

SFU Retirees Association

Newsletter January 2008

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Having completed 2/3 of my term as President of the SFURA, I have a first-hand understanding why so many volunteer organizations of previous generations have ‘given way’ to those having remunerated directors and office personnel. For the simple fact is that the Executive of this organization, now boasting a membership of 378 members, does a great deal of work. Please understand that I am not complaining, just confessing my amazement and especially my appreciation for the unselfish work done on your behalf by the members of the Executive. Mind you, there *is* compensation. Unlike so many other committees, the Executive members actually enjoy (very much so!) our meetings. We like one another’s company. We like receiving your emails posing fascinating and timely questions. We like planning and attending our many, and certainly diverse, social functions. And we like meeting you, especially those of you with whom we worked alongside for decades at SFU without ever having actually met face-to-face prior to retirement (but that’s another story, something we will be addressing over the next few years – there is something seriously lacking in the facilities for social interaction at SFU).

I am enormously grateful to Evelyn Palmer, Marg Jones, Elizabeth Michno, Dorothy Wilson, Marv Wideon, Tom Poiker, and Bob Horsfall. And I urge all members of the Association to seriously consider standing at our next Annual General Meeting for election to the Executive. Sure, there will be some work attached, but you will also have fun and a great sense of accomplishment. Join the Executive and make your own mark.

This new year marks two important anniversaries.

It is ten years since our founding. From small beginnings we have grown to be one of the most dynamic University Retirement Associations in Canada. We will shortly announce how we will celebrate this milestone.

It is also the time for celebrating (for a year-long period) along with many other nations, the birth of the inimitable Glenn Gould. For me, personally, I have two pre-eminent Canadian heroes: Glenn Gould and Terry Fox. These two men, each in their own way, epitomize what is best in human beings. Gould, in his extraordinary talent; and Fox, in his supreme altruism. In other countries, Brazil and Japan for example, the federal governments designate certain outstanding citizens as “National Monuments” or “National Treasures” or with some other honorific title. Gould and Fox and their respective legacies are each, in my opinion, National Treasures. For our part, this Association will honor Glenn Gould on this, the 75th anniversary of his birth. (Announcements to follow.)

— Norman Swartz

NEW MEMBERS

Gloria Asmundson - Media and Public Relations
Arlene McLaren - Sociology and Anthropology
Gayle Patten - Health and Counselling
Thomas O'Shea - Education
Phyllis Wrenn - French

EVENTS

SFURA SEMINAR SERIES

Our seminar series has been very successful. We have presented a wide variety of topics in the 2 1/2 years of the series, and attendance has been gratifying. The topics have included astronomy, photography, travel, history, education, pestology, SFU history, mathematics, biography, politics, financial planning.

We always welcome your suggestions of possible topics and speakers. Send suggestions to Evelyn Palmer, evelyn@sfu.ca or 604 299-3731.

We will have four speakers during the Spring Semester of 2008. All talks will be held on Tuesdays at noon in 126 Halpern Centre:

- January 29: Bruce Alexander, "Globalization of Addiction: A Study in Poverty of the Spirit"
- February 19: Leigh Palmer, "Al Gore says 'The science is settled.' Is he being truthful?"
- March 11: David Huntley, "Tides of Ice; The Story of Ice Ages and Sea Levels"
- April 8: Larry Albright, "Innovative Solutions for Sustainable Finfish Aquaculture"

TENTH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

We plan to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the SFURA with an evening event which will combine a reception honoring the founding members of SFURA and all past members of the Executive Board along with a piano recital commemorating the 75th anniversary of the birth of the Pianist Glenn Gould. (See the President's Message)

The Date and the Location: Details will be sent to members by mail and email.

SFURA Board members serving on the committee planning this event are Evelyn Palmer (chair), Marv Wideen and Elizabeth Michno. We invite members who wish to join the committee. Please contact Evelyn if you wish to help (evelyn@sfu.ca).

VOLUNTEER GRANDPARENTS

Here is a message that we found in Bill Siksay's (MLA for Burnaby-Douglas) constituency newsletter. We thought there might be some interest among SFU retirees.

"Volunteer Grandparents are looking for volunteers over 50 years old for assignment in elementary schools throughout the Lower Mainland. Volunteer Grandparents has been bridging and enriching generations since 1973. The Society strengthens intergenerational relationships and builds healthy communities by fostering communication, understanding and cooperation between the generations. The organization engages seniors who are 50+ with children between the ages of 3-14 years in two volunteer programs: the Family Match Program and the School Grandparent Program. The Family Match Program matches seniors with children and their families who do not have grandparents close by. The School Grandparent Program places seniors in community schools throughout the Lower Mainland to provide mentoring in a classroom setting. Volunteer Grandparents (Volunteers for Intergenerational Programs), 14-250 Willingdon Ave, Burnaby BC V5C 5E9, Phone: (604) 736-8271, Fax: (604) 736-8279, E-mail: info@volunteer-grandparents.ca. Website: www.volunteergrandparents.ca. For more information please feel free to contact us. Help build positive relationships between generations. You can make a difference!"

TWO GENERATIONS

By Tom Poiker

I was in Europe this fall to celebrate my fiftieth high school reunion in Kufstein, Austria. At the same time, our school had its hundredth anniversary. Interesting coincidence. Makes you think, doesn't it? What sort of life have we had and how does it differ from students fifty years earlier? Since my father was 49-1/2 years when I was born, I looked at the two of us.

As I went to compare my father's life with my own, I was amazed how different they were. My own life started with home and school for the first 18 years. Then came nine years of university. We weren't rich but I found some good part-time jobs and there were always enough fellowships to allow me to pursue my studies, all the way to the doctorate.

After that, I got my first job at the Heidelberg South-Asia Institute and a year later, I immigrated to Canada for a job at SFU. So, at age 28, I had a permanent job. You might infer that I had a boring life, all linear, a building block on top of the previous. But a steady career is not a succession of boring events, it is as interesting as one makes it.

The life of my father was quite different. At age 16, he had to quit school (he was a half-orphan) and he began an apprenticeship for a banking career. Many people of his generation did this; many fewer than today went to college and university. And there were good careers to be had in banking. After the apprenticeship, he went to Great Britain to work for a German bank.

But just about when it looked like he could use the experience of foreign service and get into middle management back in Germany, the First World War broke out. The British authorities put him on a ship for Germany and when he landed in Hamburg, he was immediately conscripted and put on a train to France.

I am not sure whether he considered this lucky or not but in the first battle of his life, he was captured by the French and he spent the entirety of the war in a prison camp. Imagine, from 25 to 30 years of age a prisoner of war. At the comparable age I finished my studies, got married and immigrated to Canada - the three most important events in my life. In those years in his life, he sat there and could do nothing.

Coming home, his foreign experience was all but forgotten and he had to start all over again. He went back to banking but after some years, he tried to use his communicative talents and became a representative for large integrated systems (don't ask me for details, he never thought we would understand enough to be specific). And the free-roaming life of a representative seemed to fit his character better and he saw real success in his career.

But just as he was about to turn this success into a career jump, the Second World War broke out. Although a veteran, he did not join the military but went to France and worked behind the front. And when he got home at the end of the war, there was no need for large integrated systems or for old bankers and he never got back into a proper career. At age 60, he started as a bricklayer and later he turned to selling sewing machines to the occupation forces when bricklaying became too hard for him.

Yes, our generation had it easy. There was little that we could do wrong. Surely life is a combination of hard work together with lots of luck and planning. But in the end, those can get you somewhere only if our politicians can keep us out of war. I wonder whether the graduates of today will be able to tell a similar story in fifty years hence.

PASSAGES

Walter Gerber - Facilities Management. At SFU since 1965. Survived by his wife of 57 years, Ida. Member of SFURA since 1998.
Marvin Stark, QC—Business Administration. At SFU since 1967. Survived by his wife of 54 years, Lois. Member of SFURA since 1997.

DID YOU KNOW?

Any premium that you pay to a private carrier (like Blue Cross) is tax deductible.
The Benefits Committee

UPCOMING SOCIAL EVENTS SPRING 2008

Lunch and Musical Performances at the Sasamat Outdoor Centre

Monday, February 4, 2008: "Feisty Folk" - Melissa Bandura. Please confirm by Jan 20.

Tuesday, February 5, 2008: "Country, Gospel & Bluegrass" - Ted D. Christopher. Pls conf. by Jan 29, 08.

Wed., February 13, 2008: "Wind in the Trees" - Mark Dowding. Pls conf. by Jan 29, 2008.

Monday, February 18, 2008: "Romantic Guitar" - Toby Beaulieu. Pls conf by jan 30, 2008.

Exhibit and Talk at the SFU Museum of Archeology and Ethnology

On Feb 21 at 5 pm, the SFU Museum of Anthropology and Ethnology will open a new exhibit of African art and artifacts to celebrate Black History Month. The SFU community, including retirees, are welcome. This wonderful collection of diverse pieces was donated by a local Vancouver collector and supporter of the SFU Museum in December of 2007.

On May 14 at 10 am, retirees are invited to attend a talk in the museum given by Dr. Barbara Winter, the curator, and some of her students who have been involved in the research and exhibit production. This will be followed by a no host lunch at the Diamond Alumni Club with Dr. Winter, to which the donor has also been invited.

To Be Announced:

1. Tour of Electronic Arts facility in Burnaby - they are game developers who are big supporters of co-op students from SFU.
2. Granville Island Brewery tour - A half-hour tour of this high-tech facility where you'll be handed a commemorative glass to take home after you've sampled the four beers in it. The tours are priced at \$9.75 for adults and take place at noon, 2pm, and 4pm, Mon-sun.
3. Reifel Bird Sanctuary tour combined with a bike ride (or arrive by car). The walking tour of the sanctuary is about 3 kms and wheelchair accessible.
4. Vancouver Port Authority tour.
5. A Tuesday afternoon of 5-pin bowling at Lucky Strike Lanes in New Westminster and/or dinner at the Thirsty Duck Pub next door.
6. A presentation on identity fraud and one on self defense tips. Any suggestions re presenters would be appreciated.
7. Picnic at Bedwell Bay.

And last, but not least, a heads up for The Met opera buffs out there who are not inclined to travel to New York. Check out the HD Cineplex theatres eight live opera broadcasts and eight rebroadcasts on the big screen at

http://www.metoperafamily.org/metopera/broadcast/hd_events.aspx

Input and suggestions related to these or other events are welcome by Elizabeth Michno: michno@sfu.ca, 604-461-1945.

INTEREST GROUPS

Several interest groups are in the process of formation: those with volunteer leaders are listed below. Please contact the leaders for details. I'll be contacting others who expressed an interest in leading groups on the questionnaire to see whether we can get more groups going. If you are interested in leading a group (or if you've convinced somebody else to do so), please contact me. Volunteers will be more than welcome!

Bob Horsfall <horsfall@sfu.ca>

Genealogy Interest Group: Norman Swartz swartz@sfu.ca

Please contact Norman for 'when and where' details: he's organizing this group.

Investment Strategies (sharing ideas) Marv Wideen <wideen@sfu.ca>

If you are interested in an investment strategy interest group, please contact Marv—time and place to be arranged to fit demand.

Microcomputers: PC and Macintosh

Leigh Palmer is organizing microcomputer interest group(s)—please contact him for details <palmer@sfu.ca>

Writing Interest Group: Tom Poiker <poiker@sfu.ca>

The purpose of the group is to share our writings and to invite experts to tell us how we can improve it.

The first meeting is at: 10am on Monday, February 25th, in AQ 3046, the Retirees Centre.

Music Group:

We know there are many of you who are amateur musicians who might like to get together and play.

Please email Evelyn Palmer, evelyn@sfu.ca.