

Simon Says



Spring 2012
Simon Fraser University
Retirees Association

President's Report

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It seems only a short time ago I reported the virtues of the incoming executive, and now it's already time to report those of the outgoing executive and other members of the SFURA who have contributed to the ongoing success of our organization.

One of our major accomplishments this year was to develop a new website. Our thanks go to Stephanie Mitchell for helping us through the transition from the site that Norman Swartz first developed for us, through the one she (Stephanie) designed, to the new one now supported by SFU's IT Services. Thanks also to Marilyn Bowman, Perce Groves, and Hiromi Matsui for their contributions to this effort.

This year we also created a new SFURA brochure to promote the benefits of our organization. Percilla Groves, Hiromi Matsui, and Len Evenden were primarily responsible for this producing this very attractive, up-to-date, addition to our recruitment tool-box.

Evelyn Palmer organized the production of the fourth DVD—"A Conversation with Erickson and Massey, SFU Architects"—in our series on the oral history of SFU.

This year, we initiated a very successful Fall luncheon (thank you, Hiromi) at the Diamond Alumni Centre, which we hope to repeat in coming years.

Last Fall, we hosted a meeting with the UBC and UVic retiree associations at which we assisted in planning the national meeting of the College and University Retirees of Canada to be held in Victoria in April. Len Evenden served on the program committee and will stand in for Tom Poiker as our delegate this year.

Members of the executive served in their various capacities with distinction, with a particular tip of the hat to Michael Roberts for organizing our seminars and to Tom Poiker for our Newsletters. I would also like to acknowledge a number of non-executive members who continue to volunteer their time and effort: Marg Jones, Len Evenden, and Evelyn Palmer for continuing service and advice to the Board, Penny Spagnolo for maintaining our forum listserve, Marv Wideen (and Philip Mah) for organizing our financial interest group seminars, Ted Cohn (and David Ryeburn and Bob Horsfall) for organizing the walking group, Elizabeth Michno for the Shadbolt "A Little Lunch Music" series, and Kathie Wraight for layout and graphic design for our new brochure.

I'm excited about the proposed slate for the new Board and I look forward to working with everyone in some useful capacity as your Past-President. Hope to see everyone at our Annual General Meeting on May 9th.

Fall Financial Planning Seminars

During the fall of 2011 and the spring of 2012 the Financial Group organized four seminars. In November a group of retirees, including Tom O'Shea, Phil Mah, Jay Burr, Tom Poiker, described how they had planned their finances during retirement. In November, Jovin Shen of the Online Trading Academy and Bill Gruver, from SFU described their experience with Day and swing trading. In February, Ted Cohn examined the political, economic, and social aspects of foreign debt and financial crises. In April, Debbie Wilson, Director of pensions at SFU, and Robert Grauer, Chair of academic pensions, provided an overview of the retirement arrangements at SFU. The planning group listed below welcome suggestions for future seminars dealing with financial issues affecting retirees.

Marvin Wideen(widen@sfu.ca) , Tom O'shea (Oshea@sfu.ca), & Phil Mah (Pmah@sfu.ca)}}

Our Foreign Correspondent in Changchun

Marilyn Bowman

Charles Crawford, Professor Emeritus, is currently at Jilin university in Changchun, NE China, teaching a full graduate course in evolutionary psychology until 17 May. He is getting ready for his 75th birthday while there, and has suspicions that his students are secretly planning a festivity for him. His wife Carol, here, thinks he is having "the time of his life there", and enjoys his emails. He has already been featured on the university website at <http://zsy.jlu.edu.cn/> in the square photo box; he is standing beside the Dean of Social Science. Changchun has been the location of the SFU Field School in China, which I directed in the early 1990s. The city has a population of 7.5 million !!! but in its high northern prairie, feels more like Calgary without the mountains. It showers the streets with drifts of poplar fuzz in the spring. Changchun has some notoriety in modern Chinese history, as it was the capital city chosen by the Japanese as their capital of "Manchukuo", where they installed the last Qing dynasty emperor Pu Yi as their puppet emperor for a few years. His palace is still there and can be visited; it has the louche feeling of a dissipated Art Deco hangover.



Dr. Yanyan Zhang the person who was responsible for inviting Charles and who is taking care of him. The photo was taken when she took him shopping at a large, and beautiful, shopping mall.

Members' Newsy Notes

Louis Druehl

Louis Druehl (Biological Sciences, Burnaby Campus) focuses his creative energies editing The New Bamfielder (www.bamfielder.ca), a monthly paper, for this small coastal village and his physical energies cutting firewood.

Malcolm Page

Malcolm Page is Canadian delegate to the International Association of Theatre Critics assembly in Warsaw in March.

I am off tomorrow - I will try to report my travels for the Newsletter when I return next month.

Sandy Dawson

Sandy Dawson (1999 early retiree) moved on from SFU to become a professor at the University of Hawaii. He's returning to Vancouver in April (13th-17th), and bringing along 3 doctoral students, all of whom will make a presentation at the American Education Research Association (AERA) annual meeting. In July (8th-15th), Sandy and 3 other doctoral students will head for Korea to present at the 12th International Congress of Mathematics Education (ICME-12). Mid-July (18th-22nd) finds Sandy in Taipei to present at the 36th Annual meeting of the Psychology of Mathematics Education (PME-36). He concludes his July (23rd-29th) travels by convening on Palau the NSF funded Summer Institute for Project MACIMISE (Mathematics and Culture in Micronesia: Integrating Societal Experiences). Sandy is the PI for Project MACIMISE that involves 10 doctoral and 12 masters students from the Micronesian islands of the northern Pacific from the Marshall Islands through to Palau."

Mahalo, Sandy & Sandra Dawson dawsons@hawaii.rr.com

Elizabeth Michno

A Little Lunch Music Series at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts in Deer Lake Park

There were four delightful noon-hour concerts by Shadbolt Centre music instructors as well as a variety of outside musicians at Encores Cafe with a special buffet each month.

Death of a Playhouse

Tom O'Shea

"The Pulitzer Prize-winning Death of a Salesman made household names of both playwright Arthur Miller and the character Willy Loman. Willy Loman is the American everyman: the dreamer chasing unsuccessfully after greatness until he becomes consumed by the dream. He's a tragedy on a small scale, made great by his embodiment of all our fears and failures."

From the Vancouver Playhouse promotion for Death of a Salesman, February 2011

Many of you will have seen the recent notice of the closure of the Vancouver Playhouse. SFURA members will remember fondly two recent social outings to the Playhouse, one in 2009 in which we toured the production facilities on 2nd and Main and then attended a tea matinee performance of Toronto, Mississippi. The second was in 2010 where we went to an open house, including a backstage tour, and the official opening of the Rehearsal Hall below the main stage. Max Reimer, the Artistic Managing Director, was gracious and welcoming to us on both occasions.

I went to the final two Playhouse productions this year...Hunchback on the main stage, and GunMetal Blues in the rehearsal hall. Both were superb.

How sad it is to see the closure of such institutions in Vancouver. This is a result, in part, of serious reductions in support for the arts by our provincial government. One of my favourite local theatre groups, the United Players (Jericho Arts Centre) no longer receives any funding and has to get by solely on ticket sales and donations. I don't see how they can last. When gambling was officially approved in BC one of the benefits touted was that a major part of the profits would be allocated to support schools and arts organizations. Core B.C. provincial arts funding was scheduled to fall by more than 88 per cent over two years, from \$19.5 million in 2008-'09 down to \$2.25 million in 2010-'11. As George and Martha would say....sad, sad, sad.

In many ways the Playhouse is our Willie Loman...a "dreamer chasing ...after greatness until he becomes consumed by the dream ... a tragedy on a small scale, made great by [its] embodiment of all our fears and failures."

SFURA SEMINAR SERIES 2011 – 2012

Michael Roberts

September 20th 2011. Bruce Alexander led off the 2011-12 Seminar Series with a different style of a traveling through the Midwest – ‘Train Ride through Methland’. October 18th 2011. Michael Fellman’s presentation ‘Views from the Dark Side of American History’ explored a rich variety of topics beyond his research focus of the US Civil War.

January 17th 2012. We revisited the early years of the university with a joint presentation by George Suart, Klaus Rieckhoff and Jerry Zaslove – ‘Years of Turbulence at SFU (1968-70) – Three Views’. The presentation was followed by a spirited discussion. February 21st 2012. Rob Gordon gave an insightful look into the structure, strengths and weaknesses of the new crime bill – ‘Crime and Punishment in Conservative Canada’.

March 20th 2012. Lynn Copeland brought this year’s seminar series to an end with a subject that affects all of us ‘Academic Libraries – Do books matter anymore?’ Heribert Adam is going to lead off the 2012-13 Seminar Series in September with a talk on ‘Lessons from South Africa for peacemaking between Israelis and Palestinians’.

With the DAC open for lunches we were able to entertain our speakers in pleasant surroundings and with some style! We have an open invitation to anyone who attends the seminars to join for lunch afterwards – its your chance to have a chat with the speakers and retired colleagues. My thanks to everyone who attended our seminars; Charles Crawford will take over the role of Seminar Convenor for the coming year.

SFU Plant Sale

Hiromi Matsui

Spring is here and now is a great time to divide your plants and help SFU students. The 16th annual SFU Plant Sale is being held on Wednesday, May 16 and we are asking for donations of house and garden plants.

All proceeds go towards funding SFU student bursaries. Please label your pots with the name of the plants. We can arrange to pick-up up plants if necessary.

Thank you for your help.

for the SFU Plant Sale Committee

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Oral History Project Report

Evelyn Palmer

On January 17, 2012 the SFURA Seminar was: George Suart, Klaus Rieckhoff & Jerry Zaslove: "Times of Turbulence at SFU (1968 -70): Three Views". We arranged for Joel Schwarz of the Teaching and Learning Centre to videograph the seminar and the comments following the presentations. The SFURA Board does not plan to produce the dvd for sale as we have for the previous four dvd's, but it is available for viewing on the following website.

http://www.tlc.sfu.ca/archive/lecture-series/2012/2012-01-17_retirees-web/

The link will be added to the SFURA website in April.

The details of the first four DVD's are found at: <http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/about-us/dvd-oral-histories-of-sfu.html>

They are available for sale.

SFU Surrey Tour

Hiromi Matsui

SFU Surrey has celebrated its 10th anniversary and SFURA members will have a special tour on **Tuesday, April 24, 2012**. Joanne Curry, Executive Director of the SFU Surrey Campus will provide an introduction to SFU Surrey programs and an overview of developments in Surrey's City Centre. Alistair Lachlan will talk about the Arts and

Sciences programs in Surrey and we will visit the School for Interactive Arts and Technology (SIAT). Following the tour, those who are interested can have lunch at the Central City Brewing Company Pub.

SFU Surrey is easily accessible by car or transit - SkyTrain access is particularly easy. Information about directions to SFU Surrey, transit and parking is available at:

http://www.surrey.sfu.ca/maps_directions

The campus is located along the Expo SkyTrain Line, at the Surrey Central stop. On SkyTrain, it takes approximately 10 minutes from the Columbia SkyTrain station in New Westminster, 45 minutes from the Waterfront SkyTrain station in downtown Vancouver, and 30 minutes from the Lougheed Mall SkyTrain station in Burnaby.

We will meet at **10:00 AM** at the Blenz Coffee on the **second** floor - the Mezzanine. Follow the pedestrian walkway from the SkyTrain/ bus loop across the parking lot to the Central City mall and office tower, then enter the foyer of the building. Go up the Grand Staircase (there is an escalator) to the Mezzanine - Blenz is on the left. Beware: there is another Blenz on the right hand side of the Foyer on the ground floor.

If you would like to attend this event, please contact Hiromi Matsui, matsui@sfu.ca by **April 17th** and indicate if you will attend and if you will come to the lunch at the Pub.

An Opera Trip to Berlin

Marilyn Bowman

I just returned from Berlin late yesterday afternoon from a wonderful trip to see five operas. There was gorgeous singing most of the time in the five operas/two opera houses, and a wild Bruckner (8th) concert conducted by Zubin Mehta in the Philharmonic concert hall. It is a fabulous in-the-round stage with jagged waves of 3-4 balconies careening all around above. He looks dissipated, not the fab sex-pot he was so many years ago when I used to go see him in Montreal.

The L'Elisir d'Amore was terrifically funny. The tenor, Rolando Villazon, has had troubles with his vocal cords in recent years and my tour pals were not expecting very much, but his voice was in splendid Italian-tenor form, passionate and ringing and luscious, and he turned out to be a superb natural comedian. My eyes were on his every move and there were lots of them; just hilarious, and endlessly inventive. We should watch for him on the Met Opera moviecasts.

The Jenufa opera by Janacek had always puzzled me - opera experts on the Metropolitan Opera radio-casts always raved about how wonderful it was, but I only heard it on the radio and never could figure out what the excitement was all about. Pretty nice music, but... Well, the secret is, you have to see it, because all the way through, it is the most perfect combination of dramatic action, story, emotion, and music that you could ever imagine. Just thrilling. Now I know what it is all about. The plot could be easily fitted onto a deeply evolutionary model, and leaves lots of interpretive possibilities.

The MacBeth was done in a quasi-modern setting of some violent state, whose police uniforms looked like classic East German Staasi, and all the sets and costumes built up around this theme of the horrors that men and women will do for raw power. There was nothing Scottish about any of it, but it was completely brilliant. It even included two bloody nudes marching across the back of the stage at one point, and the witches were not three but a huge chorus of grey wild cleaning women who had reverence for nothing and nobody. In other scenes an oppressive background of grey men in grey suits and grey coats and bowler hats, running the gruesome office operations of the current power man whoever he might be. A fantastic staging and the soprano was wonderful.

The most striking staging was for the Tristan/Isolde opera, with a giant winged creature's huge wings rising and falling in a huge sweep across most of the stage. Gradually you realized these wings were on the body of a man, a fallen man torso with head and arms and back and with broken wings. One of our gang thought this represented a fallen angel, symbolic of the forbidden love between Tristan and Isolde. I thought maybe it was Icarus, in that they were so determined to fulfill their love/purity/ultimate passion (as represented by the sun).. that they broke man's rules and were hurtled back to earth. Who knows? But the soprano was fabulous, and despite the tedium of some of the long conversations, every time the plot came to a climax the music and singers were super.

Altogether a wonderful week. I made sure to drink a hefty dose of espresso just before each opera so I wouldn't disgrace myself by falling asleep. In fact in the first opera I was sitting by a very stern-looking German man so decided to be pre-emptive. "Do you speak English?" I asked. Yes, so I told him I was very sleepy from my jet lag, and if I fell on him, or snored, or drooled, he was supposed to knock me awake. That entertained him and we got along famously; thank goodness though, I stayed awake.

Sudan Camel Trek – January 2012

Marta Wnorowska

Last January I finally managed to leave for a long awaited trip to Sudan. It was supposed to be a 285 km camel trek across the Bayuda Desert. Meroe pyramids, Land of Kush, Battle of Omdurman, General Gordon, Lord Kitchener, and the Dervishes whirled in my imagination as I landed in Khartoum. Little did I know what kind of challenge was ahead of me!

During a few days in Khartoum, I saw all that was available to see. After loading nine women (between 60-75) and four men (56-72 + one young man) and our guide Michael Asher, a renowned writer and desert explorer into a small bus, we started driving toward Metemma, our caravan departure point some 150km north.

20 camels, 5 camel men of the local nomadic tribe and a cook from Darfur were waiting for us on the other side of the mighty river. The camels crouched nicely on the orange sand among the scrawny acacia bushes. The camel riding lesson was first. We were taught to mount, ride and dismount, learn the right commands and off we went into the desert!

Everybody was assigned their own camel for the duration of the trip.

For 10 days we had no contact with any people except occasional nomads with their herds of goats and camels. The idea was to be immersed in to a deep desert experience, taking only what we could carry with us. We were to live like the nomads. There were only two water sources on the whole route. One was a rain water reservoir in a deep rock cleft in the mountains, and the other a deep (150') well in the middle of nowhere frequented by nomads. The water when treated with iodine tasted foul but was drinkable after flavouring it.

We had a choice either riding the camel or walking and leading the camel. Each change could happen only at the hourly short stops. One could walk only or ride only or split between both. We moved through the flat terrain mostly along the wide wadis (seasonal river beds) on the hardened sand surface. Sometimes we had to drag the beast, and sometimes the beast dragged us. The camels were eager to stop at anything edible, be it thorn bushes or dead grass. The days went by in the rhythm of early wake up calls, breakfast at the break of dawn and departure shortly after, lunch around one with siesta, and the dinner after dark. On average we did 30-35km a day with one being 44km (11 hour trek), and a couple of days below 30km. It was nice and fresh during the night and about 36C at 1PM.

While one may think the landscape monotonous, it was changing all the time. The feeling of the endless space around was very powerful. Little regular cones of black hills of different height vanishing in the haze of the heat, the blowing sand, the mirages with shimmering water. As we approached Korti, Michael showed us a very thin black line on the horizon. It turned up to be a line of cliffs along the Nile. Then we knew "we made it". Even then there was still 20 km more to go. Buckets of sweat, blistered feet, bruised bums were forgotten once we had a final destination in sight. Our bus came to pick us up and we travelled to two ancient sites, Meroe and Musawwarat es-Sufra. One was an ancient necropolis of Meroitic kings (500 BC-500 AD) and the other a complex of temples dating back to Napatean period (15th-11thC BC) and than later Meroitic.

This trip was certainly an eye opener to the history and culture of a very little known region. The trip itself wasn't for the faint of heart as it was so basic and devoid of any creature comforts. It was very satisfying never-the-less.



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Marg Jones, hard at work for members of SFURA, receives a Valentines Day treat from a mysterious admirer!



A bonus for the email recipients:
Two special students of Charles Crawford
Charles submitted these after the newsletter was printed