Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Our President...

I’m pleased to introduce the 2012-2013 SFURA Board who were elected at the May Annual General Meeting. Tom O’Shea is our former President and our former and present ‘socialist’ who has already organized the groups for the Vancouver Canadians baseball game at Nat Bailey and the Day at the Races at Hastings Park. Charles Crawford recently completed teaching a graduate course in evolutionary psychology at Jilin University in Changchun China.

John D’Auria continues his work in nuclear chemistry with Triumf. Percilla Groves who initiated the “Ask Us Here” service in the SFU Library was the lead in producing the newest SFURA brochure. Karen Kirkland was the manager of graduate programs in Education and will be helping to organize our social events this year. Most of you have seen Ron Long’s photos from his work in IMC but he has branched out leading travel groups in Guatemala and Africa. After many years of organizing Convocation ceremonies, Marilyn Pankratz has travelled to Thailand and Indonesia.

Our special advisors, Marilyn Bowman, Len Evenden, Margaret Jones, and Evelyn Palmer continue to provide wise counsel and guidance. Maurice Gibbons, the great champion for self-directed learning has agreed to take over the editing of the SFURA Newsletter from Tom Poiker who did a fine job.

Allow me to give a brief introduction in case you’re wondering who is the current President of SFURA! I’m Hiromi Matsui and I worked at the University for 28 years, most recently in the Faculty of Applied Sciences on Diversity and Recruitment. I’m continuing my volunteer work on the Board of the Canadian Centre for Women in Science, Engineering, Trades and Technology.

Adventures in the Pacific

Greetings from Palau in the far western Pacific. Sandra and I have been traveling almost since the 9th of June. Since the 6th of July, we have been to Korea (9 days), Taipei (2 days), and now Palau for the next 12 days. Here are some notes I made while we were in Taipei.

After dinner this evening we sat on steps out front of our hotel--Grandee Taipei--and watched the hundreds and hundreds of people wandering in, out, and around the Shilin Night Market. It is impossible to describe this nightly event, a moving
mass of humanity, joyfully eating, talking, laughing, buying, weaving in and out of cars, buses, and millions of motor scooters. Our guide today said there are 20,000,000 people in Taipei, and 23,000,000 scooters. They are everywhere, parked during the day, handle bar to handle bar, on all the main streets. Loved the site of baby girl/boy, standing in front of mom, who is sitting in front of dad all on one scooter. Sat on the steps amongst 20 or so young people, and young families, who bought food and drink in the market alleyways and came in search of a place to sit and eat. Streets are spotless: no one, and we mean no one, throws trash on the street. They will walk a half block or two in order to deposit trash in a bin or plastic bags placed along the streets. The cars, buses, and scooters weave effortlessly amongst each other, very few horns honking, everyone seems to make space for the ‘other’ guy. We’ve been quite taken by Taipei, have added it to the list of places we’d come back to in order to explore further. Signing off now to go to bed for our second and final night in the hotel opposite the Shilin Night Market.

The picture above is of our hotel, and the man is sitting on the steps I mention in this short piece. The picture was taken in the morning when the neighbourhood is asleep from working the night before.
In My Opinion...

Marilyn Bowman

Becoming Alone

Earlier this year my life’s companion of 45 years, Andrew Ross, died after a short sharp ten weeks’ destruction by cancer. In the time since then I have been learning to live alone.

I realize that even when our loved ones are near, unless we are physically in the same place they reside most of the time in our memories. After death, our loved ones’ existence in our thoughts has not really changed, they are still with us there. But what has changed is our future expectation of being alone. When those we love are alive we always expect to see them again, to talk with them, share stories, and test ideas with them. When they are gone from our lives, we no longer have that expectation, and this is what creates a profound feeling of being alone.

When I return to my house after a trip now, I feel solitary in a way I never did before. There is no real ‘home’ there because home is just me, and I can be anywhere. The absence of an expectation to be joined again with a loved one completely changes the experience of life. Planning to go to a movie or public event is different when we are alone; the absence of a dear person to share events with and to remember them with changes the nature of those events.

As I drift alone through weekend expeditions we used to share, the meaning of routine encounters is changed in subtle ways. Buying flowers from the Lonsdale Quay vendor we knew for years no longer interests me because Andrew is not there to give me his unique comments on my choices. I always had great pleasure asking for them because his aesthetic sense was more complex and interesting than mine. The changed meanings can be quirky too. The Steveston floating dock no longer means I can thrill myself with walking on the outside edge in spite of my erratic tendency to topple, because Andrew is not at my side to save me.

I am still learning how to be alone, and it is a new kind of learning. In the past it was easy to be solitary without feeling lonely because of the expectation that the solitude and separation from my loved one was only temporary. Knowing that it is permanent makes living different in a way that cannot be truly remedied by seeking social activities. It is a new way of life. I am learning how to be alone.

The Socialist Report

Tom O’Shea

As some of you may know, I was the SFURA Socialist until May 2011 when I took up the mantle of President for the 2011-12 year. During that year we were unable to find someone to serve as social organizer, and I think that members missed having opportunities to get together and experience new things. Now that I’m Past-President, with extraordinarily ill-defined job responsibility, I’d like to resume the job of Socialist, at least for the coming year.

In this inaugural column of the newsletter under Maurice Gibbons’ capable leadership, I would like to review recent SFURA social events, announce forthcoming events, and suggest possible future events. I welcome suggestions, comments, criticisms, and anything else members would like to submit. Just put fingers to keyboard and email me at oshea@sfu.ca.

First of all, I’d like to thank Elizabeth Michno for identifying and organizing a number of monthly Thursdays last Spring at the Shadbolt “A Little Lunch Music” series. We typically had a table of 8 to 10 attendees for buffet lunch and live entertainment. Both lunch and entertainers varied in quality, but the location and price are right. I think we should do this again next year if the series is repeated.

On July 20th, 20 members attended a Vancouver Canadians baseball game at Nat Bailey stadium. This is becoming an annual event and provides an excuse to drink beer and eat peanuts and foot-long hot dogs. I still don’t recommend their hamburgers; they remind me of Mrs Lovett’s meat pies in Sweeney Todd. But I digress. We had a good day.

On August 11th, 32 members gathered for the annual Day at the Races and the Marg Jones Handicap. In contrast to the Nat Bailey hamburgers,
The Socialist Report continued

the buffet at Hastings Track is excellent, and the service is great. Most of us hung on through all eight races, in spite of mostly losing betting records. But at $2 a bet, how much can you lose? The best result belonged to Marilyn Walkley who bet on horses 4, 5, and 6 in the 7th race. The three finished in that order and she walked off with $80 on a $6 bet.

Now for forthcoming events. We are delighted that Karen Kirkland has joined the executive and she will be setting up the second annual Fall Luncheon at the DAC on September 26th. This is an informal gathering around a buffet lunch where members just meet and chat and renew old acquaintances at the beginning of the new academic year.

In October, I hope to organize a tour of the Port of Vancouver, with lunch at a nearby downtown site.

On a peripheral note, I’m facilitating a lecture series by SFURA members at the Wilson Centre in Port Coquitlam. It looks like a number of members are interested in presenting, and the Wilson Centre has been very supportive. The first presentation in the proposed series is tentatively scheduled for October 11th at 1:30 pm and will feature Malcolm Toms on the topic "Sappers and Gold-miners: Theatre in British Columbia." A very reasonable lunch is available at the Centre, and I’m assured that SFURA members would be welcome to attend. This series would serve particularly SFURA members living in the tri-cities area who might find travel to our Vancouver events problematic. If you’re interested, let me know and I’ll send registration information to you.

Finally, as we all know by now, the Vancouver Playhouse theatre has ceased operation. In the past we attended a number of Playhouse matinee events, and I would be interested in suggestions for suitable afternoon theatre performances at other venues. Please let me know your thoughts.

FOR A GOOD READ . . . .
BY PERCILLA GROVES

"People say life is the thing, but I prefer reading," to quote Logan Pearsall Smith. For many years I worked in the SFU Library, but contrary to popular opinion, librarians do not actually read much on the job. They are too busy teaching research classes, setting up web pages, ordering e-journals, refining policies, advising on journal publication policies, and so on. Now that I no longer work I indulge my addiction whenever possible. The books referenced in this column are some that caught my attention in the past few weeks.

The Library Book: A History of Service to British Columbia (Vancouver: British Columbia Library Association, 2011) celebrates BC libraries large and small. Meticulously researched by Dave Obee, a Victoria Colonist reporter, this was one of the top three titles recently honoured by the BC Historical Federation. Those born in BC are sure to find photos and stories about a familiar library, no matter how small their home town. A great gift for anyone devoted to literacy.

All Roads Lead to Wells: Stories of the Hippie Days (Half Moon Bay, BC: Caitlin Press, 2012). Susan Safyan wove together recollections of dozens of the people who converged on Wells, a remote settlement near Barkerville, during the back-to-the-land movement of the last century. Several of these adventurers later became SFU students, as did Susan herself. Even if you were too old (or too young) to be a hippie yourself, you will find it easy to admire the energy of these optimists.

My Polio Memoir. (Lulu Press, 2011). Ida Curtis wrote this story of her teen-age experience with a life-changing illness as a gift for her family. The rest of us can order our copies from www.lulu.com. Many newsletter readers will have known Ida during her years at SFU and will be delighted by this personal account. Ida and her husband Jared now live in Seattle and maintain their SFU connection through SFURA memberships.

The Butcher Boy. (London: Picador, 1992). Like Kevin of We Need to Talk about Kevin the teen-age boy who is the central character is a pure psychopath. However, whereas for me Kevin had no redeeming features, the well-named butcher boy was weirdly engaging, perhaps because author Patrick McCabe let his anti-hero tell his own story. By the time I

When two visiting Australians met in the DUC for the first time, one told the other, "I came here to die." The other bloke smiled and said, "I came here yester die."
Some people say we should go quietly into old age, but I’m with Dylan Thomas when he writes, ""Do not go gentle into that dark night/ Rage, rage against the dying of the light."" We can fill these pages with the indignities that gather with the years, but to what end? Besides, I don’t remember adolescence or the start-up years as any piece of cake either.

We have to keep the walls from closing in. Throw open the doors and walk through them to the next adventure. Our greatest dangers lie in the bog of inactivity--both mental and physical--and the sog of over-eating and over-watching. Losing old friends and getting cut off from others is a drag-me-down too. When it's most difficult to get going is when we need to get going the most. Fortunately, there are promising signs that in this period of decline, the body, mind, and spirit are all capable of renewal, but alas, only with effort. Psychologist, Erik Erikson, put it starkly when he said that we have the choice in our seniority to achieve generativity or endure stagnation until we do. That's a no-brainer choice, isn't it?

The secret is to be engaged, to challenge ourselves, and to continue giving our lives meaning. Fortunately, we have models to emulate all around us: old guys taking up marathons and walking to the poles; aging women sailing around the world alone and swimming across vast, shark-infested waters. I am amazed at how many of our peers are doing great work for others at home and abroad--in Africa for example. And it seems that nobel laureates are usually geezers, too.

So if they can do that, surely we can take long walks, help a neighbor, plant a bulb in a pot, or write an article for the newsletter--and push on from there to amazing heights. The journey starts with a single step, and who knows where it will lead. And as Joseph Campbell says, we will not be alone, but with all the heroes of myth and history to show us the way.

Don't diminish; rage a little, and keep that light burning brightly. Grrrr!
Elder Banking...PRICELESS!!

Shown below is an actual letter that was sent to a bank by an 86 year old woman. The bank manager thought it amusing enough to have it published in the New York Times.

Dear Sir:

I am writing to thank you for bouncing my check with which I endeavored to pay my plumber last month. By my calculations, three nanoseconds must have elapsed between his presenting the check and the arrival in my account of the funds needed to honor it.

I refer, of course, to the automatic monthly deposit of my entire pension, an arrangement which, I admit, has been in place for only eight years.

You are to be commended for seizing that brief window of opportunity, and also for debiting my account $30 by way of penalty for the inconvenience caused to your bank.

My thankfulness springs from the manner in which this incident has caused me to rethink my errant financial ways. I noticed that whereas I personally answer your telephone calls and letters, --- when I try to contact you, I am confronted by the impersonal, overcharging, pre-recorded, faceless entity which your bank has become. From now on, I, like you, choose only to deal with a flesh-and-blood person.

My mortgage and loan repayments will therefore and hereafter no longer be automatic, but will arrive at your bank, by check, addressed personally and confidentially to an employee at your bank whom you must nominate.

Be aware that it is an OFFENSE under the Postal Act for any other person to open such an envelope. Please find attached an Application Contact which I require your chosen employee to complete. I am sorry it runs to eight pages, but in order that I know as much about him or her as your bank knows about me, there is no alternative.

Please note that all copies of his or her medical history must be countersigned by a Notary Public, and the mandatory details of his/her financial situation (income, debts, assets and liabilities) must be accompanied by documented proof.

In due course, at MY convenience, I will issue your employee with a PIN number which he/she must quote in dealings with me.

I regret that it cannot be shorter than 28 digits but, again, I have modeled it on the number of button presses required of me to access my account balance on your phone bank service. As they say, imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

Let me level the playing field even further. When you call me, press buttons as follows:

IMMEDIATELY AFTER DIALING, PRESS THE STAR (*) BUTTON FOR ENGLISH

#1. To make an appointment to see me
#2. To query a missing payment.
#3. To transfer the call to my living room in case I am there.
#4 To transfer the call to my bedroom in case I am sleeping.
#5. To transfer the call to my toilet in case I am attending to nature.
#6. To transfer the call to my mobile phone if I am not at home.
#7. To leave a message on my computer, a password to access my computer is required. Password will be communicated to you at a later date to that Authorized Contact mentioned earlier.

#8. To return to the main menu and to listen to options 1 through
#9. To make a general complaint or inquiry.

The contact will then be put on hold, pending the attention of my automated answering service.

#10. This is a second reminder to press * for English.

While this may, on occasion, involve a lengthy wait, uplifting music will play for the duration of the call. Regrettably, but again following your example, I must also levy an establishment fee to cover the setting up of this new arrangement.

Your Humble Client,
Elaine Somerville

p.s. Don't make old people mad.
We don't like being old in the first place, so it doesn't take much to piss us off.

[Supplied by Dave]
When Maurice asked us to send in stories that might be of interest to SFURA members, I emailed him a three line note indicating that Barbara and I enjoyed cruising. Maurice, in turn, asked that I expand on my experiences, so I did.

The very first cruise we took was a short one to Mexico with a stop in Puerto Vallarta. Two good things about that cruise. First, I like Margaritas and I had several very good ones. Second, we met up with Bill and Jane Saywell who have a nice condo in Puerto Vallarta where we had lunch and talked about the “old days.”

**Down the Danube to Budapest**

Probably our most enjoyable cruise was on the Danube. From a few miles south of Munich, we cruised to Budapest, and ports in between. I always wanted to visit Prague. It had been an open city during the world war and therefore very historical and with no bruising from the battles. Many SFURA members know that before Barbara and I travel, I send an email asking if anyone has contacts. I made contact with a former UBC professor now in Budapest. He spent a day with us visiting historical sites on both sides of the river. I cannot say that Hungarian food is high on my list of preferences.

Another trip we liked was from Valparaiso to Buenos Aires. Valparaiso is the port for Santiago. We were lucky to find a great guide who spent three days with us touring that richly historic city. The cruise went around the southern tip of South America. The Captain said that it was the calmest trip that he had ever taken. I understand that some similar trips experienced a lot of difficulty. We eventually landed in Buenos Aires. We really liked the city and the food was superb. Prior to that trip I always found Argentinian wines very poor. In fact, because they are excellent and not expensive, they are now my first choice in reds.

**It Isn’t Always Smooth Sailing**

Our fourth trip was flying to Singapore and cruising back to Beijing. Singapore is a marvelous city. The brother of one of Barbara’s friends spent a lot of time with us. The only bad moment in Singapore was when I ordered a Singapore Sling at the Famous Raffles Hotel. It cost $25 and was awful. On the way back, the ship was going to stop in Nagasaki and we had arranged to have lunch with a friend who was going to fly in from Tokyo. Our timing was not good. Japan’s tsunami was happening.

Our ship did not stop in Nagasaki, our friend did not fly in, and we flew directly to China. I was surprised at how modern Beijing is. I had not expected it. We saw the usual tourist sites in the area. Our Air Canada tickets were for flying home from Beijing with a stop over in Tokyo. Luckily, we were able to reroute by way of Seoul.

Barbara and I have done a lot of traveling since we retired. The other day I actually counted the number of countries we have visited. Turns out to be 40. As we get older, cruising is our first priority. I recommend it.
Financial Planning Seminars Yield Solid Advice

By Marv Wideen, Tom O’Shea, and Philip Mah

Our Financial Planning seminars offered for retirees and others in the SFU community have spanned a variety of topics described in previous newsletters. The presenters have included retirees, administrators from SFU, and commercial sales people.

In this article, we discuss what they can mean to us as retirees, and the full range of options they represent. We use the visual below to locate our comments on a spectrum of financial opportunities.

Our first point rests on the wide range of possibilities that exist for our investments; no right answer exists when it comes to managing our money for and during retirement. For example, the old mantra, ‘buy good investments and hold them’ shown to the right of our figure was challenged by George Suart, Konrad Colbow, and Larry Albright who shared their experiences of buying and selling stocks and options as a way of building financial resources. Jovin Shen from the Online Trading Academy and Bill Gruver expanded that option as they described how short-term trading, shown on the left of our visual, can create wealth by those taking on the role of pro-active traders.

During one of our first seminars, a group of retirees including Marilyn Bowman, Leo Eutsler, Larry Albright, Allan Black, and Marvin Wideen spanned several parts of the spectrum from the use of mutual funds and bank notes to the use of paid advisors for pro-active investing. The returns offered by the examples that speakers used to illustrate their points ranged from 8% to 23%.

Each year, we have attempted to solicit ideas from retirees who have undertaken changes to their investment portfolio. Recently, Tom O’Shea described his investment history since joining SFU and the reasons for making shifts in his mutual funds portfolios and the advisors managing them.

Phil Mah also described how he had shifted his portfolio in mutual funds shown near the right of the spectrum. Investing in mutual funds offers great opportunity, but as presenters noted in this session high fees can be problematic.

Four points sum up our approach.

1. As indicated by our spectrum diagram below, we endeavoured to explore the different investment vehicles available.
2. We gained insight from sales representatives and practitioners by having them illustrate the "how to" methodology for each type of investment.
3. We tried to examine the benefits and risks of each type of these investments.
4. We encouraged attendees to ask questions and decide for themselves the best course of action to take.

In setting up this series of seminars we have always been neutral in promoting one type of investment over another. We are not attempting to persuade but to provide information and discussions. We welcome your suggestions for future seminars.
Dollars and Sense  Konrad Colbow

First let me point out that I am merely an experienced investor with about 40 years of trading activity, and about 15 years as Chair of the SFU Faculty Pension Trustees when times were good! However, I am not a registered "Investment Advisor", so you make your own decisions! Here is what works for me:

1. Both my RIF and unregistered funds are in "Margin Accounts" with the discount brokerage arms of the Canadian Banks where I believe funds are quite safe Canadian Banks where I believe funds are quite safe.

2. Within these accounts you can have a Saving Vehicle yielding 1.2 %, insured by the government up to $100,000, with transfer in and out with no fees and next day settlement. These seem to be a better deal than the traditional "Money Market Funds", which carry excessive management expenses. I sometimes have up to 10% in these "Saving Accounts", waiting for a better investment opportunity.

3. I do not like Mutual Funds, since management expenses are not justified by the performance of the average fund, and guessing which fund will be the best performer in the coming months is just as hard as finding tomorrow’s winning stock.

4. I find that ETF's (exchange traded funds) are a better deal, in particular XIU (S&P/TSX 60 index), which contains the 60 largest Canadian Companies and has a management expense ratio of only 0.17%. XIU is highly liquid (important), the buy and sell charges are usually only 1 cent apart, and it has a put and call option.

5. I do not like to tie up my funds for 5 or 10 years at 3 or 4% in bonds, particularly at my age!

6. I sometimes make short-term stock trades of less than a week, but that is not easy. You have to pay a lot of attention, and must be prepared to have one bad trade for every two good ones, even if you do well!

7. So what is left for a reasonably "safe investment”? Buy 1000 shares XIU for about $17,960 (today) and sell 10 calls (this is called covered call writing). Commission on the stock purchase should be no more than $9.99, and the 10 calls only $22.49!

You have 2 choices: The optimist will sell 10 calls on Dec 17 for $ 778, after commission, which will be 4.6% over 4 months or 13.8% per year. The pessimist will sell 10 calls on Dec 16 for $1278 after the commission, which is 1.7% for 4 months or 5.1% per year.

In addition, both will receive a dividend of $0.46, which equals 2.7% per year. This is the return for the optimist if the XIU are at the same price of $16.96 (or higher) on the third Friday in December. The pessimists are making 4.4% (1.7+2.7) even if the shares of XIU drop $0.96 or about 6% between now and December. If you are not familiar with options, Google "options" or “Montreal Exchange" to learn more. Good luck!

In Memoriam  Evelyn Palmer

Donalda Halifax was part of the Nursing Team at SFU and a member of the Retirees Association. She passed away August 4, 2012 after a short illness.

Keith Slessor, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry, passed away on July 18, 2012. He taught at SFU from 1966 to 2005, and received many teaching and research awards. His obituary in the Vancouver Province is at this website--:http://www.legacy.com/obituaries/theprovince/obituary.aspx?n=keith-slessor&pid=158757439#fbLoggedOut
It's All About You

Evelyn Palmer

A new series in the SFURA Newsletter about significant events in the lives of members.

James Dean, Professor Emeritus, Faculty of Business Administration

James Dean continues to be active professionally and otherwise. In January he presented a controversial but prescient paper at the annual American Economics Association meetings called "Euroland: How the Core Cremated the Periphery". In April he broke a rib on an "unbroke" horse in Canyon de Chelly, Arizona but was rescued by the film crew making "Lone Ranger Returns" with Johnny Depp playing Tonto. They had leased all "broke" horses in the Canyon. In May he gave a talk at Carleton University's Alumni Anniversary called "Paradoxes of Globalization: Relapse of the West and Renaissance of the East?" In May - June he spent five weeks at the Economics University of Bratislava as part of an EU project to upgrade their PhD program and research. He taught a PhD course and co-authored a paper called "How Slovakia Kept the Confidence Fairy". In July he gave a paper on the euro-crisis at a conference in Thessaloniki, and then participated in an annual conference on global monetary issues hosted by Robert Mundell (Honorary PhD, SFU 1998 and Nobel Prize, 1999) at his 13th century palazzo near Siena. He then spent four days in Languedoc with Steven Davis (Professor Emeritus, SFU) discussing, inter alia, the philosophical foundations of economics. July 15 - 31, his Slovakian co-author, Eva Muchova, was a Visiting Professor at Simon Fraser.

Monique Layton, Former Director of Distance Education Programs, School of Criminology

I'm just recovering from a horrendous year: a few broken bones while in Quebec in June 2011, resulting in lots of stainless steel from hip to mid-calf, a reconstructed knee, five months in hospital, and nine months in rehab. Then bed bugs (no point describing the dreadful nuisance to those who have never had them - those who have will understand). And for a hat trick: all my jewelry was stolen from our apartment (all meaningful items given to my mother by my father). This could have been so much worse that I feel myself extraordinarily lucky to be now walking with a cane at home and with a walker outside -- and bug free, to boot.

On the other hand, I have been writing a lot, with two finished books, Streetwalkers and the Art of Bullshitting (2010), based on my dissertation; Notes from Elsewhere. Travel and Other Matters (2011); and a third one in draft form, Passage to Tahiti, that involves a lot of eighteenth-century and contemporary research.

I want to hear the latest news from everybody...babies, jaywalking tickets, volunteer work, honours, trips, whatever is happening in your life that is important to you. Tell me about it at evelyn@sfu.ca. EP.
ON THE POLITICAL SCENE…
Ted Cohn

CHANGING GLOBAL RELATIONS

The 1980s and 1990s were marked by a severe foreign debt crisis in Latin America and Africa, and a financial crisis in East Asia. The US and International Monetary Fund helped deal with these crises, and many believed that developing countries (the South) should pattern their policies after the US. The developed countries (the North) felt they had little to learn from these crises, because they did not have the severe indebtedness problems of the Africans and Latin Americans, or the overly close government-business ties or “crony capitalism” of the East Asians.

However, events in the 21st century have pointed starkly to the fallacy of these assumptions. In 2007-9 we had the most severe financial crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. It did not stem from the South, but from the US subprime mortgage crisis. This was followed by a sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone – the 17 countries that use the euro as their currency. This crisis is not only threatening the future of the Eurozone, but also the global economy.

The world has looked to China, India, and other emerging countries to maintain demand and provide a stimulus to the global economy, and global economic power relations are clearly changing. China has become the world’s largest merchandise exporter, and it is using its revenues to secure natural resources in Canada and around the world. The South accounts for about 80 percent of the world’s population, and a narrowing of the income gap with the North is a positive change; for example, the middle class is growing rapidly in some emerging countries.

However, this more competitive global environment also presents major challenges for us: 1. We must be more willing to share global economic decision-making with the emerging countries, 2. As the wealth gap narrows between the North and some emerging countries in the South, we must ask why the gap between rich and poor seems to be increasing within Canada, the US, and a number of other developed countries, 3. If we persist in being such a consumer-oriented society, we must become as innovative in upgrading our productivity as we have become in racking up debt on our credit cards, and 4. We must reassess as a society our short and long-term priorities (wealth, culture, education, leisure, equity, the environment, etc.).

We can’t have it all.

Try Life-Writing by Tom Poiker

Most children and grandchildren seem to get interested in your stories when it is too late to tell them personally. So the experts recommend that you write them down. And don’t just keep them in your computer, print them out. This is basically what Life-Writing is all about. Now comes the task of making it interesting enough so that your descendants will actually read it. Photos are highly recommended, if not essential. You might have to search for good photos but it pays off.

When you start writing, think in terms of stories, less as a chronological series and even less as a curriculum vitae. You want to entertain and your life is the basis. It really doesn’t matter how varied your life has been. The best work I have seen was by a lady who spent most of her life in a small town in the Interior of BC but the book that she produced from this experience beats anything else.

My own experience with life writing started with a membership in a life-writing group. We meet once a month and read stories to each other. My group does not edit any work but some do. The intensity of the applause is a measure of the quality. The papers are collected and published in a booklet once a year. My second level of Life-writing started when my grand son was born on October 14, 2009. From then on, on every 14th of the month, I send a story to my son and daughter-in-law, my son prints it out, reads it to the boy and then puts it into a folder. The hope is that the boy will read it again a few decades later. At this time, my son gets the most enjoyment out of the stories, I think.

If you aren’t writing your stories now, why not give it a try?
CURAC Annual Conference
April 18 – 20, 2012

Len Evenden

SFURA is a member of the College and University Associations of Canada (CURAC), the umbrella organization for retiree associations of institutions of post secondary education. The 2012 meeting was held at the University of Victoria, with UVRA being the main sponsor and organizer, aided by UBCRA and SFURA. I attended as the SFU delegate, substituting for Tom Poiker. (Tom was SFURA’s representative for the last three annual meetings.) Other SFURA attendees and participants were Tom O’Shea, Marilyn Bowman and Hiromi Matsui. This report provides some general perspectives while a more detailed report was earlier made to the SFURA executive. That report included information and notes made by Marilyn at the conference.

The main purpose of CURAC is to coordinate the efforts of member organizations and to promote the interests of retirees from post secondary institutions. It is gradually working towards being the lead (and only) organization at the national level. Like Canadian confederation itself, the constituent units are autonomous and, given the short time of CURAC’s existence, work comparing the situation of retirees across the country is still at an early stage. Keep in mind that this collaborative work is done on a voluntary basis by retirees.

The work is of considerable interest, bringing individuals together around shared concerns. But one of the main characteristics of this (our) demographic is the progressive shrinkage in numbers and the inevitable decline in energy levels. New ‘recruits’ are always needed and welcome. A measure of CURAC’s stage of development may be noted in the information presented at the conference: across the country, about half of all those who are eligible to join their respective RAs in fact do so. Some eighty delegates were registered at the conference itself. We don’t actually know how many institutions have retiree associations, but the numbers may be increasing.

Based upon resolutions from past years, CURAC has tried to define priorities. At the Victoria meeting, considerable time was given to discussing the issue of ‘communication and visibility’. Vague though this may sound, it includes the complicated question of the symbiotic relationship between RAs and university administrations. SFURA is with the majority in having a mixed membership of academic and administrative retirees. To illustrate the complexity, I might point out that UBCRA comprises only professors emeriti, their campus connections being affected by their status as a part of the Alumni Association. (All three BC Associations have developed closer relations with their respective administrations during the last three years, and now coordinate their efforts through regularly held joint executive meetings.)

Various presentations explored issues such as health and wellness, including reference to the Canada Health Accord. SFU’s Frances Atkinson gave the main presentation on social media. (See Marilyn’s notes in the original report to the executive.) Insurance and housing were also discussed, the latter being addressed by Gordon Harris, President and CEO of UniverCity here on Burnaby Mountain.

The representative for Tapestry at UBC complemented his energetic and wide-ranging luncheon presentation at dinner. Further, reports were made on questions of pensions, physical health and cognitive functioning. Helpful presentations, based upon experience in approaching the administrations of large universities, were given by two representatives of AROHE, our sister American organization, while the question of retirees’ contributions to scholarships and other causes within institutions, was noted by some. It seems that retirees are thought to be generous in this respect, but accounting for the other numerous contributions made by retirees (continued scholarship, graduate instruction etc.) is not yet thoroughly understood.

SFURA’s involvement in this conference stimulated our thinking, and the months of preparation meant that we developed cordial relations with executives of both UVIC and UBC. Colleagues at UVIC in particular, led by John Schofield, are to be thanked for their thoughtful and energetic organization. Tom O’Shea was responsible for an important moment in the discussions that directly affected SFURA delegates, for he had the forethought to bring a fine bottle to a late night exchange of ideas between the UBC delegates and ourselves. Thanx Tom!
Editorial

So, what should the mission of a newsletter be? I have no idea, but starting from scratch, I’d have to say, news, news about our members, our organization—SFURA—and our shared interests in travel, money, reading, activities, and—from the email traffic—deals. Anything helpful. Since we are a mixed group, our mission should also represent the interests of all our members, not to mention their suffering partners. Our reporters and columnists from this edition have done a fine job of that.

But what about looking ahead and seeing some possibilities? What about aspiration? We are a significant group of well-educated people who are ridiculously well off in global terms: what might we do together that would be worthy of us and make us proud? I like that: harnessing our powers and working together to make a difference. It would announce that we are still here and still teaching by the example of what we are doing. That we are on fire, not extinguished.

What do you think? I will set up a letters to the editor for all of our members who have something to say. Please send your ideas or comments to mauricegibbons@shaw.ca. I also hope there is room for a little hilarity, besides the amusement that will arise naturally from our attempts to find a common voice and enterprise. Is there someone out there who can see the humour in who we are and what we are doing—and not doing? A pen name is always possible. If you’re on, give me a call. No. Old fashioned. Text me?

Thank you to my exceptional predecessor, Tom Poiker, for the standard that he set; and to our many contributors, both freelance writers and our established columnists—aren’t they something–and this is their first shot on short notice, so watch out! If you have something to say, please say it to us through the newsletter.

I’m all for becoming a community with character, a voice, and a purpose. There is power in our numbers, our knowledge, and our experience. We are good at talk: can we find a walk to walk? What do you say?

Maurice Gibbons
[Editor]

“Whatever you think you can do or believe you can do, begin it. Action has magic, grace and power in it.” Goethe
The Board

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<tr>
<th>Position</th>
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<tr>
<td>President</td>
<td>Hiromi Matsui</td>
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<td>Vice President</td>
<td>John D'Auria</td>
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<td>Treasurer</td>
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<td>Secretary</td>
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<td>Past President</td>
<td>Tom O'Shea</td>
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<td>Charles Crawford, Ron Long, Karen Kirkland</td>
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<td>Board advisors</td>
<td>Marilyn Bowman, Len Evenden, Marg Jones, Evelyn Palmer, Penny Spagnolo</td>
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Contributors

Sandy and Sandra Dawson  
Len Evenden  
Gnarly  No fixed address  
Philip Mah  
Hiromi Matsui  
Ton O'shea  
Tom Poiker  
George Suart  
Marv Wideen

Columnists

Dollars and Sense  Konrad Colbow  
For a Good Read  Percilla Groves  
In My Opinion  Marilyn Bowman  
It's All About You  Evelyn Palmer  
On the Political Scene  Ted Cohn  
The Socialist Report  Tom O'Shea