

SFU Retirees Association

Newsletter January 2009

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Since the publication of the September Newsletter the association has continued to sponsor various activities and has progressed on a number of fronts. Two colleagues have joined the executive, namely Hilary Jones as Secretary, and Tom O'Shea as Social Convenor. Welcome to both, and a big thank you to their predecessors, Dorothy Wilson and Elizabeth Michno, respectively, for all their efforts on behalf of the association. The attention and effort given to association concerns by various members and by the executive committee continue to astonish me. I want to thank my own immediate predecessors, Norman Swartz and Marvin Wideen for their knowledge, advice and encouragement; long-standing members of the executive have also been helpful and patient in helping me up the learning curve.

While individual members report elsewhere on their particular spheres of activity, let me highlight a couple of items. The now well-known seminar series, organized by Evelyn Palmer and held in the Halpern Centre, has grown to serve not only the membership but also the university at large. Attendance is commonly between 25 and 40, with different presentations drawing different audiences and participants. Thus a wide circle of interested individuals from both the association and the university at large are drawn by these offerings. Academic discussion is enhanced and some of the expertise and interests of retirees continue to be made available. Indeed, in response to a request, we are searching for ways to make the talks and discussion available in the new Surrey campus. The Benefits committee, led by Tom Poiker, has continued its discussion concerning issues that may affect members, such as health care, and it has also realized the connection of such discussion to the status of the association's relationship to the university. Marv Wideen's finance interest group provides an opportunity to raise specific issues as it explores the (sometimes arcane?) workings of the financial world. Norman Swartz has re-conceptualized and redesigned the web site, making it even more efficient and attractive, while Tom Poiker has put in many hours to redesign and produce the Newsletter. The fall dinner was held as usual at the Eagle Creek restaurant, located at the Burnaby Mountain Golf Course, with about 80 persons in attendance. The new logo, designed by member Chris Hildred (see below) was presented, and thanks were also given to those members who had submitted designs, and to Bob



Horsfall who organized the competition.

Lee Gavel (photo at right), architect to the university, gave an illustrated overview of the physical development of the campus, emphasizing the current problems of expressing, in built environment terms, the ethos of the university as a single institution spread over three campuses. Chris and Lee were presented with the association's new award – the Mug of Honour. (!) I want also to thank those who worked together to arrange the evening, especially Marg Jones.



Tom Poiker has reminded me that the seniors' Program at Harbour Centre, directed by Alan Aberbach, offers a comprehensive list of courses and special interest programs. Its development over more than thirty years indicates the university's responsiveness to interests and issues of retirees and seniors, as does the academic programming associated with the Gerontology Program and Research Centre. Details of both are readily and extensively available through SFU's website.

Lastly, two more general points: the 2008 issue of *University Affairs* contains a feature article about the development of retirement communities affiliated with universities. UBC and the University of Guelph are cited, as is some American experience. This may signal a growing interest in the broader issue of housing, and also of community development as these may come to affect the lives of academic retirees. A broader concern is indeed being expressed, as in the work of CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. Under the leadership of Moses Znaimer (a well-known media figure – CBC and City-tv) CARP has been reorganized and would now appear to be one of the stronger voices advocating for seniors in Canada. Znaimer was recently in Vancouver to drum up interest. With SFURA in mind, I attended one of his meetings and saw that this is an organization that might be worth watching. Their newly designed magazine (*Zoomer* – a bit on the glitzy side for some, but why not?) is available on newsstands, although it comes with membership.

On a more somber note, members of the Retirees' Association will be saddened to learn of the passing of Marg Jones's husband, Jack, during the holiday season. I take this opportunity to express my sympathy to Marg, who does so much for us all through her work in the Association.

With best wishes and seasonal greetings to all,

Len Evenden

FINANCIAL PLANNING GROUP

by Marvin Wideen

The F P Interest Group has met on three occasions this past year. Its aim is to provide retirees with a forum to explore issues related to financial planning. A group composed of Tom O'Shea, Phillip Mah, Iris Woodham, Shue Tuck Wong and I met on November 27 to review where we were in the financial planning seminars, and to set out some future plans. We agreed on the following points:

- * The seminar series on financial planning should continue;
- * We should meet regularly on six occasions each year and more often if required;
- * The second Tuesday of each month at 12:00 noon should be established as a regular meeting time;
- * Our first meeting was held on January 13 at 12:00 PM after the SFURA seminar and lunch. It took the form of a study group examining the SUN LIFE funds that many of us hold in our portfolio. In this working seminar we will share ideas about which funds in the SUN LIFE group are most appropriate to hold in today's financial situation. We will make use of the internet services of SUN LIFE to assist the discussion.
- * The March meeting would focus upon Estate Planning, addressing topics such as (a) protecting our estate from the Canada Revenue Agency, and (b) passing our estate tax free to beneficiaries. This seminar would draw upon an outside presenter.

Since that meeting, George Stuart has proposed a meeting to explore the premise that this is not a buy and hold market. The strategy for 2009 should be to buy and sell which requires a whole new procedure of which we should be aware. That meeting has tentatively been planned for April 14. Let any member of the group know if you have additional ideas for financial planning sessions.

DID YOU KNOW?

The SFU Retirees Association is a registered non-profit society under the BC Society Act. It is not constituted within Simon Fraser University itself. It has that in common with the SFU Faculty Association, APSA (the SFU Staff Association) and the SFU Alumni Association.

Your Benefits Committee

SFURA SEMINAR SERIES

by Evelyn Palmer

Five talks will be presented in the Seminar Series for Spring 2009. They will also be announced in SFU News and on the SFU Calendar Events page: <https://events.sfu.ca/>

The SFURA web page has a complete list of seminars and social events: <http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/>

All talks are presented on Tuesdays at noon in 126 Halpern Centre. Members who wish to join the speaker and members of the Executive Board at a no-host lunch in the Pub after the talk are asked to notify Evelyn (evelyn@sfu.ca) by the Sunday before the seminar.

Tuesday January 20, 2009

Alan Rudrum:

"British Intelligence and the strange case of the Master of Balliol"

Abstract: In November 2007 I caused a furor by writing to an e-mail discussion group on John Milton that Christopher Hill as a historian was wont to massage the evidence to fit his political biases, and that I understood that he was almost certainly a Soviet agent. Hate mail poured in, but one Canadian scholar wrote in support of my view of Hill's scholarship and another pointed to a website on which the question of Hill's Soviet links was discussed. After reading the literature that site pointed to, and a good deal more, I have come to the conclusion that the Master of Balliol College Oxford had indeed been a Soviet agent. In my talk I shall summarize the evidence.

Tuesday February 3, 2009

Hannah Gay:

"A Historian's Look at Theoretical Ecology, 1950 - 2000"

Abstract: "The fox knows many things, but the hedgehog knows one big thing", Archilocus, c. 680-645 BC."

Ecological science became increasingly fashionable in the latter half of the twentieth century as environmental concerns entered the political arena. Some of this history will be discussed, as will some developments in theoretical ecology. Many of those who rode the theoretical wave made major university careers, won large government research grants, and acted as science advisors (often replacing physicists) to governments and major institutions worldwide. How and why did this happen? I have just begun to work on this topic and so my talk will be introductory.

Tuesday, March 3, 2009

Charles Crawford

"Teaching Darwin to Chinese Marxists, Drinking Moutai with Party Officials, and Visiting Confucius's home: My adventures in PR China: November 2007"

Abstract: In the summer of 2007 I received an invitation to teach the first graduate course on evolutionary psychology given in PR China and to give lectures at the Schools of Marxism and Business Administration of Tianjin Normal University as well as to the Tianjin Philosophical Society. Western Marxists tend to be very environmentalist in their approach to the study of human behaviour. Since evolutionary psychology, as I see it, focuses on the functioning of biologically innate psychological mechanisms, I was worried about how my course and lectures would be received. Moreover, the invitation came because of my friendship with a senior party official. Hence, I also worried that my lectures might embarrass her. I spent some time partying with party officials and was taken on a tour of Confucius home and other historical sites. It turned out to be one of the most interesting three weeks of my life and changed my view about many things in PR China.

Tuesday, March 31, 2009

David Huntley

"The British Columbia Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform, the B.C. Single Transferable Vote (BC-STV), and the Referendum on May 12, 2009"

Abstract: In 2004 the B.C. Citizens' Assembly on Electoral Reform recommended that British Columbia use the B.C. Single Transferable Vote (BC-STV) electoral system for electing MLAs in the future. In the May 2005 referendum 57.7% of voters said yes, just short of the 60% that the legislature had set for its use in 2009. Because of the high acceptance the legislature has mandated a second referendum in May 2009.

I will discuss:

- Why the Citizens' Assembly was formed.
- How it was formed and who its members were.
- What the Citizens' Assembly did for almost all of 2004
- The BC-STV electoral system that the Citizens' Assembly recommended.
- Why the Citizens' Assembly recommended BC-STV.

Tuesday, April 21, 2009

Tom Poiker

"A Journey into the World of Native Art"

Abstract: This is the story of my discovery of Native Art, from simple carvings to my own designs on the computer. There are three stages in this development: the first is the stage of craftsmanship, i.e., learning the trade. The second is that of my own creativity where I designed new images and carved them. The third stage is that of my social-cultural reflection, seeing the art as an evolving system.

A NEW COLUMN?

Evelyn Palmer talked to me and suggested that we should have a column in the Newsletter by people whose life has changed significantly in recent times. She suggested that after she had heard what has happened to me over the last six months. So we decided that the first of this column should be written by me.

AN ACADEMIC TURNAROUND

by Tom Poiker

When I went on a visit to Mexico City in April, I thought that this would be my last academic activity in my life. I was to see the Centro de Investigacion en Geografia y Geomatica "Ing. Jorge L. Tamayo" A.C., the largest institution of its kind in Latin America. It had been developed by Carmen, a former PhD student of mine and I was supposed to talk to everybody and give my advice. So I did that, talked to all researchers, several graduate students and gave two talks. There was a question about creating better communication with the field workers and I suggested something that helped me with my online program. So I had to give another talk.

The response was very enthusiastic and Carmen said "we need to learn more about this. When can you come and give us a workshop?" So I came back in September. And we talked about my online program. "Why not us?" "Well, you can have my material, nobody else wants it." So, now we are working on an implementation of my online program and on December 9, I am there again to celebrate their tenth anniversary and get the first tutors lined up.

Soon after my return to Vancouver, I took part in a meeting to organize the next large conference in our subject. I took advantage of a quiet time before the start of the meeting and lamented the situation in our field. Over 95% of all maps are produced by people who have never taken a course in mapping and all our professional can do is complain about. What we should do is teach them. We have to find somebody who will write a book on "Mapping for Dummies". All looked at me and said "well, Tom, why don't YOU write it?" and one of them, a former student of mine, said "I will help you." By Now, we call the book "Zen and the Art of Map Design."

So, I'm now busier then ever before. But I like it. It is professional alright but without all the meetings and marking etc.

HOW I SPENT MY SUMMER HOLIDAYS

by Len Evenden

Polly and I thought we'd try to save a bit of cash this year, even before we knew there would be a financial meltdown in the world's corner offices. Just have a quiet summer at home and cut down expenses. Then: a notice came from the University of Edinburgh to say that the Geography Department, where I had done my doctoral work, was celebrating its centenary in September, and that former students, associates, lecturers, demonstrators – you name it – were all invited. While we were mulling this over, Polly's sister-in-law in England wrote to say she was planning a small birthday party for her husband, that is Polly's brother, and could we possibly make it? And a colleague friend in Oxford, whom we had not seen in some forty years, wrote, also coincidentally, to suggest we stay with them if ever we were in the vicinity. And a distant cousin, whom I had never met, contacted me through the Internet to ask family tree questions, and to invite us to visit. The reasons for a few weeks holiday in the UK began to accumulate and, just to kid ourselves, we began to think in terms of pounds sterling. That way the numbers didn't seem so bad. Could a conversation with our travel agent be put off any longer?

What with the rising costs of fuel, green guilt about unnecessary travel, and all that, what would be the best travel option? Prices for regular carriers were zooming up, so what about charters? Indeed, what about the company called Zoom? No, our man said, I won't send you on Zoom. Why not? - we know folks who have traveled on it. Yes, but Zoom is going to fail. How do you know that? From the pattern of their marketing and pricing during the past year. Oh. He had it figured out months before Zoom's spectacular collapse, an event that produced a spate of hand-wringing commentary in the British press and news services. In the end we booked with Globespan, coincidentally based in Edinburgh, and whose retail offices in the West End of Edinburgh's downtown were still open when we left for home a month later, a reassurance that they had remained in business. Mind you, when it actually came to departing from Glasgow Airport (undergoing major renovations) we didn't fly with Globespan itself. At departure we discovered that our flight had been contracted to a Spanish charter line, leaving a number of folks, let us say, asking questions. At first the atmosphere was just a bit tense but, to everyone's relief, we touched down in Vancouver without incident, justifying our faith in our travel agent, and also the numerous Internet checks during the month to make sure Globespan had survived the rumours of its demise.

Outbound from Vancouver: we landed at Gatwick, an airport that seems to invite you to leave as soon as possible. Europcar fixed us up with a Ford Focus (1.6 litre) instead of the VW diesel we had requested. We were soon on our way west, in the gathering darkness and rain, to a pre-booked B & B in a small village near Southampton (Twyford). Fearing the motorway traffic out of London, and keeping in mind that we would have to adjust to driving on the other side of the road, we opted to take the "old" main highway through the towns and villages. That was the first mistake. All roads in the south seem to be jammed with cars at any time of day or night; all drivers are in a blinking hurry and tailgate as though it were the rule of the road; vans and trucks of all sizes and shapes careen around corners and bends, giving no quarter. Signs are often hidden behind uncut hedges that crowd into the roadway and may well scratch your rental car if you are not careful. Signs may also be so numerous, and varied in size, shape and lettering that no stranger could be expected to read them while searching for them in the gloom, whizzing past before they could be taken in. One must be a local to survive in such circumstances. Someone once told me that Tocqueville had remarked that one can know France and the United States but one can never know England and the English because there are too many alternative modes of thought there. Analogously, in our experience this year, by-ways dominate, expressing the landscape version of English eccentricity. De Tocq may have been onto something (but don't hold me to it). Lesson: to get anywhere, more or less unscathed, take the motorways out of London for about 100 kilometers, and then become a local, wherever you are.

And so began a car trek: by ferry to the Isle of Wight where we took in the slightly gloomy but wonderful Osborne House, summer residence and grounds of Queen Victoria; by ferry and road to Weymouth to visit Polly's cousin, who showed us the famous quarries of Portland Bill. On a high bluff overlooking the Channel, we talked with slightly odd but friendly pigeon fanciers who had driven transport trailers from far and wide, filled with their caged racers and who were just waiting for the right weather and winds to send their birds winging to places as far away as Lancashire; north through tiny Mosterton to locate the Admiral Hood pub once run by friends, and to have Sunday lunch there (Roast Beef Special - £9.95 plus a pint); tea with friends at the Bath Spa Hotel, in the centre of town, and perhaps the only place with parking; and then into Wales, stopping at the Tintern Abbey ruins where, by what some might call good fortune, we found a traditional hotel that had been taken over by Best Western. That night our lot was to visit their excellent dining room and then to rest in an Americanized bedroom and bathroom. How could Canadians not feel at home?

The Abbey remains are exposed on the flats of the narrow lower floodplain of the winding River Wye. Feeling the slight *frisson* of a foggy and damp valley bottom, alongside the evocative remains of the abbey, you know you are someplace different. You somehow *feel* you are entering Wales. From there on, the larger Wye Valley, with its many small tributaries and narrow winding roads was our geographical framework. We became conscious of late light in the mornings and long afternoon shadows and gloom, even during sunny spells, of which there were few. A week after we departed for points east, major floods overwhelmed the creek and river beds, but before seeking the more open country of Shropshire, Oxfordshire and East Anglia, we had two important calls to make. Polly is an expert knitter and, even if I had tried, she would not have been dissuaded from seeking out the Colinette Knitting Mills

and factory. An impressive place and a successful visit. Have you ever tried to carry a green garbage bag equivalent, filled with brightly coloured wool, as hand baggage onto an aircraft?

Next stop, Hay-on-Wye, famous for its second hand bookstores. Perhaps the less said about Hay the better, but keep in mind this place survives as a tourist destination. Late in the day, in pouring rain, its bookstores were a sad lot, some leaving books outside to get soaked, none extending a welcome to come in and look round. The town closed up at 5:00 or 5:30 PM. No restaurants remained open in the deserted and glistening wet streets, except for a take-away fish and chips, and one pub that served food only after 7:00 PM. A publican, whose place remained closed, advised us to go for the fish and chips. (We waited for the pub at seven o'clock.) Our B & B was delightful, however, a farmhouse on the edge of town, and the next morning we shared a breakfast table with a couple of bright young co-eds from Oxford who spoke with all the energy and assurance of those whose backgrounds and position would give them the confidence of knowing that they are at the centre of things.

Hop-scotching across the country through various other visits, we needed the week's rest and stability that landing in on family can provide. We enjoyed that immensely, even the unsettling blast of Polly's brother's birthday party! Best not to go into detail, but suffice it to say that given the average age of invitees, this was an above-average wing-ding! Thence to Scotland, with a wonderful diversion in Yorkshire. Hiking about a mile in from a secondary highway and across the fields, we visited an abandoned medieval village, Wharram Percy. Professor Maurice Beresford had identified this place in the late 1940s. It was excavated over a period of some 40 years and now gives material for quiet contemplation. (SFU library reference: DA 670 Y6 B47 1990)

And so to the centenary celebrations of the Department of Geography at the University of Edinburgh. Apart from linking up again with a number of friends from long ago, it was a particular pleasure to see again several (then) undergraduates who had helped me in my research for my thesis. I had paid them each about £1-0-0 per day (at the time worth about \$3.00 Canadian) for this work, and they are still speaking to me! We all look very mature now. I was also pleased to represent the Canadians who had taken their doctoral work there, and was able to announce the establishment of a Centenary Scholarship in honour of the occasion, raised by the Canadians, now mostly retired. The rest was pure personal pleasure in visiting with friends, and the driving was much easier than south of the Humber -- until the final day when we had to go through Glasgow from the north, to the airport, and return the car. All was not lost, however, even if we ourselves were in danger of becoming so. A friendly soul drew us a map to help get us through the airport and to the correct car rental. Once we had returned the car, we were of course stranded in the rain, somewhere on the fringes of the airport, an unknown distance and direction from our terminal. But another friendly worker "gave us a lift" as they say, taking him out of his own way. When I offered a substantial tip, he refused, remarking, "Let's jus' say thaat it's a wee bi' o' Scottish hawspitality!"

THE IDES AND THE AGM

A. The annual **Ides of March** Celebration will be held on **Wednesday, March 11, 2—4 pm** at Eagle Creek Restaurant, Burnaby Mountain Golf Course. Participation for members is free, \$10 for non-members (like spouses). No-host bar; coffee and juice free.

Membership renewals are due April 1 for the 2009/2010 year and should be paid in advance of the event or at the event.

B. AGM and Dinner, Wed., May 6, 2009.

NEW MEMBERS

David Boal, Physics
Eng Choo, Business Administration
Jessie Girard, Recreation

Total membership: 378

PASSAGES

John Ellis, Education

FEEES FOR SENIORS

Unfortunately, this item fell between the planning and the printing of the newsletter. Bruce Alexander has taken up the issue of the cancellation of fee remission for the senior credit program. Together with Ehor Boyanowski, he organized a meeting “for those of us who would like to press the university on this important issue”. The meeting was scheduled for 2:30 Thursday, January 15. Ehor has reserved a seminar room, 10218 ASSC1. ASSC#1 means Arts and Social Science Complex #1. It is the new building that now stands in the parking lot facing Strand Hall.

If you are interested in finding out what was discussed, please get in touch with Bruce at alexande@sfu.ca.

To see the entire email message that Bruce sent out, please go to <http://www.sfu.ca/retirees-forum/msg01044.html> and wait for further emails from him.

SOCIAL EVENTS

by Tom O'Shea

It was with some trepidation that I agreed to serve as your Social Events coordinator for the coming year. The program of activities initiated by my predecessor, Elizabeth Michno, and by Bev Carlson before her is formidable. I've looked over the list of SFURA social events held over the past ten years, and it shows astonishing variety and creativity. A sample of activities include BC Lions football games, tours of various facilities (e.g., Port of Vancouver, Capilano and Coquitlam Watersheds, Chinatown, Westminster Abbey in Mission, Univercity, the Granville Island Brewery); matinee performances at the Playhouse and Arts Club theatres; walking tours of various parks and attractions; and a day at the Hastings Racetrack. I hope to be able to continue some of these events and initiate others.

To help me in this endeavour I would appreciate suggestions from SFURA members. Please let me know what events from the past you would like repeated, what new activities would be welcome, and the names of individuals we might approach about hosting events. My email address is oshea@sfu.ca, and you can reach me by phone at 604-551-5542.

A MOMENT TO REMEMBER

Three members of the Association recently met with President Michael Stevenson to discuss the affairs of the Retirees' Association. Shown in the photograph with the SFU President are Marg Jones, Treasurer, Marv Wideen, second Past President, and Len Evenden, President. As a token of appreciation for his endorsement and support of the work of SFURA, Len presented the Association's new Mug of Honour award to the President.

