

SFU Retirees Association



Newsletter May 2009

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Len Evenden, President
evenden@sfu.ca

Norman Swartz, Past President,
Webmaster swartz@sfu.ca

Hilary Jones, Secretary,
hjones@sfu.ca

Margaret Jones, Treasurer &
Membership
jonesa@sfu.ca

Kersti Jaager, Assistant Treasurer
kersti@sfu.ca

Evelyn Palmer, Seminar Series
evelyn@sfu.ca

Tom O'Shea, Social Events
oshea@sfu.ca

Bob Horsfall, Member@Large,
Interest Groups
horsfall@sfu.ca

Tom Poiker, Newsletter, Benefits
poiker@sfu.ca

Penny Spagnolo, Forum
pspagnol@sfu.ca

Telephone: 778-782-3360

The publication of this newsletter coincides, more or less, with the date of the Annual General Meeting. A time to take stock. First, may I note that our membership has grown in number, and recently cracked the four-century mark. We do not know what the upper limit of membership will be in future but the university's retention of faculty and staff, who choose not to retire at 65 years of age, has apparently not affected our ability to grow at a modest pace. Further, I want to thank the members of the board for their dedication and willingness to take on tasks that not only keep the association functioning, but also are beginning to open up new areas of interest, activity and concern. In particular, I want to acknowledge the enormous contributions made to the success of the association by Marg Jones and Evelyn Palmer. We all know that both these members have been, and are, towers of strength in the interests of all the membership. Marg has served for over a decade and has carried a variety of responsibilities. She has been the treasurer and organizer of the many favours and events we take for granted, such as the mailouts, keeping track of the paid-up membership, issuing the cards that let you park, and putting together functions such as this AGM dinner. Evelyn, for her part, may be best known for her inspired leadership in mounting the successful seminar series held in the Halpern Centre. This seminar is perhaps our major contribution to the intellectual life of the institution, and is much appreciated by many, including President Stevenson. But to many she is also well known for her attention to what is going on both within and without the university, and for circulating information concerning events that she thinks might hold interest for members. And so it is with thanks and not a little regret that I report that they have chosen not to run for the Board again. What I am happy about, however, is that both are willing to serve in advisory capacities to new board members and to the association as a whole. I am sure we all offer our deepest thanks, and wish them both well for the future.

And so changes are gradually coming to the Board. Two new members joined this year and have already made major contributions. Hilary Jones took over the task of taking the Minutes of Board meetings, and she produces these as works of art -- accuracy with flair. You must actually watch her taking notes in Pitman shorthand to believe the skill involved! Tom O'Shea joined the board as the social convenor, and has already organized a successful theatre outing that included instruction in the backstage activities of costumes and set construction. He has plans for a number of new activities, and we shall hear about them in due course. He wonders aloud whether he likes the name of the position, social convenor, and might entertain suggestions as to what else it might be called. Ideas, anyone? Other members of the Board have continued their commitments and activities, and I would encourage everyone to visit the website that Norman Swartz has (re) constructed. This crisp presentation includes historical information as well as current, and has already come to the notice of others. Recently we received enquiries from McGill retirees about the website, as they begin to work on their own. Tom Poiker continues as the editor of the Newsletter and is our representative to the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada. He also chairs the Benefits Committee, which comprises Philip Mah, Walter Wattamaniuk, Norman Reilly, Bill Yule, George Suart and Bill de Vries. Kersti Jaager has been working with Marg Jones to learn the ropes of record keeping and event organization, while Bob Horsfall has taken on special assignments concerning the logo, mug production and enquiries about the attendance of retirees at convocation. In this he has worked with Chris Hildred, who designed the logo. Marv Wideen, second past president, has successfully established the finance interest group, and presentations sponsored by this group have attracted much interest. For this

meeting, and for a second time, Marv has chaired the nominations committee, the other members being John Webster and Bev Carlson.

You will notice a pattern here, of members working or collaborating with individual board members, thus making their skills and knowledge available in wider circles through the board. I think this is a pattern to be encouraged and in particular I would point out the continuing contribution of Penny Spagnolo who, without fanfare, keeps the computerized membership list up-to-date. Further, it was recently pointed out that we should be systematic in our photographic record. Several volumes of photographs have now accumulated, and plans are afoot to scan and organize them. Much of this record is due to the work and interest of Bev Carlson, and perhaps others of whom I am not aware. In order to pursue the idea of a photographic record, Chris Hildred and Leigh Palmer have both agreed that one or the other would take photos at various events. But this should not discourage members from bringing their cameras to events, and, if they have good photos to share, making them available for the association record. And a last point about records is this: we are at last in a position to develop proper archives. Space is now available for this, and filing cabinets and shelves are also in place to start this project. Most importantly, Frances Fournier, archivist for many years on campus, has recently retired and has already joined the association. She has expressed willingness to advise and work with others to put our records in order. And so this is a first notice, to EVERYONE, that there is now an opportunity to divest yourselves of that box of SFURA records you have not yet tossed – just in case they may be needed! At some point, soon, we shall work out a way to receive or collect any such records that might be donated. Watch for further notice.

Other ways in which members can make contributions that would be of help to the university, as well as pleasant to undertake, is to volunteer for various projects or activities such as the plant sale (see Vito Modigliano) and attending convocation. Such contributions can be made by any and all members, would be noticed, and would help to justify continued university support and partnership.

While this report necessarily focuses upon our internal interests, we should not forget that we are part of a larger community of retirees in the university world, and also at large. We maintain membership in the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada (CURAC) and Tom Poiker attended their meeting last May in Montreal. He will again be our official voting representative at the next meeting, to be held towards the end of May in New Brunswick. CURAC has teamed up with CARP, the Canadian Association of Retired Persons, to offer preferential rates to individuals wanting to join that organization. Its benefits include the splendid and informative magazine Zoomer, and the opportunity to take part in many other beneficial initiatives at favourable rates. This is perhaps the most effective organization in Canada in promoting the interests of seniors. Further, I met recently with members of the boards of the UVic and UBC Retirees Associations. This and future contacts will help us to put into perspective our BC experience as university retirees, and to compare the benefits and problems facing this increasingly large cohort. Overtures to enter into a dialogue have also been received from retiree organizations of universities in the US Pacific Northwest.

In sum: it has been a busy but enjoyable year for the association. Some members already have volunteered to help out with certain tasks such as stuffing envelopes – so if you are approached, or see a chance to chip in with some activity such as an interest group, do not hesitate to take up the opportunity!

CONNECTING TO SFU CONNECT

by Tom O'Shea

Recently I changed my email system to SFU Connect. Perhaps my experience can help others. I was quite frustrated with my previous system (MacIntosh Mail). In that system, once I signed on to SFU my email was downloaded to my computer and stored there. The problem was I had a laptop computer at home and a desktop computer at my desk at SFU. At home I would sign on to email, download messages, delete some messages, and save others to files on my laptop. At SFU, I would sign on and have to deal with the same set of emails, deleting again, and saving others to different files on my desktop. My home laptop files were not available to me when I used my SFU desktop and vice versa. To further complicate matters, if I was traveling I signed on through SFU Webmail and had to deal with the same set of messages a third time. So I made the switch to SFU Connect. As a result, all my messages, files, etc are now stored on SFU's computer. Now I can sign on from any computer anywhere, delete messages, respond to others, store in files... and all are saved to my assigned space on SFU's system. Not only is this more convenient, but I also don't have to worry about someone stealing my laptop (or desktop) computer that contains many email files. But the problem was making the switch. Information on what to do can be found at <http://www.sfu.ca/itservices/newemail/join/>. On that site you'll find the following statement:

How do I switch to the new system?

SFUwebmail users: No matter your role at SFU, if you currently always use SFUwebmail to check your SFU email, then you can use the sign-up form to switch over to SFU Connect.

To follow to the form, please click [HERE](#).

If you use Mutt, or a POP or IMAP client (like Mac Mail, Eudora, Thunderbird, Outlook, etc), you will likely require technical support in switching over. Please contact your department's technical support team as soon as possible. In departments with no desktop support, those wishing to switch should send a request to connect-join@sfu.ca and explain that their department does not have tech support.

So if you use only Webmail to access your email, the switch is easy. Just fill in the form and it will be done for you. However, my problem was that I was a POP client and used Mac Mail. It was easy enough to set up the new system to receive new messages, but I couldn't figure out how to access all my past mail on the new system. That is, I couldn't transfer my old files from Mac Mail into SFU Connect. I was lucky enough to have access to a technician in our faculty who did it for me, but I would not be able to replicate the process, and it did take some time to do it. My only advice to others in this situation is to send a request to connect-join@sfu.ca and hope for the best.

ON CHANGING THE GUARD

The work that some persons do is highly visible, e.g. that of architects, ballet dancers, and gardeners – to name just a few. And everyone can see whether their work is well done or not. But the work of some others is just about invisible and, paradoxically, the better that work is, the more invisible it becomes. Think of copyeditors, piano tuners, and structural engineers.

Evelyn Palmer, who is not standing for re-election to the Executive Board, has contributed to the Association in the second manner just described. Just because her efforts in organizing our monthly Seminar Series have been so exceptional, they have gone virtually unnoticed. The smooth running of the Series, the great (and delightful) variety and quality of the topics discussed, and the palpable pleasure of the attendees is simply ‘taken for granted’. But that attitude belies the amount of effort – perhaps one should say, gleeful effort – that Evelyn has poured into her ‘behind the scenes’ work – lining up (and occasionally cajoling) speakers, juggling schedules, booking meeting space, supervising the delivery and set-up of audiovisual equipment (often differing from one seminar to the next), personally attending to advertising, and setting up post-seminar luncheons.



But we will miss more than just her superb organization of the seminar series. Evelyn has been the Den Mother on the Executive Board. She frequently has brought home-baked delicacies to the meetings, arrived early to turn on the coffee pot, and always has an encouraging word for everyone. Without wishing to sound treachery, we really do regard her as a ‘ray of sunshine’. All of us hope that her pending absence from the Board will turn out to be just a ‘sabbatical’ and that in due course she will return to the Board and be Den Mother once again.

SFURA AT THE PLAYHOUSE

by Tom O’Shea

At the first formal social event for the SFU retirees association this semester, a group of a dozen members gathered at the Vancouver Playhouse production centre near Main St. and 2nd Ave. We were taken on an hour-long tour of the Playhouse production facilities, led by the charming Playhouse coordinator Stasa Andric. We visited the set construction workshop, the props department, the wardrobe department, rehearsal halls, and the “green room” (a name that apparently applies to the room backstage in any theatre where the cast and production crew relax and socialize).

After lunch, we moved to the Playhouse for tea/coffee and cookies prior to the matinee performance of “Toronto, Mississippi.” Meg Roe’s performance as an autistic teenager was outstanding, and consistent with the high standards of Playhouse performances all season. Also starring was Alessandro Juliani, whose father, John, was a member of SFU’s theatre department in the early years. Joan MacLeod, the playwright, is a Vancouverite now on faculty at the University of Victoria. “Homechild”, another play of hers, is being presented by The Arts Club Theatre this spring.

Finally, following the show, Peter Jotkus, the production stage manager, gave us a guided tour of the backstage facilities. We learned of the intricacies of lighting, cuing, and props management, and journeyed into the depths beneath the theatre through the star dressing rooms, storage areas, and the ubiquitous “green” room.

We all thoroughly enjoyed the privilege of entering the theatrical world. We left with admiration for the creative talent and enthusiasm required to mount a stage production in Vancouver, and an enhanced appreciation for what we see as audience members. I hope that we will be able to repeat this event next year and entice other SFURA members into taking part in this wonderful experience.

MARGARET JONES

By Evelyn Palmer



Margaret Jones has been an indispensable member of the Executive Board for SFURA since it was formed in 1998. She is stepping down at the May 6 Annual General Meeting, and will be sorely missed. During her eleven years she has held the office of Treasurer and Membership Chair, but her work for the association has gone far beyond that.

Marg makes all the arrangements for the lunches and dinners at the Eagle Creek Restaurant where the AGM and Fall Dinners and Ides of March Celebrations are held. She looks after the membership lists and organizes the tasks of publishing and mailing newsletters and other documents to members. Her office in the TC has been the SFURA office on campus. She organizes the popular summer event, A Day at the Races and occasional lunches off campus. She was interviewed in our second Oral History DVD.

Margaret was a charter staff member of SFU. She started in the Reading and Study Centre, moved from there to Counselling Services and during that time occasionally assisted the Wrestling Program with fund raising prior to her “retirement” in 1993. She continues to work for Athletics part-time and volunteers her services there full-time. Her walls are filled with awards, certificates of service, thank-you letters, and photographs. She was a recipient of one of the President’s 40th Anniversary Awards for her commitment and service to the university, the SFU Fred Dietrick Memorial Award for her contribution to the SFU Athletics program, a Volunteer of the Year Award, the CD Nelson Award, and the SFURA Distinguished Service Award.

Margaret will be missed by SFURA for her stellar contributions.

FUTURE SOCIAL EVENTS

by Tom O'Shea

Further details on all future events will be sent to members by email. If you do not have email and are interested in any of these events please phone me [home: 604-294-0986; cell: 604-551-5542].

Sunday, May 24th. Opera at the Winery. Opera Appassionata is presenting Mascagni's opera Cavalleria Rusticana on Sunday afternoon, May 24th at 3 pm at the Wellbrook Winery in Delta (see www.wellbrookwinery.com). Wellbrook Winery is located at 4626 88th St., near the intersection of Highway 10 and Ladner Trunk Road. This will be a fully staged opera with orchestra in a heritage barn on-site. Although the opera is written in one act, this performance will have two acts and an intermission. The intermission will provide an opportunity for patrons to sample the wines of Wellbrook Winery (at a nominal price). The SFURA is eligible for a group rate of \$15/ticket if we can put together a group of 10 or more. However, this will need to be done in advance of the performance date (no group sales at the gate, and no refunds). If you are interested in attending, please let me know as soon as possible (certainly not later than May 8th).

Friday, June 12th. A Musical Soirée. Evelyn and Leigh Palmer have graciously offered their home for a musical late afternoon/early evening starting at 5:30 pm. Details will be forthcoming, but the event will be built around the choral group Chemsemble (consisting of members of the Faculties of Science and Education, including 5 SFURA members) who will perform for an hour or so. Also included will be a sing-along and pot-luck dinner. Those attending will be asked to suggest two songs that they would like to hear and we will arrange to have the lyrics ready for all to sing. The Palmer home is on Deer Lake in Central Burnaby and we hope for a beautiful summer evening over-looking the lake.

Sunday, June 21st. An Afternoon of Baseball. The Vancouver Canadians play the Everett Aquasox at Nat Bailey Stadium at 1 pm. This is a jewel of a ball-park, the hot dogs are great, and the beer is cold.

To be arranged. Mike Roberts has offered to lead a short field trip looking at the constraints of geology and geomorphology on urban settlement on the North Shore. That is, looking at building in environments prone to landslides, floods and high slopes. The subtext is the failure to incorporate environmental planning into city planning. The longest hike is about 800m though most stops are quite short. As Mike says, "If we make it a morning trip, we could finish having a pub lunch somewhere in deepest and darkest West Vancouver."

MEDICAL SERVICES PLAN OF BC (MSP)

by Hilary Jones

Starting in January 2009, SFU made some changes to the way MSP premiums are reimbursed to SFU retirees. These changes only affect those retirees who receive a monthly pension cheque from CIBC Mellon (staff pension plan) or Sun Life (faculty pension plan) and have their monthly MSP premiums deducted from their pension. These retirees will have noticed that effective January 1, 2009 only 50% of the MSP premium has been deducted from their pension cheque. This change reduces the workload for Human Resources at SFU as they no longer need to reimburse 50% of the MSP premiums for those retirees receiving a monthly pension cheque.

For all other retirees who are paying their premiums directly to MSP, there has been no change in procedures and SFU will reimburse 50% of the premiums annually. This group should send proof of payment each January to Human Resources at SFU and will receive reimbursement in March/April.

All retirees should be receiving reimbursement for 50% of MSP premiums paid in 2008 very shortly. This includes those retirees receiving a monthly pension cheque in 2008, before the new system took effect.

NEW MEMBERS

Fred Wong -Library
Anthony (Tony) Patrick - Application Interpretation & Support Group
Surjeet Siddoo - Education
Christine MacKenzie - Kinesiology
Donald Gustein - Communications
Reo Audette - Computer Sciences
Elio Fata - LIDC Learning & Instructional Development Centre

PASSAGES

Gerry Simpson, Physical Plant and Planning
Jim Wilson, Geography