

# SFU RETIREES ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER – SEPTEMBER 2007

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

**A**s the new President of this Association I have been asked to write my first message for our Newsletter. You all know the usual format: thanking the former Executive, recounting our successes, and giving a preview of upcoming programs and adventures. But on this one occasion, I want to depart from that format.

Many of you know that Sylvia, my wife (of forty-plus years), has been suffering severe back pains since the spring of 2003. Finally, after having exhausted every other treatment, her surgeon decided last fall to recommend surgery to us. At that point we entered the most painful, by far, period of her distress. Beginning in February of this year, her surgery at VGH was scheduled and then cancelled four times! Each time, the surgery was re-scheduled for one month later, and the psychological toll was ratcheted up from terrible to unbearable. And then, when she finally did have her surgery, and received first-rate care and pain-management while in the hospital, we were more or less abandoned when she was discharged. It was only when I started to complain that her doctors had treated the injury but were not treating the patient, that she was called back to VGH for tests and, finally, was given some realistic help in managing the considerable post-operative pain.

I tell you this story not because I am seeking your sympathy – thankfully Sylvia is slowly starting to improve. I tell you this personal story to underline the fact that the BC Medical System is badly broken and as seniors/retirees – who likely will require more medical services than other segments of society – we need to get involved in fixing it. As an organized group of articulate stakeholders, we need to make loud and clear to the Provincial government our needs, demands, and entitlements. Do we really need to spend billions, on e.g. the Olympics and the like, while our hospitals are chronically understaffed and beds are empty, and while it is nearly impossible to find family physicians who are accepting new patients? Please let's think about this and discuss how we might take collective action. We owe that to ourselves, to our families, and to everyone else.

— Norman Swartz

## NEW MEMBERS

A hearty Welcome to the following members who have joined us this 2007-2008 year.

- June Beynon
- Georgina Black
- Stephen Black
- Colin Jones
- Hilary Jones
- Ray Koopman
- Ron Marteniuk
- Dale Matson
- Gary Mauser
- John Simms
- K. Lawrence Weldon

## EVENTS

**Wednesday September 26, 2007**, 12:00 noon in 126 Halpern Centre. Seminar Series #1 – Steven Davis, *Volunteering in the Developing World: Academics for Higher Education and Development*

**Sunday, September 30, 2007**, Daylong coach tour to view the world-renowned sandcastles in Harrison Hot Springs followed by a tour of Westminster Abbey in Mission. (See enclosed flyer and website for details and reservations.)

**Tuesday October 30, 2007**, 12:00 noon in 126 Halpern Centre. Seminar Series #2 – Norman Swartz, *Family Photos on Your Own Website*

**Saturday, November 3, 2007**. BC Lions vs. Calgary. Tickets \$45. Only a few tickets remain. Contact Marvin Wideen ASAP for tickets: 604-461-0376 or wideen@sfu.ca

**Wednesday, November 7, 2007**. Luncheon and concert at Helm Lodge at Sasamat Lake. "Violin Melodies and Memories" by Zelko Krakan". (See enclosed flyer and website for details and reservations.)

**Wednesday, November 7, 2007**. Annual Fall Dinner at Burnaby Mountain Golf Club. Speakers, Roy and Maureen Carlson "Archaeological Places in BC". (See enclosed flyer for details and return coupon for reservations.)

**Tuesday November 20, 2007**, 12:00 noon in 126 Halpern Centre. Seminar Series #3 – TBA

**Tuesday, November 27, 2007**. Luncheon and concert at Helm Lodge at Sasamat Lake. Program TBA (*Romantic guitar or Andean Music*). (See enclosed flyer and website for details and reservations.)

## THE BENEFITS COMMITTEE

Tom Poiker

It has been said time and again that the SFURA is a social club. The demand to be more relevant has been raised as frequently. So, at our last board meeting, Norman Swartz announced that we would have a "Benefits Committee" and asked me to chair it. I immediately said yes which surprised him but - think about it - what would have happened if I had said no?

So, here I am. I don't have much knowledge in this area but I am determined to give it a try. But I need help. I need ideas, I need bodies to constitute the committee, etc.

SFU is going through a major change with respect to the situation of us seniors and we might be able to achieve a better position within the university than we have now. At present, we are "represented" by somebody in the relevant committees, why not have our own seat there? We have very little presence on Campus, why not do something about it?

The main change in our status is that the mandatory retirement age of 65 is abandoned and people now have options. Without going into detail (for that, the SFU website is a better place), you can stay in your position beyond 65; you can have your workload and/or the scope of

your appointment reduced (change the allocation among teaching, research and service); and there is a study-leave option. Of course, this is all too late for us retirees because none of the retirement decisions are irrevocable.

This is all very new and the university will have to study the effect of these changes over the years. We should be involved in these reviews, I think. Let us work on this together.  
Tom Poiker, poiker@sfu.ca, (604) 936-3767

## **PSST: WHAT'S YOUR NUMBER?**

Simon Fraser University has changed all its telephone numbers.

1. Instead of "604", you now use "778".
2. Instead of "291" or "268", you now use "782".

The last four digits of every number stay the same. E.g. "604-291-5555" is now "778-782-5555".

## **PASSAGES**

**PAM PARFORD**, member since 1997, d. June 2007.

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For those of you wishing to commemorate deceased members of the Association, SFU colleagues and friends, and your own family members, there is now a section of our website for just such a purpose. The first contributor is Sally Rogow who has written in memory of her husband, Bob Rogow. See <http://www.sfu.ca/retirees> and then click on "In Memoriam".

## **A TRIP TO SCOTLAND**

Janet Blanchet

If you travel to Scotland in midsummer, especially to the far north, the days are long; the sun is on the mountains until after 10:00 p.m. There is likely to be a cold wind sweeping in from the North Atlantic or from the North Sea, and the sun shines erratically. However, the afternoons and evenings tended to be sunny this past June. The torrential rains that have caused such devastation in England did not touch Scotland, though there were showers from time to time.

Apparently the best time to see the heather in bloom on the mountains is in August; we saw some, but we were early. The Scottish mountains are very beautiful, but they could not be more unlike the jagged Rockies, they are rounded off by glaciation, and largely populated by sheep. Volcanic activity has also shaped the landscape; Edinburgh Castle is built on top of an extinct volcano. The tour that my friend and I joined took us from Glasgow north, along the shore of Loch Lomond and over the high country to Oban. Using ferries, we visited Mull and the Isle of Skye, which we toured before visiting Ben Nevis and travelling along Loch Ness to Inverness. From there we travelled over Highland country to the west coast and thence north to the very northern coastline of Scotland. This country appears both remote and dramatic; it is relatively treeless, and it is traversed by single lane roads with passing places here and there. Stone walls (dry stain dykes) crisscross the hillsides. The wind from the North Atlantic or from the North Sea sweeps across it, and tales of trials of the crofters and of the Highland Clearances become extremely vivid. The northwestern tip of Scotland is well named Cape Wrath. The cliffs along the north coast are high and forbidding, and there is little shelter for vessels along the coastline. At Mey we viewed a castle that had belonged to Queen Elisabeth the Queen Mother. Apparently she bought this castle after her husband died, as a retreat from London, a city that could not seem more distant from this remote site.

We next took a ferry to the Orkney Islands, where we were shown a prehistoric village at Skara Brae, and a remarkable ring of standing stones nearby. We also viewed Scapa Flow, a harbour that was used during World War II. Thence we went to Kirkwall, the principal town on the Orkney Islands, where we had time to walk around and explore. From this point we took an overnight ferry to the Shetland Islands, still further north. Both the Orkney Islands and the Shetland Islands have a "Mainland," but in fact they are archipelagos, and there are about one hundred islands and islets in the Shetland archipelago.

We spent the best part of two days on the Shetland Mainland. Near a remote lighthouse we viewed colonies of seabirds, including puffins, we saw shellfish farms in the inlets (voes) for mussels and oysters, a North Sea oil installation, prehistoric structures and excavations, and a very fine maritime museum. It is very apparent that the sea has governed these islands from time immemorial, and I had never previously understood how strong the Scandinavian influence was in northern Scotland and the isles.

Another very comfortable overnight ferry took us from Lerwick, Shetland Mainland, to Aberdeen on the east coast of Scotland. From that point we drove east through gorgeous country, much less forbidding and windswept than the far north. There were green fields and woodlands, more cattle (including Highland cattle), and fewer sheep. We visited Braemar, site of highland games, and Queen Victoria's Balmoral Castle, before returning to the coast and driving south Abroath, to Glamis Castle and thence to St. Andrews, home of golf and of Scotland's oldest university. This university was founded in 1410. On that particular day a cold wind swept in from the North Sea, and I imagined winter in St. Andrews. We continued our journey to Edinburgh. The following day was spent exploring the city of Edinburgh and Edinburgh Castle, which commands a very fine view of the surrounding country, and visiting Rosslyn Chapel, a remarkable fifteenth century structure housing many fine stone carvings on the columns, including one of an angel with bagpipes. The tour wound up with an excellent dinner and an exhibition of Scottish pipers and Scottish dancing. Following the tour we spent three days with friends at Peebles, south of Edinburgh. They showed us some of the beautiful borders country along the Tweed valley, and a number of fascinating historic sites, including the oldest continuously inhabited house in Scotland, Traquair.

All in all, this was a fascinating journey. It was rigorous at times, as we were constantly on the move, but every day we had some free time. We surely saw the country, and we especially enjoyed the western islands, as well as the Orkneys and the Shetlands. We admired many beautiful old buildings. We had with us a good map of Scotland, which was indispensable. We enjoyed the food, but interestingly, despite the numerous shellfish farms in the inlets, we never saw oysters on a menu. We always had a comfortable place to stay. The dramatic and often brutal history of Scotland came alive, as we had a very good guide. We came to understand something of the Scottish view of the English, and we enjoyed the Scottish people, who were delightful.

Upon our return to Vancouver we fell into bed early, having been awake for about twenty-four hours. My friend woke up once or twice during that first night at home, and she thought that she faintly heard the bagpipes playing "Scotland the Brave," but decided that her imagination was playing tricks on her. However, when she unpacked her suitcase, she found that small fridge magnet in the shape of bagpipes had in fact been playing, probably all across the Atlantic. We had been piped home!

### **The Association's Mailing List**

From time to time, the Association will work with commercial firms, off-campus groups, etc. to distribute materials to our members. However, it is illegal for us to provide our mailing list or mailing labels to persons or groups outside of the Association. When you receive materials ostensibly from SFURA but not originating with us, please understand that the mailing labels were placed, in our own office, on stamped, sealed, envelopes provided to us. Your privacy has been carefully protected.

### **Let's Hear from You**

We would like to expand this Newsletter. Please send us stories (e.g. of your travels, as Janet Blanchet has done above), your opinions, news, recipes, jokes, etc. And take especial note of our "In Memoriam" page on our website (see above under "Passages".)