

Simon Says

Spring 2010

Simon Fraser University Retirees Association



Why is Burnaby Such a Safe Place to Live?

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The photo (courtesy *Burnaby Newsleader*) says it all: Our own Chris Hildred in a policing vest.

Now, there are many people in Burnaby who work for a safer Burnaby but Chris is clearly ahead of most of them. Just consider this:

Besides his work in neighborhood policing and neighborhood watch, he introduced Feet First, a

pedestrian safety program from the U.S., he helped set up the Speedwatch program, founded the business watch program and was director of the Burnaby Crime Prevention Society. He is also a member of Burnaby's Social Sustainability Steering Committee. According to the *Burnaby Now*, Chris was awarded a community safety and crime prevention award by the Solicitor General in 2007 and, to top it all off, has been chosen as Citizen of the Year to receive the Kushiro Cup at the Appreciation Dinner, May 7th.

The *Burnaby Newsleader* writes that Chris "... Felt like famous underdog Susan Boyle who said she was "gobsmacked" after winning the *Britains's Got Talent* competition".

As some of us might remember, he was not that modest when he received the SFURA Mug of Honour!

A Lad o' Pairs! A Man of Many Parts!

Len Evenden

The website of the Western Regional Science Association carries the following announcement:

"Warren Gill, VP-university relations and a professor of geography, is the new president-elect of the Western Regional Science Association (WRSA). Founded in 1961, the WRSA is an international multidisciplinary group dedicated to the scientific analysis of geographic regions."

Warren has worked with this Association for many years, and this recognition as a leader in the field is well-deserved. Congratulations!

President's Column.

Let me begin this last report of the season by noting how lively and convivial a time we had yesterday (Wednesday, the 17th) at the annual Ides of March reception. I am sure everyone is aware that this year our little bash, in being dislodged by two days from its 'official' date, coincided with St. Patrick's Day. From the Roman calendar and Caesar's fate to what is possibly more an American than Irish celebration of green, we covered it all this year. When Polly and I arrived at the Burnaby Golf Club, Marg Jones was already there and had everything set up - and 'colour-coordinated'. Name tags with little shamrock stickers were written out in green, Marg pointed out that she had raided the green part of her wardrobe, and the registration tables were decorated with green tea roses. Very thoughtful, as were the touches of green that others wore - from ties to earrings - and the stubby green candles on tables. So thanks to Marg and her companion organizers, Kersti and Barb, and others who helped in unseen ways. Everyone was green for a day and could defer until next year any reflections on the various meanings of the Ides.



We were very pleased that President Michael Stevenson and Vice-President Warren Gill were each able to accept an invitation to come. Their presence was a highlight. As everyone will now know, Michael is completing a decade of distinguished leadership at the 'helm of a craft that must often come about in rough and unpredictable seas'. During this time he has encouraged the activities of our association, fostered its development and given it the confidence to seek a continuing and contributing presence alongside what is now a major university. Warren, working at first with past President Jack Blaney, was a founding figure in SFU's establishment in downtown Vancouver. To this splendid success was more recently added, under Michael's general guidance, the Surrey campus, located as it is in the rapidly developing new downtown of what may well in time become BC's largest city. Both Michael and Warren have been to the fore in developing these major new extensions into 'metro's' main hubs, and it seemed appropriate to present each with a photograph of the entrance-way to the Harbour Centre campus at 515 West Hastings. This photograph, entitled "The University in the City", shows an SFU piper playing his pipes

while looking to the street. You can almost hear the skirl. Behind him and through the large windows one can see parts of the library and the lovely glass lights hanging high. The windows themselves reflect the traffic. The university's presence in the city is one of mutual transparency.

During the last couple of years we have been concerned with recognizing the contributions of those who, especially in earlier years, gave inspiration, time, talent and effort to the establishment of our association. Several have already been acknowledged and have received the one and only prize we have, the Mug of Honour. (See earlier newsletters.) This time Mugs went to Harry Evans, Janet Blanchet, Bev Carlson and John Walkley. Each has served selflessly in the past, and each continues to provide support in various ways. Friends and colleagues demonstrated their appreciation by generous applause. Congratulations and thanks!

Matters of status and organization also require attention, including relations with other BC associations and participation in the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada. Tom Poiker is our representative to this national group, CURAC, in which he is an active participant.

May I conclude these remarks by saying that the association has made discernible progress. Various activities have become regularized and well patronized according to the interests of various folks - from walking on a regular basis, to social outings, to seminars and discussions of financial planning. Announcements about these have been sent to members regularly, and I am impressed that members of your executive have been so very effective in making the events the successes they have been. But I should also point out that others, not on the executive, have also contributed much. Some of what they have done will be noted elsewhere in the newsletter, but it is important to note that the success of an association like ours increases with wider participation. All this is not to gloss



over problems our association must deal with. As time passes expenses increase, and there are hints that this trend will continue. Overall, however, we hold our own with associations at other universities, and, as the demographic profiles of the country and retirees gradually change, we shall have to be vigilant in order to best serve our membership and the cause of higher education. Be sure to attend the AGM on May 5th to help get next year's activities off to a good start!

Photo: President Michael Stevenson, Len Evenden and Marilyn Bowman recently discussed matters of importance to SFURA. During his time as SFU president, Michael has been a firm supporter of our association, encouraging its presence and work on campus.

Seminars Report, SFURA for March Meeting, 2010

Marilyn Bowman, Seminars Coordinator

Completed seminars this semester

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 practices 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
Cancelled but to be replaced by the Financial Interest group, Speakers Kevin Bogle and Misa Zivkovic: Preserving pension income in uncertain markets.

Fall 2010

All confirmed; all Third Tuesdays

Sept 21: Forensic biology: Rolf Matthews
Oct 19: Immigration: its costs and advantages for Canada: Herb Grubel and Don Devoretz in a conversation.
Nov 16; Cities of the Silk Road - Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva: Marilyn Bowman

Applying for OAS (Old Age Security) - or Down a Rabbit Hole—orBureaucracy Run Amok

Norman Swartz

Next month Sylvia turns 65 and recently received forms from the Canadian Government to fill-out so as to receive Old Age Security.

Sylvia did so, but then, in turn, received a letter saying that, as an immigrant, she has to produce a certificate showing when and where she arrived in Canada. Oddly, no such certificate was ever required when she applied for her passport or for her Canada Pension Plan entitlement.

However, Sylvia has no such certificate. She arrived in Canada in 1953, from England (where she was born), at the age of eight in the company of her parents and older sister. Her father is deceased and her mother suffers severe Alzheimer's Disease. Whatever documents there were are now lost. So Sylvia was instructed to apply to Canadian Immigration for a copy of the relevant document. To that end, she had to download from the Web, and fill-in, **four(!!!)** forms and submit copies of her passport, proof of citizenship, and a copy of her birth certificate. The accompanying instructions said to mail the package to an office in Vancouver. Today Sylvia received a letter from that office, containing a receipt for their \$30 fee, along with the information that the request was being forwarded to Ottawa and that the typical wait for processing to be completed is **seven months!**

Isn't it odd that a person who has been a citizen since 1961, has filed income taxes throughout her adult working life, who holds a Canadian Passport, and who receives the Canada Pension Plan, is made to jump through so many hoops to qualify for the Old Age Security benefit? I wonder how many other persons who find themselves in this same bureaucratic labyrinth finally throw up their hands and say, "Oh, the hell with it!"?

A Cautionary Tale

Dave Huntley

About fifteen years ago we had been involved in an extensive study of sand dunes in the prairie provinces; the objective was to find the relation between climate and dune activity. Our part was to determine the ages of the dunes, and it became clear that the last period of major dune activity in the Great Sand Hills of southern Saskatchewan started ca. AD1800.

Steve Wolfe, a geographer at the Geological Survey of Canada, who was leading the work was eager to find some record of the climate covering that time span. He came up with a paper by Roslyn Case and Glen MacDonald at the Geography Department of McMaster University; they had studied the widths of tree-rings in the Rocky Mountain foothills of southwestern Alberta, some 350 km to the west. This area has a different climate and its relevance might be questioned, but that is not my point.

They studied trees at three sites, two of them were at Crowsnest Pass and one km apart; the widths of their rings showed some measure of similarity in variations with time, but some notable differences. The third site was 150 km to the north near Calgary. The pattern was quite different and to my eye it was uncorrelated with the first two patterns. The authors then averaged this third pattern with the average of the first two and claimed the result was a "487 year reconstruction of annual precipitation in southwestern Alberta". When I read this I was extremely unhappy at this conclusion; it looked to me like they had averaged two uncorrelated sequences, the average being meaningless. I wrote to MacDonald asking him about this but I never received a response.

Now the averaged sequence of Glenn and MacDonald showed a pronounced dip (dry period) at AD 1800. This occurs as a result of a pronounced dip in the Calgary record being combined with unremarkable low points in the other records. There are other dips in their averaged sequence and as far as I am concerned these could all be statistical artefacts resulting from averaging two unrelated sequences that appear to be random. I had much discussion with Steve Wolfe on this matter and did not want the Case and MacDonald result to be used in our paper in any significant way. I lost.

In this way what was either a local precipitation minimum or an artefact due to an unknown cause at one site in the Rocky Mountain foothills has now become a regional minimum for the southern prairies. The only way to find this out is to go back to the original paper and study it carefully.

Membership Statistics

New

Alton S.Harestad-Biological Sciences

Paul Shaker - Education

Christine Prisland - Humanities

Ken Thornton - ESPM

Renate Doege Education

Deceased

Fran Frazer - English

Ian Thorson- TRIUMF

William Liu - Interpretation and Translation Program

Hari Sharma - Sociology(had been member 2000-2001) but did not renew -

Withdrawn

Fred Murray

Lifelong Learning at SFU Harbour Centre: The Seniors Program

Julian Benedict, Coordinator, Seniors Program

For 35 years, the SFU Seniors Program has provided lifelong learners with academically challenging and intellectually stimulating courses. As a charter faculty member of the university, the program's director, Dr. Alan Aberbach, knows the history of the program well. "It is all about learning what you want in later life," he says, "with over 65 non-credit courses annually, we offer a wide variety of topics that are sure to interest everyone, including English Literature, History, Political Science, and more." Students come from all backgrounds, and range in age from 55 to 94.

Program courses begin in January, May, and September, and typically meet once per week, for 2 hours, over a 6-week term. With baby boomers increasingly choosing to retire, enrollment has steadily grown over the last ten years, from about 200 students per semester, to a high of 1260 in the fall of 2009. Aberbach encourages former staff and faculty to attend the program's low-cost courses and free forum events, which are held at the Harbour Centre campus in downtown Vancouver. "We encourage everyone to check out our website or call us for more information," he says.

New non-credit courses will begin in early March 2010. For more information, learners can call 778.782.5212 or visit www.sfu.ca/seniors

Walking group outings in 2010

Bob Horsfall

Jan. 6- Burnaby Lake walk: Twelve walkers began at Piper Spit, crossed the dam at the Brunette River end, and followed a series of trails around the lake. It was a beautiful day with reasonable weather, and a lively discussion of the virtues (or lack thereof) of dredging the lake ensued!

Jan. 20- Stanley Park walk: Six people showed up, found no group, and walked separately. Janet Blanchet tells us that "It was a lovely day for the walk, and I was quite pleased with myself when I had completed it".

Jan. 27 - West Vancouver Seawall walk: The Burrs led a birding walk enjoyed by 18 happy walkers. Jay identified lots of birds, and everybody enjoyed the great views of Vancouver.

Feb. 3 - Sasamat Lake/Woodhaven Swamp walk, with eight participants: a new walk for several of us, and the area offered lovely views of both lake and swamp sections.

February 10 - Burnaby Lake walk, with 8 or 10 participants: We did it counter-clockwise for variety, and two of us chose to augment it by adding the Conifer and Spruce Loops.

February 17 - Buntzen Lake walk: Six people walked along the east side of the lake on the trail, returning by the Hydro service road. There was general agreement that the scenery at Buntzen is spectacular, and is worth a return visit.

February 24—PoCo Trail walk. Four participants began at the Hyde Creek Recreation Centre where we walked downstream, continuing along De Boville Slough to the Pitt River, then a short distance downriver and returning. The weather was problematical, though not as bad as we had feared. It was an easy, flat walk with good views; under better weather conditions, we'll do it again

March 3 - Capilano-Pacific walk was enjoyed by 13 people. Many of us had never been on that walk before, and enjoyed it very much. The forest and river views are excellent, but unfortunately when we got to the dam the clouds limited our view of the Lions complex to a few minutes.

March 10 - Lynn Headwaters walk, "enjoyed" by 6 hardy participants (the weather was pretty ugly, with rain below, and increasing snow as we ascended). When we met sticking snow on a couple of the bridges, we decided to call it quits for the day. The company was great; the weather wasn't!

The participants vary from walk to walk. We're a convivial bunch, sometimes doing a lot of talking as we walk. All of us have enjoyed going on new (to us) walks. Newcomers are welcome—come join us!

The Social Scene

Tom O'Shea,
Socialist

On March 4th, 13 members of the SFURA attended the Burnaby Lyric Opera production of Mozart's opera *Così fan tutte* at the Shadbolt Centre. This turned out to be a wonderful evening of an updated *Così* that included cell telephones and a hockey training camp in Regina. It was a pleasure to hear young strong voices in an intimate environment. Evelyn Palmer very kindly publicized the event for the SFURA and she and Leigh hosted the group at their home following the performance. The evening was made complete with brownies and vintage wine. My thanks to Evelyn for making the arrangements for this event.



Who are the people on the photo and where was the picture taken?

