in which he says – because everybody's saying oh, you're running for next time – and he says, I'm not running, you know, for some far-off convention in 1984. I'm running for now. And funnily enough, of course, he did run in 1984, and that was the convention that he did win.

But before that, he becomes Trudeau's Justice Minister. He becomes Trudeau's Finance Minister. He has a fight with Trudeau over government policy and resigns in 1975. He goes into the private sector for almost a decade where he becomes the most sought-after director in English Canada.

And then, after Mr. Trudeau takes his walk in the snow, he comes back out of private life, goes back into public life, wins, serves 79 days as Prime Minister, and then loses. Worst election loss in Liberal history at that point. Holds the job for four more years. Runs again against Brian Mulroney. Loses again. Leaves public life in '93. Goes back into private life.

And then really has a whole new chapter in his life and becomes this great champion for democracy, which is what he frankly spent the last 15 years of his life doing. This was a guy who into his 60s, 70s, 80s, even into his 90s, was going into schools, was going into post-secondary institutions, and was giving speeches about the importance of people participating in democracy.

He had this line. He said, democracy doesn't happen by accident. You have to participate. And when I think about all of the participating he did over the years, the great victories he experienced and the awful disloyalty and internecine warfare that he was a part of also during his time in public life, I can't think of another politician who just experienced such a roller coaster of a career.

So, I started thinking okay, okay, this is worth doing. I say yes. We do it. I got to meet his, I'd met his wife a few times in the past but we really spent a lot of time together, and she gave me access to the archives.

And I went to Ottawa and I spent time with hundreds if not thousands of documents. And I saw some really good juicy stuff, which if you think I'm going to give you for nothing tonight, you can forget it. You got to get the book.

One of the things that really... let me put it this way. Life has a way of crushing your heart a little bit. John Turner never knew his father. His father died when he was two years old, a botched operation. John Turner also had a sibling that he never knew because the child died shortly after birth, medical complications again.

And as if history wasn't hard enough on this family, the same thing that happened to John Turner's mother – death of a husband, death of a child, in relatively short order – the same thing happened to Mrs. Turner, John Turner's wife, a couple of years ago.

I remember when Mr. Turner died, there was a lunch for him that I attended and somebody at that lunch said, you know, John's not the only one in trouble. His son is really having a lot of health issues right now and I don't know how much longer he's going to live. And this surprised me a lot because the son in question, David Turner, lived across the road from me and just up the street in midtown Toronto. I knew him a little bit. We weren't great friends, but I knew him reasonably well.

And I called him after that lunch. I called him to say Dave, I'm calling you to express my sympathies on the death of your father. But I'm also hearing some very disquieting things about your health. What's going on? And he gave me the kind of, well, don't believe everything you hear. And six weeks later he was dead.

And, you know, poor Jill Turner also had to experience losing a husband, losing a child, in very short order, as her mother-in-law once did.

Anyway, here we are, two years later, two years and a month later, since agreeing to do this project. The book is now available. I've learned more about supply chains in the last six months than I have in the past 60 years. This book apparently was printed in China because the cost of printing books in Canada has gone up 100, 200, 300 percent over the past year, and as a result the book was printed in China.

But because of supply chain problems, thanks to COVID, they couldn't get the thing on a boat over here in time. And when it got here, it sat in some container ship in some Vancouver port for months. I was really hoping to have the book out on September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2022, in time for the second anniversary of Mr. Turner's death. But as you can tell, we're a couple of months behind schedule

But it's now available. And, you know, the one thing I always say to myself after I finish a book is I really don't care how many copies it sells. You know, I have a full-time job. It's a very full-time job. So writing these books is nothing I'm doing, thankfully, to make a living, because you couldn't make a living at it. I do it because I think the people I'm writing about deserve it.

I wouldn't want too many decades to go by without people remembering who Bill Davis was. I wouldn't want too much time to go by without people remembering strengths and weaknesses

all of John Turner. He was a great Canadian who, and I don't know if this is a great book – I mean, the viewers, the readers will decide – but I think he did deserve to have a great book written about him and I hope this one's it.

Okay, I've talked long enough. With that, I'm delighted to take your questions. So, M. le Président, it's over to you.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Merci, Steve. So thank you very much. So can you give it a couple of seconds just to add in some questions into the chat.

What I will say, though, is that, you know, through the gracious donation of one of our members, the Society's actually going to be giving away, as soon as the book is released, as part of a little bit of a fun kind of competition that will be occurring. So for those of you here attending at the AGM, please do watch for your emails as well as communication from the Society, and hopefully you'll be one of the lucky individuals to receive a copy of the book.

We do have a couple questions. First one from Don Bourgeois. Is history about political leaders including leaders who had other careers, law, business development, etc., and if so, why?

**Steve Paikin:** Well, I mean, Don, is that the person who asked the question?

**Michel Beaulieu:** Don, yes.

**Steve Paikin:** Don, I mean, at the risk of stating the obvious, to me history is about everything. It's not only about political leaders. It's surely about political leaders. But, of course, it's about well more beyond that.

I think one thing that just popped into my head that I'd like to share on that front is when John Turner died, the headline in the *Globe and Mail* was "John Turner, Served 79 Days as Prime Minister, Dies." And so many of his friends took offense to that headline. It was as if to suggest the most important thing about his life was the fact that he was the second shortest serving prime minister in Canadian history, behind only?

Someone here's got to know it. Who's the shortest serving? Put it in the chat, go ahead, who knows. John Turner is the second shortest serving. Who's the shortest serving prime minister in Canadian history? Not Kim Campbell. I think she was the third shortest serving. In fact, Turner and Campbell used to have a joke, is that she was the 17<sup>th</sup> prime minister... no, what was it? He was the 17<sup>th</sup> prime minister. She was the 19<sup>th</sup> prime minister. Two prime numbers but not prime minister for very long. That was it.

Stephen Smith, you are correct. It was Charles Tupper. He's the shortest serving prime minister of all time. So, Turner was number two on that list. And it really offended Mr. Turner's friends that somehow the *Globe and Mail* thought that was the most important thing to put in the headline.

Wasn't that the headline was inaccurate but it was, you know, why not "John Turner, Great Champion of Democracy?" Why not, "John Turner, One of the Country's Best Ever Finance Ministers?" Why not, "John Turner, Who Oversaw the Ukrainian Elections, Leading a 500-Strong Canadian Delegation to Ensure that the 2004 Elections in Ukraine Were Kosher?"

There are a lot of things they could have said. There were a lot of achievements that could have gone into that headline that were far more significant. It's kind of strange, eh? Guy was prime minister. That might not make the top 10 achievements of his life. Kind of strange.

So, you know, is history about political leaders? It surely is, but it's also about getting in the arena. John Turner knew when he embarked on that effort to become leader of the Liberal Party and thus prime minister of Canada that he was sort of buying a stock that was really low. The Liberals had been in for a long time, right? They'd been in almost non-stop from '63 to '84, just that nine-month period of Joe Clark.

So it was going to be tough. And, as he discovered, he was not only the wrong man at the wrong time but he was offside from his party on so many things that it just made his time in office very problematic.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Okay, so we have a next question from Jan McQuay. Democracy is not only important, it's under siege worldwide. I don't know much about John Turner's life but political leaders should be champions of democracy and it sounds like he was.

**Steve Paikin:** Jan, you're 100% right and I would say that that was the most enduring and important contribution that he made to Canada, and to the broader world.

Got to remember, when he was Minister of Finance, he was down in the United States frequently, meeting with the then Treasury Secretary, George Schultz, and the President, Richard Nixon. He had great relationships with leaders all over the world.

Had he been able to figure out what kind of... had he been able to somehow renew the Liberal brand and be the kind of prime minister who could have won that '84 election, I think Canada's influence on the world stage would have been significant. Not that it wasn't under Brian Mulroney. Don't get me wrong. We did very well under Brian Mulroney in terms of influence. But we would have under John Turner as well.

There are democracies all over the world where guard rails are not being respected. There are democracies all over the world where just because you can do it doesn't mean you should do it. And we're seeing just ample, far too much, evidence of this kind of behavior by politicians, and John Turner couldn't stand it.



I remember talking about Donald Trump and, well, let's just say that given that this is a family show, as they say, I cannot tell you how he described the American President. I won't use those words, all of which begin with F and MF and so on.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Next question is from Elka Weinstein. Can you tell us more about the elections in Ukraine? I've never heard that about John Turner.

**Steve Paikin:** Sure, love to.

John Turner was asked by Paul Martin, who had a very close, actually both men had a close relationship with the Ukrainian community in Canada. John Turner, you know, one of his great friends was Ukrainian, a guy who came to this country with absolutely nothing, built a billion-dollar corporate empire. A guy named Jim Temerty. They became great friends and, as a result, I think Mr. Turner always had a soft spot in his heart for the Ukrainian community here, which is a not insignificant community in Canada. They have a significant political heft.

And Paul Martin was the same way. Paul Martin, of course, from Windsor, Ontario, where his dad was the MP, and a strong Ukrainian community there which Mr. Martin always felt close to.

As a result, in 2004 when there were presidential elections there – you remember this is a Yakovlev [Yushchenko?] versus Yanukovych. Yanukovych is sort of the Russian stooge and Yakovlev [Yushchenko?] is the orange tie guy, right? They're trying to usher in a kind of a new democratic revolution in the Maidan, in the center square of Kyiv.

And Paul Martin says to John Turner, Canada is going to send a delegation of 500 election observers over to Kyiv to monitor the elections and make sure they are fair. And I would like you – and I guess Mr. Turner is at this point maybe 73 or 74 years old – I'd like you to lead our delegation and make sure that it all happens according to Hoyle.

And the elections took place on Christmas Day, and John Turner, if nothing else, was a staunch Catholic and always spent Christmas with his family. So his first, his initial, reaction was, but you know, Prime Minister, I got to be home with my family over Christmas. But Paul Martin prevailed upon him and the family understood that this was important and therefore allowed him to go with their blessing.

And he went over there for a week and did what needed to be done, did all the overseeing, you know, was basically in charge of the delegation that made sure all of the oblasts as they're called, the ridings, brought the election returns in and were counted properly and so on.

And it was a clean election. They came to the conclusion that it was a good and clean election. And years later, Mr. Turner said that he thought that was probably the best and most important thing he'd ever done in his life. So there you go.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Don Bourgeois has a comment and you might have some thoughts on it. John Turner was instrumental to the development of technology businesses in the Waterloo region.

**Steve Paikin:** Okay, you're telling me something I didn't know. I don't know if you can open him up and have him tell me that information, or maybe put a note in the chat about that.

But, you know, I talked to, you know, several hundred people for this book and that's something that I don't think anybody ever told me that before. So it's good to know.

**Michel Beaulieu:** So I think Don wins the award for stumping you this evening.

**Steve Paikin:** There you go. He won't be the first or the last.

**Michel Beaulieu:** So next question, and I do apologize for getting your last name wrong, but Kae Elgie or Elgie...

**Steve Paikin:** Elgie, soft G.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Elgie, so I apologize, Kae. If you could have interviewed John Turner himself, if he had still been alive, how would that have changed the writing of the book?

**Steve Paikin:** It wouldn't have, because I did interview him many times over the years. And, you know, I didn't start writing the book obviously until he died, but I had interviewed him plenty of times over the years. I'd written columns about him for the TVO website. We'd had lots of, I mean ample, opportunities. We've been together, got together, on numerous occasions.

And, of course, whenever you're together with a man like that, you know, you're not talking about the Leaf game last night. You're talking about his life. You're talking about his political career. You're talking about the highs and lows and what he... So it wouldn't have changed at all. I had a really, I think, pretty good understanding of his life, his achievements, his downfalls, and all of that from having spent so much time with him over the years.

**Michel Beaulieu:** A question from Stephen Smith. Can you speak to Turner's interest in Canadian history and was that something he dabbled in after he left public life?

**Steve Paikin:** He certainly cared a great deal about Canadian history and I'll give you one great example of that.

I mean, he was a Liberal, but his favorite prime minister was Sir John A. Macdonald. He always said Sir John A. was the best. And I guess he understood, Mr. Turner did, that in 1867 America had just been through a horrendous Civil War and they were starting to look north and it wasn't beyond the pale or wasn't beyond possibility that this, you know, newly unified American government might decide to have its eyes on those Canadian provinces of the day.

And if not for Sir John A. Macdonald and his ability to bring people together at Charlottetown and make Confederation happen, who knows what would have happened? So Mr. Turner always thought Sir John A. was the greatest prime minister. Although, because he was a loyal Liberal, he of course had a picture of Sir Wilfred Laurier in his office.

But yes, of course a big and massive interest in history. And whenever we got together, we always talked about the history of the country. Always.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Okay, so this is a last opportunity for anyone. Oh, here we go. So Rhonda has asked, oh, I'm not quite sure. East York Historical Society President Pat Barnett would like to say something regarding Mr. Turner to Steve, please.

**Steve Paikin:** I know Pat.

**Michel Beaulieu:** I think if I can, so I'm looking, I can, if you could actually send directly to me, Rhonda, the... I've got a couple people who've called in. So if you can actually, if you're okay with this, Steve...

**Steve Paikin:** Of course.

**Michel Beaulieu:** ... let me pass directly in the chat which number he's calling from, I can actually connect to his audio.

**Steve Paikin:** Great, yeah, let's do that.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Okay, just one second. So I do, while we're waiting for that, I do have a question. So Bill Davis or John Turner?

**Steve Paikin:** You know, I actually touch on this in the book, in the Turner book, because they're born in the same year, one month apart. They both became first ministers, and two different guys you couldn't possibly meet.

Bill Davis was a teetotaler. Okay, he wasn't a total abs... he wasn't completely abstemious, but, you know, you'd pour him a half a glass of wine over dinner and he might drink a third of it and leave two-thirds of it in the glass.

John Turner, as anybody who knew him, loved alcohol and indulged in it far too much. And, you know, probably because a lot of his life was sad and that helped him with dulling the pain of that, and partly because he had enormous back pain. He had terrible pain in his back, and I think he needed the alcohol to help dull the pain of that as well.

Bill Davis. How do I describe this? Bill Davis never lost ever. He won seven personal elections in his own riding. He won the '71 PC leadership. He won four general elections as Ontario premier. No one's done that in a hundred years.

John Turner, God bless him, lost his first leadership attempt. He won personal election every time he contested his own riding, but had the worst loss of any Liberal leader before Michael Ignatieff in 1984 and lost again in 1988, and was deeply scarred by the losses. It really hurt him.

He hoped that he might be able to do what Lester Pearson did. Some of you may remember in 1958. Mike Pearson's first election as leader of the Liberal Party. Dief won 208 seats and it was a blowout and, you know, but back in those days Pearson was allowed to lose in '58 and lose again in '62 before winning in '63. John Turner only got two kicks at it and he knew that after he lost in '88 he wasn't going to get to go again.

Bill Davis was not what you'd call a party animal. John Turner was definitely a party animal. People admired and respected Bill Davis, yes, they loved him. John Turner, how do I put this? Mr. Davis used to have his pregnant wife Kathy walk three steps behind him whenever they were campaigning lest anybody make the connection that he might have had something to do with her condition. John Turner loved hanging out with women, and I'll just leave it at that. Next question.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Thanks, Steve. And I think I have Pat on the phone so we'll just see if I can get her connected.

**Steve Paikin:** I can answer Sarah's question in the meantime.

**Pat Barnett:** Hello.

**Steve Paikin:** Oh, there we are, sorry. I'll get back to you. I saw that question but go ahead, Pat. I hear you.

**Pat Barnett:** Yeah, I've got a bad line. I've come in by telephone.

Mr. Paikin, I just want to thank you so much for doing that book. Mr. Turner was a great guy. And I remembered – I think maybe you've got it in the book, I'll find out later when I own my own copy – and he was true to his country.

When he was called upon to take on the position of prime minister of Canada, he was on vacation, right? in Jamaica?

**Steve Paikin:** He was.

**Pat Barnett:** Yeah. He was in, he was on vacation with his family and he didn't hesitate to say yes. I met Mr. Turner several times and I remembered once at The Top of the Senator, when it was really, you know...

**Steve Paikin:** A great jazz hangout.

**Pat Barnett:** Right. And so my husband and I, we used to hang out there a lot. And I was celebrating my birthday in the same month that he has his. And he recognized me and left his party, because he was with a lot of cabinet ministers at the time, and came over to wish me Happy Birthday and sang Happy Birthday to me.

**Steve Paikin:** That sounds like him. That's the kind of thing he'd do, Pat.

**Pat Barnett:** Yes, I never forget that.

**Steve Paikin:** When's your birthday, Pat?

**Pat Barnett:** Well, I don't really want to say. It's in June.

**Steve Paikin:** I know, you said it was in June. What date?

**Pat Barnett:** Well, I don't want to say it on the air.

**Steve Paikin:** Well, because we're two days apart. So you know, you and I may have the same birthday here. You never know.

**Pat Barnett:** Well, what day is yours?

**Steve Paikin:** His was the 7<sup>th</sup>. Mine's the 9<sup>th</sup>.

**Pat Barnett:** Oh. But are you in June are you in July?

**Steve Paikin:** I'm in June. We're two days apart. He was June 7, I'm June 9.

**Pat Barnett:** Okay, so mine was a little bit later.

**Steve Paikin:** Okay.

**Pat Barnett:** But he sang me Happy Birthday in French.

**Steve Paikin:** Wow.

**Pat Barnett:** And we just, my husband just thought this was incredible, for a man to recognize me. Because I was sitting in a booth, and he recognized me and came over. So, I'll never forget that, and like I said, I really really truly do thank you for what you've done.

**Steve Paikin:** Well, I thank you for calling in tonight and I'm so glad we got a chance to talk again. You and I've met before. And John Turner, he said – he was not a boastful person but he

said – if there's one thing I can boast about, he said, I know more people in this country than anybody else. And it's true.

He could go onto the main streets of any city, and probably rural areas of this country as well, and people would know him by name. And he would know them by name. He had a, again, one of those astonishing political abilities that great politicians have to remember people, their names, stories about their kids, all this stuff, had a great capacity for remembering all that.

**Pat Barnett:** And the thing about him too, Steve, he was handsome.

**Steve Paikin:** No, he wasn't, Pat, he was gorgeous. He was absolutely gorgeous. He had those baby blue eyes that went right through you. You'd look at the guy, and if you see the cover of my book – geez, I don't have a copy of it here – but the cover of the book is a picture taken by his wife. And I guess he's probably, I don't know, high 50s, early 60s, in the picture, and he's just like so ruggedly good looking.

It's, I mean, in part it was a curse, because the expectations you have to live up to when you're that good looking are tough. You know, you never, somebody once observed to me, he never could live up to those expectations and being that beautiful made it harder for him.

**Pat Barnett:** Yes, how is his wife do you know?

**Steve Paikin:** I do know. We stay in touch. She's okay. You know, she's in her early 80s right now, so she's dealing with the things that people in their early 80s have to deal with.

I'll tell you what. She's got a lot of strength. To lose a husband and a son in such short order and, you know, again, I talk about this in the book, she says, you know, I suppose I could have just crawled under my bed and, you know, withered away. But, you know, that's not me.

She was and is an incredibly strong woman and she has found projects in life to keep her active and interested and I take my hat off to her. She's been through a lot and she's still going.

**Pat Barnett:** Good for her, and happy AGM to the Ontario Historical Society.

**Steve Paikin:** Thanks for calling in, Pat. Great to talk to you.

**Pat Barnett:** You're welcome.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Thanks, Pat. So, we've another question from Sarah Bohan. How did you sort through your volumes of papers and research and not get overwhelmed and keep your focus and write the story?

**Steve Paikin:** Yeah, great question. And the answer is, Sarah, I was in touch with Library and Archives Canada for, and I think in a way, you know, I thought this was going to be a problem. It

may have turned out to be a blessing. Because of COVID, there was no access to the archives for the longest time that I was working on this book. And then they opened it up a little bit, but very restricted, like a finite number of people allowed in at any one time.

And as a result, of course they're in Ottawa and I live in Toronto. So, you know, it's not the kind of thing where you can just drop in on a hunch. You got to have an appointment and make sure that you can get in, if you're going to make that trip.

So, it took me a long time to actually physically get to Ottawa because of all the restrictions on attendance. What that allowed me to do, however, was go through all of what's online, and they have everything online. They have thou... I mean, there are thousands of documents in the Turner collection. And I had a chance to go through the categories online to know, okay, I don't need this. I don't need this. I don't need, oh, that looks interesting, I want to see that. Don't need that.

So, by the time I got to Ottawa, I had not thousands of documents that I needed to wade through, but only, let's say, hundreds. Had maybe, you know, 50 boxes of stuff that I needed to look through instead of 5,000. So that was a big help. And ultimately, when you know what you're looking for, and you're open to the odd surprise, which I did find, the odd really juicy surprise, it helps.

**Michel Beaulieu:** Okay, well, we're getting near the end. Does anyone want to have the pleasure of asking Steve the last question for this evening?

**Steve Paikin:** Thanks, Sarah. That's good, no, it seems, Michel, that your group either wants to go watch the Leaf game or the World Series. So I'm for that.

**Michel Beaulieu:** I was going to say they're about 23 minutes late for *The Agenda*.

So with that, on behalf of the Ontario Historical Society and all of us present though, thank you very much, Steve, for what has been a – I'm sure I speak for everyone – a fascinating discussion.

Thank you for being so open with the question-and-answer portion of this. You know, a first for our AGMs, as we've been doing virtually, and also some live questions. So this has been a fantastic evening.

**Steve Paikin:** Thank you for the invitation to be with you. I see Sarah sent a note saying, any future projects, with a question mark? And, Sarah, of course not. This was my last book.

**Michel Beaulieu:** On that note, thank you once again, Steve. And I hope everyone in attendance has a safe and happy rest of your evening, and we will hope to talk to you all soon. Have a great evening.

**Steve Paikin:** So long everyone. Thank you.