

Simon Says

Winter 2009

Simon Fraser University Retirees Association



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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN: Encountering Leonard Russell.

This column is generally devoted to summarizing recent affairs of the association. But our editor, perhaps sensing a bureaucratic tendency, recently suggested I write something a bit more 'interesting' than usual. Interesting. Hmm. Not being much of a raconteur, I thought I might stray from presidential 'stuff' to say something about my attempt to find out about the philosopher Leonard J. Russell.

Who? Good question. When all this started I had never heard of him either. So be warned -- interest in this will be a bit esoteric for many, or merely incidental. But for me it brings back memories of a brief but important moment. It all began in the fall of 1962. I had just graduated from the University of Georgia in Athens and was to take up my first teaching job, at Georgia State in Atlanta. (They were desperate.) At the same time a certain fellow graduate student at Athens, Polly, was to return home to England and, being a bit slow, I didn't wake up to this until I heard the penny drop. (Are you still with me?) A few days later I wrote her to say several and various things, and invited myself to her family's home for Christmas. Still with me? I was getting the hang of this, and speeding up a bit.

The cheapest way to get to Britain from the U.S.A. at that time was with Loftleidir, the Icelandic airline. It still ran DC6B turbo props, did not belong to IATA, took forever to 'airport hop' (New York, Gander, Reykjavik, Glasgow etc) and kept fares low. Their market thus comprised students, poor academics and other assorted folks with time rather than money. I fitted the bill.

Now, fast-forward past the holidays to the return trip in the early New Year. I found myself alone in a three-person row of seats about midway along the aircraft. Opposite, and a few rows ahead, sat an elderly English couple, the wife being the taller of the two. She was dressed in a long skirt hiding dark lisle (aka warm) stockings and sensible shoes. On top was a hat with a long pin. The husband wore the then obligatory patterned warm shirt, woollen tie, shiny grey trousers with something like a Harris Tweed jacket, well-worn leather shoes with cracked uppers, a distinctly shabby raglan topcoat and battered flat cap. Anyone knowing the appearance of the average UK academic or small shopkeeper in 1960 would recognize the image.

Meals were good on these flights, cognac and chocolate being offered. After every meal the elderly gent came back and asked whether he could join me for a few minutes (say about 60). He wanted his after-dinner cigarette or three, as did so many in those days. He confided that he was not allowed to smoke in his wife's company, and I, a non-smoker, soon discovered why. He was addicted to the Gauloises brand! Who could forget those? -- especially the unfiltered ones?

Despite the cancer-inducing atmosphere, we got along famously. He told me he was Leonard Russell, a professor of Philosophy and an “expert” on Leibniz. Luckily, I had taken a Philosophy course and could allow that I had heard of him – Leibniz that is. Although retired, Russell was on his way to spend a term at Emory University in Atlanta and asked what I did. He actually seemed pleased that I was teaching Geography, and in Atlanta, and went on to tell me that he had been a friend of A.J. Herbertson, one of the icons of British Geography. Luckily, I had heard of him too – Herbertson that is. Things were looking up in our conversation, but discussion soon turned to William Golding’s *Lord of the Flies*, which I was reading as my travel entertainment. Very clever, he observed, Golding using children as the characters. We must get together some time in Atlanta was his final comment, and I could find him through the Philosophy Department at Emory.

We landed safely in New York. I breezed through immigration and customs and, turning back to wave, saw this tired couple being grilled and forced to undergo the physical work of opening all their bags on the counter. Their luggage looked as ancient as their clothing, and they had brown paper packages tied up in string that had to be undone. Most suspicious. “They’re just my husband’s professional papers” I heard Mrs. R. say, in a high nasal and pleading voice. Just open them, was the bored and uncompromising response from the young woman snappily turned out in a well-pressed blue-grey uniform.

I didn’t see them again but later found they had made it to Atlanta. Here’s how I knew. Sometime in February or March, on a beautiful sunny day, I wandered to Emory on foot, the campus being within walking distance of my ‘digs’. (The neighbourhood was where the movie “Driving Miss Daisy” was shot.) I vaguely wondered about looking up the Philosophy department but set aside the idea as too far-fetched for a novice lecturer from the public university downtown. But as I crossed the campus, I saw the fire escape door of a lecture hall propped open with the lectern just inside. Sitting in front of the lectern sat Leonard Russell, a diminutive elf of a man, stirring coffee in a small paper cup and looking quite happy. Should I approach him through this door? I hesitated, the lecture started and I lost my nerve. An opportunity lost. This was the last time I saw him, although on any subsequent strolls through campus I always passed by that door, just in case.

Now, in retirement, I have wondered about him, and started a Google chase. Can you imagine how one-sided is the result when you search for a philosopher called Russell? Especially when Bertrand rather than Leonard wrote one of the most obvious books on Leibniz? (SFU Library -- B 2598 R8) And when I discovered a searching review of one of Bertrand’s works by Leonard I realized they must have been well acquainted in the stiflingly small circle of academic philosophy in Britain at the time. I needed help and turned to my predecessor in SFURA, the philosopher Norman Swartz. He declared that he too had never heard of Leonard but within a short time sent me a link that would turn up in excess of 25,000 hits! This was as bad as no hits at all, and I turned to SFU librarian Heather DeForest, an invaluable ally.

A problem had emerged in that I had started to suspect the presence of a doppelganger. In the early years of my stay in Scotland, I had chanced upon *The Saturday Book*, a wonderful annual collection of essays on as wide a set of topics as one could imagine. (SFU library – AC 5 S3) Guess what? A Leonard Russell had founded the series in the early 1940s. So this must surely be my man, I thought -- and so versatile too. For as well as being a philosopher, this man was an essayist, a journalist, a parodist and a publisher! But while the given name usually appeared simply as Leonard, as in *The Saturday Book*, there were other places where it appeared as Leonard J. This was intriguing because it is the same given name and middle initial as I myself have, although the middle names are not the same. The point is not relevant, but it served to focus my attention. It was also unsettling because such versatility is rare and most academic scholars do not have the worldly contacts and backing to pull off such varied feats. Heather came to my rescue and confirmed that there were indeed TWO prominent and contemporaneous Leonard Russells in British letters.

I have now run out of space, although the encounter saga continues. Leonard Russell was born in 1884. When I met him on the Loftleidir flight, in the first day or two of January 1963, he would have been 78 years old. I sometimes wonder if all the information I have is accurate, because one of the easier publications to track is his “Leibniz’s philosophy of science,” published in *Studia Leibnitiana* in 1976. That would make him 92 years old at the time. His chief influences seem to have been in the universities of Glasgow, Cambridge and Birmingham, with occasional forays to the USA and Australia. Little mention is made of his work with continental colleagues, although there was some. As retirees we should all be so gifted and lucky! I got lucky: at the end of the summer following my first encounter with Leonard Russell, Polly and I got hitched.

Len Evenden.

Future Events

Marilyn Bowman

Jan 26, Tuesday

The Mature Mind: Understanding and Improving Memory in Older Age : Wendy Thornton

We will examine how mental processes change as a function of normal aging, and explore recent research suggesting that memory in later life can be bolstered through lifestyle modifications. In addition, we will discuss cognitive changes in age-related diseases, such as Alzheimer's disease.

Feb 9, Tuesday

The Color and Culture of Guatemala: Ron Long

The accomplishments of the ancient Maya that are so evident at Tikal are incredibly impressive. But Mayan culture continues to enliven modern day Guatemala. Our visit begins at Tikal and continues through the lives of today's Maya. We avoid the tourist traps to see how the Maya live. Compared to our own, almost everything is different in their culture which makes it endlessly interesting. And the color and energy that are everywhere evident make modern Guatemala a photographers dream.

March 16, Tuesday

The challenges to criminology in a security-obsessed society. Ezzat Fattah

The world has changed since the events of 9/11. Western democratic governments have become obsessed with internal security and have created legislation and practises that challenge both their traditional human rights legislation, international conventions, and even international court rulings. Such measures as indefinite imprisonment without trial, the use of torture, "no-fly" lists, limits on free speech, rules against group strolls in the park in Toronto, and the mandatory retention of DNA of individuals with no convictions, have all arisen within modern democracies. Unfortunately, criminologists, social scientists, and academics who are expected to be society's guardians and used to be the first to protest violations of human rights and freedoms and other undemocratic measures, have been conspicuous by their silence. Could this apathy, indifference and complacency be explained? Is there any hope for change?

April 13, Tuesday

Divas I have Loved: Alan Aberbach

Allan has been in love with opera for a lifetime. He will talk about the divas who have enchanted him, and play videos demonstrating some of his favorites.

Aquafit is Good for You

Barbara Diggins

If you have given up on your summer outdoor activities, then aqua fitness may be a great winter activity for you. It is not necessary to be a swimmer as ankle floats or flotation belts are available and most participants use one or the other. You must be willing to get into a bathing suit and take the plunge (don't worry, most pools are heated).

A one-hour deep fit class offers a gentle warm-up, a cardio session, a strength and endurance component and finishes with gentle stretching as a cool-down. Aqua fit, especially deep-fit, is recommended because there is little stress on joints and bones and you experience an effective cardio and muscle-toning workout.

Check with your local community centre pool for times. You may see me teaching at either Chimo or City Centre Pool in Coquitlam.

Barbara Diggins

Fitness Leader, B.C. Recreation & Parks Association

Financial Planning Interest Group

Marvin Wideen.

The F P Interest Group aims to organize events and seminars on financial planning that will engage retirees and others from the University community. We hope this will promote a discussion of topic and issues that will expand our understanding and knowledge of financial matters affecting our retirement planning.

A planning meeting in September identified the following topics that will become the basis of our spring program. These include:

- A revisiting of the Sun Life mutual funds in the light of the current economic climate.
- Travel and corporate insurance.
- Generating income from retirement savings.
- Using real estate as an investment.

Please pass on any ideas or questions you may have to me (wideen@sfu.ca) and I will circulate them to members of our planning committee. We are looking forward to an interesting and provocative program for the spring semester.

Taxation of Dependant/Spouse Tuition

Tom O'Shea

Retirees who received SFU T4 slips that included taxable benefits relating to dependant/spouse tuition for 2007 and/or 2008 will be interested in the following message from Barbara deStrake of the SFU payroll department.

Tax Change re: Tuition Waivers for Employee Family Members

This update will be of interest to employees who had tuition waivers issued for dependants and spouses in 2007 and 2008. The Federal Court of Appeal rejected the position of Canada Revenue Agency that a tuition waiver for a family member is a taxable benefit to the employee. In response, CRA has issued a directive that, retroactive to 2007, the benefit will be taxable to the family member; not the employee.

For the taxation years 2007 and 2008:

- Payroll will issue amended T4 slips to employees in order to exclude the taxable benefit for tuition waivers relating to family members; and, concurrently,
- Student Financials will issue amended T4A slips to students/family members to include the benefit of the tuition waiver.

Given the software changes needed to the payroll and student systems and the large number of employees and family members to be addressed, the tax documents will be prepared for all involved and distributed along with the 2009 documents in February. Individual requests are NOT required to initiate the amendments. Payroll will be in contact with CRA to discuss the Notice of Objection required for employees and next steps.

Please watch for additional information posted on our Finance web site in the near future.

Should you have any questions or concerns please email Pay-

roll@sfu.ca http://www.sfu.ca/uploads/page/01/Tax_Change_re_Tuition_Waivers_for_Employee_Family_Members.pdf

SFURA Walking Group

Ted Cohn

When Bob Horsfall asked SFURA members for proposals for new groups, I offered to set up a walking group. My offer was accepted (big surprise!), and with a good deal of help and ideas from Bob, the SFURA walking group was formed. A number of people came to the first walk at Deer Lake, including David Ryeburn who is very knowledgeable about hikes in the Lower Mainland. Bob, David, and I subsequently set up an organizing group for the walks, and David has done a number of “reconnaissance” trips to locate and determine the condition of walking trails. Several others have also led walks, and we encourage members to offer to lead walks in areas familiar to them. About 6 to 8 people have come to most walks recently, but different people come at different times – so a number of SFURA members have now participated. Most walkers are SFURA members and their partners, but some others have also joined us. At first we rotated days for the walks; this created confusion and we decided to settle on a single day – Wednesdays. A downside is that some SFURA members cannot make it to Wednesday walks, but picking one day provides some needed predictability. Hopefully, those interested in joining the walks will try to leave their Wednesdays open in the future.

The walks provide great exercise and a chance to exchange ideas and get to know one another in an informal setting. We also have a chance to go on a number of walks that we would not take (or even know of) individually. For example, a recent highlight was a walk we took on the PoCo Trail, partly along the Coquitlam River. During the walk we passed a fish hatchery, where we were given an impromptu tour. We also saw many Coho salmon trying to swim upstream to spawn. Some of the salmon reached their destination, but others were overwhelmed by the current. Another walk of interest was in less-travelled areas of Stanley Park. Bob and Marjorie Nelles are very familiar with Stanley Park, and Bob led us on a walk pointing out the devastation from last year’s snowstorms, trees gnawed by beavers, and many parts of the park that most people overlook. On a third walk, we went to the Richmond Dykes at a time when there were large numbers of snow geese. We have also taken walks at Deer Lake, Burnaby Lake, Lynn Headwaters, Dog Mountain, Buntzen Lake, Rice Lake, and the Brunette River.

As the rainy weather comes upon us, we are trying to have walks in places where people can take an umbrella. We have also talked about going to higher ground and having some snowshoe walks at Mount Seymour and Cypress. At times we’ve wondered whether this walking group will continue, but there now seems to be a critical mass of people committed to making it work. We hope that others will join us, and contribute their ideas.

Ted Cohn cohn@sfu.ca>



Here are some walkers, obviously very happy.

A New Name for the Newsletter

Tom Poiker

In the last Newsletter, I asked our members for suggestions to change the name of our Newsletter. Would you believe, I got six different names, all from Christina Wong, the daughter of Dr. Tuck and Sophia Wong. Since we didn't specify that the suggestions had to come retired people or member of SFURA, I am entitled to use them. I wanted to make a snide remark, something in the direction of "400 members—Zero — one daughter - six" but I have to admit that I never got the message, neither from Christina nor her parents. Sophia remembered two of them, "The Summit" and "Simon Says", so I chose the latter. CONGRATULATIONS TO CHRISTINA WONG FOR HER IMAGINATIVE CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COMPETITION TO DECIDE THE NEW NAME!!!

I added something to Christina's title. Can you tell?

NEW MEMBERS

Stella Atkins - School of Computing Science
Thomas Calvert - School of Interactive Arts and Technology
Hiromi Matsui- Faculty of Applied Sciences
Dewart Nelson - Archaeology Department
Monica Wolff - Library Processing - Monographs

Parveen Bawa - School of Kinesiology
Jorge Garcia - LAS (renewed, member 1999—2002)
Kathy Mezei- Women's Studies Department
M. Diane Smith - Network Services Operations

A Senior Building at UBC.

This from the Newsletter of the UBC Association of Professors Emeriti (selected by Tom Poiker)

Concert, a builder of senior homes called Tapestry, is completing its third project, this time at UBC. Wesbrook Village UBC will feature two six-storey midrises offering residents a campus-style community for seniors with 134 rental apartments, 46 condominium homes and street level retail. The two buildings will be linked by an above-ground walkway and a pedestrian greenway between the two buildings at street level. Tapestry at Wesbrook Village UBC is operated exclusively by Leisure Care.

Plans for integration with the University and adjacent residential neighborhoods are developing splendidly, featuring a Learning Centre (classrooms), a Creative Arts Centre, offices and a large full-service restaurant, pub and bistro café. The Association of Professors Emeriti would have privileged access to space for meetings and events, among other possibilities.

How about that?

For more info on the project (by the builder), see http://www.concertproperties.com/properties/senior_residences/properties58.htm
Norman Swartz of SFURA has studied the plans and has come to the conclusion that the builders don't seem to know seniors very well:

Each apartment is on two levels with an internal staircase connecting them. There is only one bathroom in the apartment. If they put the apartments on one level, they would help those owners who have difficulties with walking stairs (a frequent problems for seniors) and with the space saved by not having a staircase, they could add another bathroom.

Would you like this Newsletter in colour?

Tom Poiker

As you might have noticed, we are starting to include photos in our Newsletter. But did you know that these photos are in colour? And I have been thinking of adding more graphics, all in colour. I haven't done it yet but I am thinking about it.

That poses the question: How can YOU get these photos and graphics in colour? The answer: Easy, let me send it to you via email. If you send me an email, asking me for a digital version of the Newsletter, I will do so with a laughing heart. You see, if we could convince, say, half of our members to receive the newsletter this way, we would save a lot of money..

So, what I will do is the following: Those members with email addresses will get this Newsletter by email AND by mail. The next version, however, will only be mailed to those members who don't have email accounts and those members with email accounts who have specifically asked me to continue to send them the Newsletter by mail. All others will get it by email.

So, think about it and let me know, please.

poiker@sfu.ca

The Incident in Bukhara Marilyn Bowman

The bus was going to pick us up at 8:30 AM to take us from Bukhara, a desert oasis town along the ancient Silk Route in the heart of Uzbekistan in Central Asia. I sauntered outside to the main street to watch the passing scene and wait in the sunshine. 8:30 passed, but no bus arrived. Eventually our tour leader Michel came out of the hotel lobby reporting that the bus was 'lost'. He went indoors to make more phone calls, and in the meantime the bus driver/owner "Ivan" arrived in a taxi with his assistant. They were both very agitated, Ivan talking on his cell phone with great urgency and smoking up a storm. Michel checked with them, and returned to report that the bus was not 'lost', but stolen! Ivan had taken it to be washed last night, and when he returned in the morning to get it the bus was gone. So was the young bus-washer.

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I was quite cheerful because the day was cool and sunny, and there were lots of interesting people to watch on the busy street. In a leisurely and genial style, people wandered back and forth. There were no signs of the police. Unflappable Michel worked quietly in the lobby with urgent calls to the tour company 600 miles away in Tashkent. But things were heating up on the street. Ivan made many frantic cell phone calls, smoking more powerfully, and looking more and more worried. Magically, at nearly 10 AM a nice big new Chinese bus and driver arrived, the result of Michel's efforts, so we all piled in and headed out for a long trip across the desert to Khiva. Michel, competent and serene, had performed a miracle in getting a big bus for us for a long trip in a town with little evidence of big tourism facilities. He had been additionally worried about the missing bus because he had left his camera and tour-guide notes on board in a common practice; the bus was always locked when we left it and our possessions were considered to be safe. Without further thought we left Ivan and his assistant behind in Bukhara. Later we learned they were in big trouble over their error in leaving the keys with the bus-wash man. We were told that the stolen bus was a big novelty for Bukhara, because no one had even stolen a car in Bukhara over the past 20 years.

Days later we found out that the bus had been discovered a few streets away from our hotel. The car wash man had stolen it just for a joy-ride, but the big problem was that he didn't know how to drive it. As a result he soon stripped the gears and crashed it, causing major damage. He then abandoned it without stealing anything inside it. He was not really a thief, just a stupid, impulsive young man. The police knew who the bus-washer was, although no one knew where he was. Everyone expected he would have a hard time leaving this small city without being caught, because there are only a few roads leading into the desert. The rumour was that his offense would be punished with 15 years of jail because crime is still treated in a fierce way in Central Asia. We on the other hand, were able to continue our wonderful trip. You never know what will happen next when you are travelling 12 time zones away from home.



Penny Spagnolo with her Mug of Honour
Norman Swartz with his Mug of Honour



Marv Wideen with his Mug of Honour



Mug Shots

Fraser Says

Events

Tom O'Shea
Socialist

Summary of events since the last Newsletter:

Saturday, August 8th. The Marg Jones Stakes: A Day at the Races. Once again this annual event at the Hastings Racetrack was a great success. Forty people...SFURA members, families, and guests...enjoyed the buffet and drinks, not to mention the races as well. We had no reports of major winnings, but it is said that some members went home with as much as \$12 in hand. My thanks to Marg Jones for continuing to be involved in organizing this event.

Friday, September 18th. Urban Planning for Mountainous Landscapes—The Case of the North Shore (or Babbling Brooks, Sylvan Glades and the Occasional Landslide). I was unable to attend this event, a tour led by Mike Roberts, but our esteemed President reported that the “ambitious physical geography/geology/urban planning/geotechnical engineering trip across the north shore, to study the esoterica of debris flow disasters of recent years, attracted more than a score of members.” I received several emails attesting to the social and educational value of this event, and one member suggested that Mike might be willing to do a similar event focused on the beaches of the area. Thank you, Mike, for an excellent outing.

Friday, October 2nd. CFL Football: BC Lions vs. Saskatchewan Roughriders. Ten of us gathered at Players Chophouse on Beatty St. for dinner and then made our way through all the street activities to the game at BC Place stadium. BC, as usual, found it difficult to penetrate beyond the opposition 10-yard line, but the Lions eventually triumphed on a final play field goal, much to the disappointment of most of us Saskatchewan transplants. Thanks to Marv Wideen for continuing to make the arrangements for this event.

Possible events for the new year include tours of: Vancouver sites displaying Bill Reid works, the Vancouver Art Gallery, the newly renovated UBC Museum of Anthropology, Qwest University in Squamish, and the Sun Yat-Sen garden in Chinatown. Theatrical possibilities include: an evening at the re-built Vancouver East Cultural Centre, the Playhouse, the Shadbolt Centre in Burnaby, the Roundhouse in Yaletown, and another intriguing presentation by Opera Appassionata. If members have preferences or other suggestions please let me know at oshea@sfu.ca.



The winners of the flower bouquets. Can you tell the names?
Of the flowers, of course.
Or the winners?