



# SimonSays

S F U R A Newsletter



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Simon Fraser University Retirees Association



## Vancouver Heritage Walking Tours

By Tom O'Shea

This summer we discovered a wonderful resource that combines physical, social, and intellectual pursuits. One evening over dinner, friends shared with us their enthusiasm for the guided walks put on by the Vancouver Heritage Foundation. My wife decided to try one out and joined the free one-hour architectural photography walk on West Hastings at Hornby. She had a great experience and we subsequently enrolled (\$15 each) in a more extensive two-hour walking tour, led by VHF's John Atkin, of Strathcona Place. Not the Strathcona next to Chinatown but the old CPR lands starting at 33rd and Trafalgar in what is now known as the Arbutus Ridge neighbourhood. John was a great host, describing the history of land development in the area, social and political changes over the past 150 years, and the variety of architectural housing styles. Lots of time to chat with group members, take photos, and amble along under the shade of the great trees the planners had the foresight to include in their design.

More recently, Leora and I joined the (free) historical tour of West Hastings from Granville to Burrard. This short four-block section includes many of the major old buildings from Vancouver's early years. The Sinclair Centre is a great example of historical respect, uniting the old post office, the customs warehouse, the federal building, and the R. V. Winch building through a covered central arcade. Across the street is the new Norm Foster-designed Jameson House that incorporates two art deco buildings from the 1920s. The 1931 RBC building at Granville and Hastings, across from the Birks Building (originally a "temple" bank), contained a great surprise: two marvelous lower floors including a banking hall in the Florentine style with the original great brass doors preserved on either side of a connecting staircase. But our greatest delight was the interior of the Marine Building at Hastings and Burrard. How many times have we walked or driven past this building, admired the Art Deco exterior, and moved on? This time we

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## Simon Fraser University Retirees Association

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Maurice Gibbons

**SPEAKERS PROGRAM**

Yasmin Jamal

# President's Report

## Frances Atkinson

As we start a new season, I would like to extend a first-time or return welcome to you on behalf of the SFURA Board, and invite you to participate in our varied schedule of activities that allow you to enjoy social events, intellectual stimulation, and physical exercise with former colleagues and other retirees.



To bring you up to date on some of the plans for 2017, you should have already received an invitation to SFURA's Welcome Back Lunch at the DAC on Burnaby Campus on Sept 28th. Later, an Annual Fall dinner will be offered.

In addition, the Board will be discussing feedback from our recent member survey, in which respondents expressed keen interest in more day time functions (lunches and socials rather than dinners), with at least one such event occurring in the downtown area.

Three seminars will be given over the Fall on Burnaby Campus: *The Politics of International Trade*, **Ted Cohn**, September 19th; *A Naturalist Tour of Southern Africa*, **Bruce Brandhorst**, October 17th; and *City On Edge - A Rebellious Century of Vancouver Protests, Riots, and Strikes*, **Kate Bird**, November 21st. Further information on these can be found at the [www.sfu.ca/retirees](http://www.sfu.ca/retirees) website.

A Walking group hikes weekly on Wednesdays in a variety of locations in the lower mainland, and communicates by email.

A recent highlight was the Harbour Cruises boat trip up Indian Arm, which was a big success in August, with 75 members and guests participating. Evident camaraderie among participants throughout the trip made for a very special occasion. The SFURA Board will evaluate feedback received and will consider adding some form of summer outing to our regular calendar.

Running a large association involves a lot of volunteer work. I would like to thank all Board members from both last season and this, along with the tireless assistance of many others, for working hard and ably carrying out many functions, including but not limited to overseeing finances, managing member data, communicating with members, producing the website and newsletters, organizing social events and speakers' series, renewing the

association's constitution and bylaws, conducting a survey that went out to all members, producing board minutes and other documentation, and in general doing whatever needed to be done. The current Board is committed to maintaining and leveraging all the excellent work done by our predecessors to keep SFURA in good health and consider new types of activities. Information gained from the member survey, and from other feedback, has given us a fresh take to make sure we are meeting the needs and wishes of members.

In particular, the present Board extends many thanks and best wishes to two people who stepped down as of the last annual general meeting, former SFURA President John D'Auria and Board Member Reo Audette. We also extend a warm welcome to new board member Neil Abamson who will be joining me and the other board members and advisors listed at [www.sfu.ca/retirees/about-us/sfura-executive.html](http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/about-us/sfura-executive.html). Neil will be focusing on opportunities to do with University liaison.

I hope I haven't unintentionally forgotten to mention any significant contributions. Thank you to all who have helped out in any way. We are all enriched by the numerous volunteer hours freely given, that ensure SFURA continues to be a vital part of our lives. ❖

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## Images of the partial Eclipse in Vancouver August 2017



see gallery:

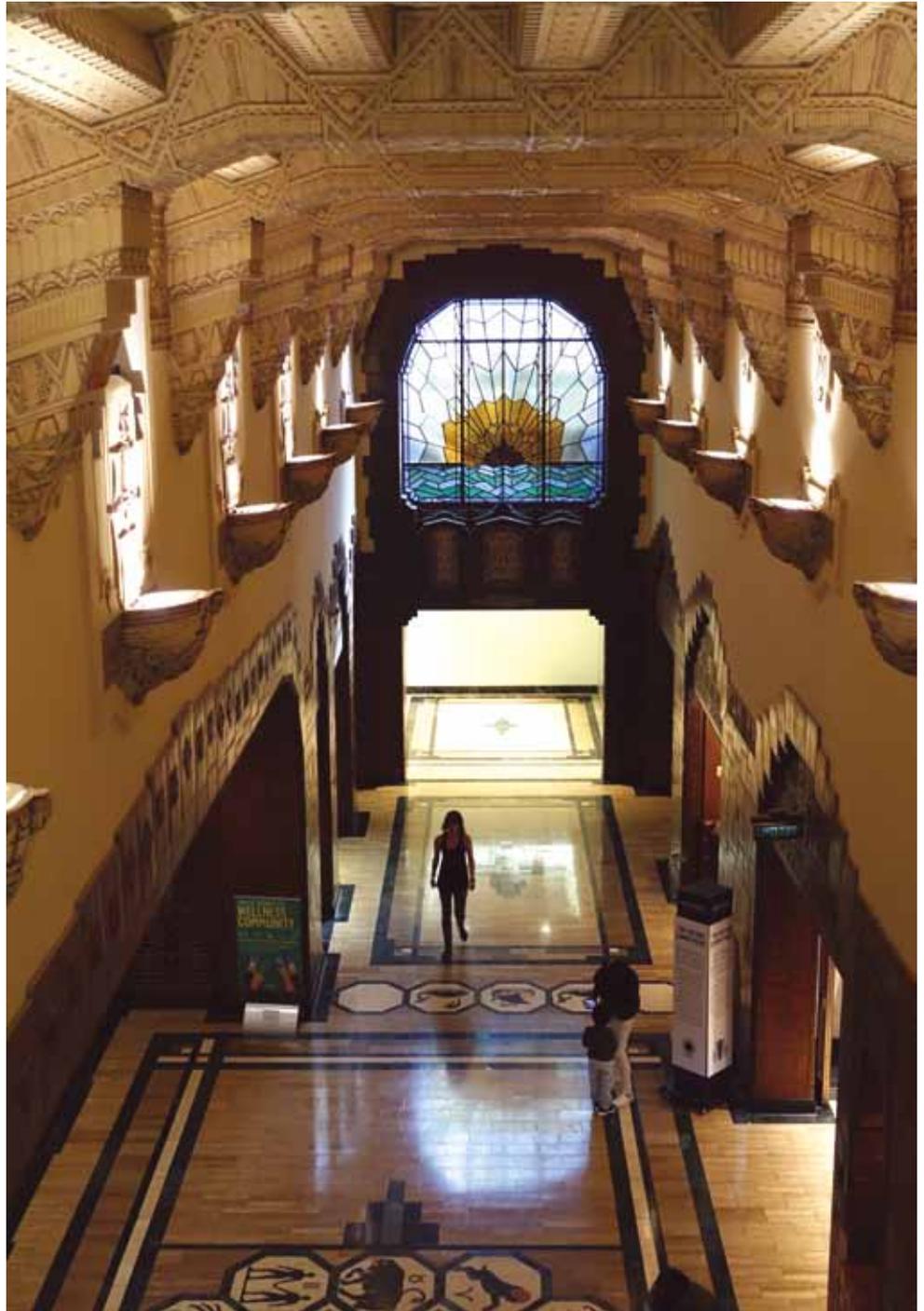
[http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/gallery/2017\\_eclipse.html](http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/gallery/2017_eclipse.html)

*continued from page1*

loitered outside the lobby doors admiring the carvings depicting a variety of ships over the years and then entered. The interior is astonishing. The floor in front of the three brass-surrounded elevators has a huge zodiac embedded in it. The walls rise two floors to upper arches that embrace carvings of plants and sea creatures and boats. We took the elevator (free to the public), with walls of inlaid wood, to the second floor and walked to the balcony overlooking the lobby to get a better view of the carvings and panelled ceiling (see photo by Leora). What a delight! Forty years of living in Vancouver without knowledge of this treasure.

So we highly recommend the events offered by the Vancouver Heritage Foundation (see <http://www.vancouverheritagefoundation.org>). These include walking tours, house tours, brown bag lunch and learn lectures, and special events such as a series

of lectures/discussions scheduled for this Fall at the Lookout on top of SFU's Harbour Centre. Hope to meet you there. ❖



## ***BC Senior's Advocate***

The Office of the Seniors Advocate monitors and analyzes seniors' services and issues in B.C., and makes recommendations to government and service providers to address systemic issues. .

Office of the Seniors Advocate on the Internet: <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca>

Phone toll free 1-877-952-3181

The first Seniors Advocate in Canada was BC's Isobel Mackenzie. ❖

## *On Managing Things*

### **Marilyn Bowman**

I have been going through old boxes of files in my basement, and musing about ownership in all its different types. Across our first sixty years, we did a lot of appropriating, taking on skills, ideas and things. Our “cultural appropriations” included learning new languages, reading the literatures of the world, attending operas created in Italy, absorbing religions from Judea, and seeing plays written in Shakespearean England from stories drawn from around the world. As we became self-supporting adults we appropriated ideas from others, using them in new ways in our research, writing, home decoration, interpersonal relations, and in creating paintings, music, and other cultural products. We also bought many things as we set up households, aided by the fantastic accessibility of every kind of object.

The next stage became imperative as we started repurposing things we had collected. We used old wood to build a new doghouse, old ethnic scarves to make a cushion cover, old materials and tools for new roles. Both my parents spent their early lives on homesteads, where repurposing everything from old equipment, old glass, and old wood and fabric was standard operating procedure in their remote farms. I still have some primeval urge to start repurposing fresh fruit and vegetables by canning and pickling every summer, remembered from childhood with my mother, even though I always forget to consume these concoctions and find ancient dusty jars of mystery chutneys in the back of my cupboard. Modern life with its excessive accessibility of things does not pressure us to repurpose.

The final stage is the best: recycling, and de-accessioning as they call it in the libraries. We are all being trained to recycle much of our garbage into categories every day, but I am also spending a lot of time “doing boxes”, sorting and filling them with good items that are all in excess to my needs to be dropped off at the thrift store for others to use. My shelves and drawers are loaded with kitchen things, boxes of professional documents, shelves of paintings, tape cassettes, records, CDs, and piano music. My closets are full of clothes, my basement with career documents, and I have thousands of books. De-accessioning is hard work because it requires actively sorting many physical objects into the reusable vs. the true garbage, but the divesting is quite pleasurable and even liberating.

As I work my way through these boxes and shelves and cupboards, I am encountering memories of past people and events. Truly letting go of most objects, books, trinkets and clothes is fairly easy and rather uplifting; with each removal, a weight seems to be lifted off my shoulders. But reminders from my cultural possessions elicit memories of the ideas, emotions, and life events of my family and friends. These memories are more complex emotionally, and increasingly fragile. They are sometimes melancholy and sometimes poignant with lost pleasures, but treasured for both reasons. De-accessioning has more emotion associated with it than I had expected, but I am pleased to be doing it. My homesteader traditions of frugality and recycling served me well across my life, but I am happy to reach the stage when I no longer need so much. ❖



# *A Gift for Persons With a Disability*

*By Dan McDonald*

Almost everyone knows someone with a disability. Think of your extensive network of family, friends, acquaintances and colleagues. Somewhere there is a person with a disability and if you could give them \$20,000 or more without in any way impoverishing yourself would you do it? You can do it.

For seven years, as a volunteer I have led workshops publicizing the RDSP (Registered Disability Savings Plan), a government-funded program that is designed to provide pension income to begin at age 60. An RDSP can be set up by/for anyone eligible for the disability tax credit up until the end of the calendar year when the beneficiary turns 59. Government money is contributed up until the end of the calendar year when the beneficiary turns 49.

As one example, the government will contribute \$20,000 (\$1,000 per year for 20 years) if the beneficiary is low income. In addition if the beneficiary/family/friend contribute \$1,500 per year, then the government contributes an additional \$3,500 per year for 20 years. The total amount of free government money can be as much as \$90,000. Neither the assets in the investment pool nor withdrawals from it by the beneficiary has any negative impact on either federal or provincial disability benefits.

It is estimated that in BC only about 25% of those entitled to set up a Registered Disability Savings Plan have done so. If you know someone who isn't sure if she or he qualifies for the disability tax credit, an online questionnaire will give an indication of eligibility.

<http://equalfutures.ca/index.php/rdsp-advisor/#top>

My message is simple. It is an incredibly generous opportunity with no downside. Tell those folks you know who have a disability about the RDSP. More information can be found at

<http://www.rdsp.com/>

<http://www.cra-arc.gc.ca/rdsp/>

It is easy to convey valuable information to those in the disability community. Just copy and paste this piece into an email and send it. They will thank you.

If you want more details or information, then contact me: [d.\\_mcdonald@telus.net](mailto:d._mcdonald@telus.net)

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Let us not, however, flatter ourselves overmuch on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel the first. The people who, in Mesopotamia, Greece, Asia Minor and elsewhere, destroyed the forests to obtain cultivable land, never dreamed that by removing along with the forests the collecting centres and reservoirs of moisture they were laying the basis for the present forlorn state of those countries.

When the Italians of the Alps used up the pine forests on the southern slopes, so carefully cherished on the northern slopes, they had no inkling that by doing so they were cutting at the roots of the dairy industry in their region; they had still less inkling that they were thereby depriving their mountain springs of water for the greater part of the year, and making it possible for them to pour still more furious torrents on the plains during the rainy seasons.

Friedrich Engels, ***Dialectics of Nature***.

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# SFURA Walking Group



# Jamming from Shanghai to Salt Spring

James Dean

Of late, the focus of my travels has turned from guest economics lectures to guest jazz jams. January promised a propitious New Year when a collection of Gen-X and Millennial ex-pats living long term in Shanghai asked me to play at a “swing” jam. SFURA members are too young to remember the prime years of swing - Benny Goodman was the King of Swing in the late 1930s – but it was he who inspired me to take up clarinet in the late 50s.

Recently, Vancouver and many other North American cities have seen an exciting revival of swing music and dancing. Our Shanghai jam in January led to another in March, followed by evenings of dancing and playing with an outstanding French band at the gorgeous Art Deco “House of Blues and Jazz” on the Bund – evocative of Shanghai’s Art Deco decadence during the 20s and 30s. Charmingly, the “revival” is not quite mature: I was invited to tutor the bartender on the making of proper gin martini.

Sadly this glamorous event was preceded a few nights earlier by the closing of the long-established “Shanghai Cotton Club” due to skyrocketing rents, but the trend of the times was clear by two am when the little club was so packed, cheek-to-bum, not to mention surreptitious smoking -- that we all feared for our lives.

Unlike Shanghai, Delhi was never known as a jazz haven, but there’s now one club, “Piano Man”: run by two superb pianists who are hard-core and dedicated. It’s so popular that by 9 pm latecomers are sprawled on



the floor and hanging from the balconies. Behind sealed glass, smokers absorb what sound they can while filling their lungs with top-ups to their daily intakes from the world’s most polluted city.

Oddly, Delhi suffers from a dearth of jazz reeds players. Hence I was welcomed onto the stage without any semblance of an audition -- lucky for me but perhaps not for them as their musicianship was world-class. But besides pianos and drums, the stage was almost entirely guitars and string bass. A curse of the modern jam world.

Throughout spring and summer, the jams continued – in Berlin, Dresden, Warsaw, Riga, Stockholm, Brussels, Paris, Montreux, Languedoc and London. Perhaps the most glamorous was the historic Hotel Imperiale in Santa Margherita Ligure, where in 1922 a postscript treaty to Versailles was signed between the

Russians and the Italians.

But none have been more meaningful than back home here on Salt Spring and Galiano Islands. Our Gulf Islands are crucibles of creativity for both young and old. There I discover destitute but sophisticated sax players in their early twenties who choose to live hand to mouth rather than cope with city life. Equally, I encounter retirees, dozens of them, who jam religiously on a Thursday night. Remarkably, some have learned to play from scratch in the past few years. Their fingers are free from arthritis, as are their minds from detritus. ❖

# For a Good Read

Reviews by Sandra Djwa, David Stouck, Jerry Zaslove



## *Son of a Trickster: Eden Robinson's Reader Transformed* / by David Stouck

In 1997 a book of remarkable short stories by a young Haisla/Heiltsuk woman came across my desk. It had been selected as Editor's Choice and Notable Book of the Year by the New York Times. That book was *Traplines* (1996) and its author was Eden Robinson from Kitimat, BC. Of the four stories in that collection, "Queen of the North" struck me as one of the best Canadian short stories ever written. Its theme was dark—violence to children that was rooted in the residential school system—but the author's touch was light, or "deft" as critics have frequently phrased it. For the next twenty years Robinson has published novels that have explored related themes, insisting in deft fashion that horror can be allied to humour.

There is an interesting trajectory in her novels as regards her reader. I would suggest that the audience for her first novel, *Monkey Beach*, with its reference to sasquatch stories, is the tourist, someone like myself from Ontario when first visiting indigenous relatives on northern Vancouver Island. The first-person narrator in *Monkey Beach* is searching for her brother lost on a fishing boat, but waiting for word and travelling the coastline becomes an occasion for introducing the reader to a unique traditional culture with its different language dialects, its myths that explain the landscape and its creatures, and its unique food practices—making "grease" to flavor food by rotting oolichans, whipping soapberries with water to create frothy "ice cream." The reader is given a tour guide of coastal British Columbia and the novel was nominated for two national literary awards. Her second novel, *Blood Sports*, further accommodates the general reader by writing about the familiar plight of non-indigenous subjects in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside.

But in her new novel, *Son of a Trickster* (announced as the first in a trilogy) the reader is no longer a tourist or outsider, but is brought to identify closely with the experiences of a 16-year-old indigenous boy named Jared. Like many of his non-indigenous peers he has some major alcohol and drug issues—he is highly valued by his friends for the marijuana cookies he bakes. But he especially engages the reader because he is a caregiver for his family—his frequently violent mother, his deadbeat father, and for his close ties to his grandmothers—the first chapter is titled "Nanas I Have Loved." He is also caregiver to elderly neighbours and their granddaughter, Sarah, who eventually shares his bed. Jared's is a coming of age story familiar to all cultures—but what is different, as the dust jacket suggests, is that his coming of age crashes up against indigenous beliefs and their unique view of the natural world.

The novel poses a connection between the use of drugs and myths. Key to that link is the brief second chapter that posits time not as a progression of sequential events, but states that all time is simultaneous. Accordingly the totemic figures of indigenous carvings and storytelling are not just historical; they transform into contemporary humans and vice versa. Jared, not yet attuned to this knowledge, is harassed on a bus to Terrace by a man who claims to be his biological father and says his name is Wee'git (Trickster). Jared moves to the back of the bus ("Christmas always brought out the crazies") and is glad to see the man get off at the next stop. But when he looks out the bus window to see if the man is really gone, he sees a raven flap upwards in his place.

*continued on page 10*

Such transformations become a pattern and source of knowledge in the book, what critic and novelist Robert Wiersema calls its magic realism. One afternoon when he is hitchhiking home after a weekend of partying, “an old Native woman” in a burgundy Cadillac stops to give him a ride. She was “perfectly respectable in a flowered dress, work jacket and square orthotic shoes,” but he saw something in her that was “dark as cedar bark, with yellowed fangs and knobby, twisted knuckles.” In spite of her solicitous concern, he shuts the door, backs away and watches “the thing underneath the Grandma-skin start to snarl.” He blames it on magic mushrooms.

Before he sees her again the narrator tells us that individual human bodies are recycled carbon that was once grass, crickets, dinosaurs, and creatures that swam in ancient oceans, and they now sing to you in your dreams. “You think they are extinct, but they wait, coiled and unthinking, in your blood and bones.”

Jared again sees the old lady, first in a dream where he is on a fishing boat with her and they are surrounded in the water by talking killer whales (the orcas remind Jared this is their hunting ground), and then fully awake after school when he stops for a pizza and sees her Cadillac in the parking lot. Again the monster underneath her skin snarls, but this time she introduces herself as Mrs. Georgina Smith, though her old name, she adds, is Jwasins. And she “doesn’t normally share dreams with humans.”

She tells him a quest story about a shaman’s two sons: the oldest wanted to succeed his father, but in his fasting and self flagellation with spikes of devil’s club, he dies. The other brother rejects his father’s life, but spirits flock to him like mosquitoes and torture him until he submits and becomes a powerful shaman. The old lady believes Jared is like the second brother. But Jared insists he has not believed in such magic since the time he stopped believing in Santa Claus. She insists he will and that she can be his guide.

Beginning in a chapter titled “Welcome to the Jungle” he sees in hallucinatory fashion numerous embodiments of indigenous narratives: a company of naked savages wearing necklaces of finger bones, humans and otters spliced together in one body, more talking ravens who insist his father is a Trickster. A grizzly bear attends a house party, but only Jared and his mother see it. His beloved Nana Sophia also transforms. He sees something with a long, terrible beak under her skin and reptilian eyes—“like a pterodactyl.”

Coming-of-age narratives embody a search for identity and Robinson ends her story with a shuffling of relationships—Who is the real father? Who is the real Nana? Monsters are also very ordinary, contemporary folks, and an important spiritual figure is also a common enough pinch penny and Bible-thumper. At the close Jared is being taken to an AA meeting.

I have followed the plotting of this narrative in terms of human psychology and indigenous mythology at the expense of the humour that pervades almost every page. Much of that humour is the subversive kind where one’s expectations are turned upside down—a mother who is more violent and foul-mouthed than any of the male characters, a “grandmother” who reveals herself a snarling wolf inside. But much of it is language—its frequent vulgarity, its pop-culture references. Chapter titles with their wide-ranging references and borrowings embody much of that blunt fun: “Cookie Dude,” “Powder House Rules,” “Oxydipal Complex,” “Ragged-Ass Road,” “Goodbye to All That,” “Sucks to be You.”

The span of this novel from brutal realism to magic realism embodies for me much of what it meant to make contact with the BC members of my extended family. But more importantly what this novel does for the non-indigenous reader is to make totem poles, masks, and legends come alive. This remarkable novel accordingly takes indigenous writing to a new level. Now Bill Reid’s first men emerging from Raven’s clamshell is in motion. ❖

# Session on Sun Life, Investments for Retirees

*FIG organizers: Phil Mah, Marv Wideen, and Tom O'Shea*

In May, the SFU Retiree Association Financial Interest Group (FIG) arranged for an information session from Sun Life. Sun Life is the provider of SFU's RRSP and TFSA savings plans in addition to being the record keeper for the Academic Pension Plan funds. The presentation was open to retirees as well as active staff and faculty. Allyson Dallas, the Coordinator of Pensions and Benefits in Human Resources at SFU introduced the Sun



Life representative, Shafique Pirani, a Senior Educational Consultant. He provided information regarding the RRSP and TFSA savings plans, including the various funds available, applicable fees and investment advantages to each plan.

We, the FIG group, asked SFU and Sun Life staff to provide this presentation for faculty and staff because many SFU faculty, when they retired were given a retirement fund which many invested with Sun Life. It has remained an important part of retirement for many and continues to be an investment opportunity for staff and retirees.

Pirani worked from a power point presentation and handout entitled 'My Money at Work'. An early comment in the handout stressed the importance of saving money. While this may not be so necessary for retirees, it may be for our grandchildren and other family members. It was noted that saving two dollars a day--a cheap cup of coffee--can add up to \$4200 in five years, assuming a 5.75 % annual return. The handout also notes that for a 26-year-old person, putting aside \$100 per month can result in accumulated savings of \$175,443 by age 65 with an average return of 5.75 % after fees.

Shafique also described the plans available for participants with Sun Life in RRSPs, RRIFs, TFSAs and NREGs. He pointed out the lower management fees of the funds that Sun Life offers was the result of the combined buying power of SFU and Sun Life. These fees are much lower than what the average person would pay at a bank or mutual company. Lower management fees mean that more money is growing for participants. He also drew attention to the fact that no fees are required to transfer money from one fund to another and this can be done every 30 days on the internet. Twenty-one funds, including four American and two International, are available which provide a wide range of investments including equity, bond, and index funds as well as guaranteed income funds, among others. On the Sunlife website one can review the returns of all of these funds on a regular basis.

Additional information was provided at the end of the presentation by Allyson Dallas regarding the Academic Pension Plan, including investment choices and applicable fees. The seminar was well attended and many questions were raised.

We welcome your suggestions for future seminars. ❖

# *Pleasant Surprises in Retirement*

*By Herbert Grubel, Economics. Retired 1999 at age 65.*

One of the great, pleasant surprises in my life in retirement has been the discovery of the continued interest economists around the world have shown in my past publications.

Research Gate is one of several organizations that maintain data bases storing copies of past and newly published academic papers and books. This data base can be searched and papers can be read or copied free of charge by anyone with access to the internet. The organization also scans these publications for references to other academic papers.

Almost daily I receive information that one of my publications has been cited by someone in some paper published somewhere in the world. The email gives me the title of the paper that contains this citation, the name of the authors, their academic affiliation and nationality. Similar information about people who just read one of my papers is also provided. Occasionally I receive requests from academics who want to know what I am working on.

Most interesting are the regular updates on the cumulative number of citations to my work. It has now reached 5,150. About half of the references are to papers and a book on a subject that contains information about the nature and usefulness of a formula used to measure trade in what is known as intra-industry trade. The empirical work my co-author and I had done in this field was cited by the Nobel Prize Committee as having provided the most important basis for the theoretical work that led to Paul Krugman's Nobel Prize.

But there are also many citations to my papers on multinational banking, the brain drain, the international monetary system, international migration, social limits to growth and others.

The citing authors are affiliated with institutions of higher learning around the world including many in developing countries. My advice to PhD students I supervised in the past was to write up their main findings such that their mothers could understand them. For the most part, I have followed this advice in my own papers, which might explain why they are read and appreciated by so many economists in developing countries.

Another public service for academics available free of charge is the site of the Social Science Research Network. It enables academics to get into circulation academic papers without having to go through the tedious process of having them refereed and criticized by journal editors. I have placed on this site all of the papers I have written over the last decade at the rate of about two a year – just for fun, not because I need tenure or get paid. The information provided by the site indicates that one recent paper of mine dealing with Canadian immigration issues has been read 1,200 times and downloaded 156 times. Another recent paper on deregulation led a think tank in Switzerland to ask for permission to publish it.

The other pleasant surprise of my life in retirement has been the steady flow of invitations to attend academic conferences around the world, some of which included invitations to present papers and the offer to have all expenses paid. Last year these events brought me to Italy, Miami, Peru, Chile and Argentina, this year to Korea and Italy. The number of invitations is *continued on page 15*

# Writing on the Edge

**Sheila Delany**

*When we published the Fall Issue of the newsletter Simon Says, we accidentally edited out three paragraphs from the excellent article by Sheila Delany. The editors apologize for this error and offer a copy of the complete article below. - Editors*

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Last month I e-mailed our list about the Centro Maya project I've undertaken with Rotary's World Help Network. This column adds some background. Last November, I went with a small group to San Juan la Laguna, a small town (about 10,000) on Lake Atitlan in southern Guatemala. This is the deepest freshwater lake in Central America, occupying an ancient caldera and surrounded by active volcanoes. In the evening you hear far-off thunder across the lake, and sheet lightning flickers over the mountains. Days, people who live around the lake are out in wooden barques, fishing. Along parts of the shore are other villages, and occasional hotels—some quite gorgeous and, by our standards, very reasonably priced. Above are trails, wilderness and caves, some still used as Mayan altars where shamans and their clients can receive the dream, ritual or potion that will cure their illness, guarantee fertility, change their lives..

The country still suffers the wounds of its decades-long civil war initiated when the U.S., protecting the United Fruit Company and supported by sections of the Guatemalan Catholic Church, invaded in 1954 to prevent agrarian and other reforms and installed a military regime. Massacres of indigenous people were perpetrated by the army; civil rights were non-existent; rape and crime common; social structure and traditional culture was ripped apart. If you drive to Atitlan and pass through the great market at Chichicastenango, you'll see a mural depicting the centuries-long history of the country: nothing has been forgotten. Some has been represented in film: "500 Years" (2017); "Finding Oscar" (2016); "Granito" (2011), and more.

Canada plays its part in these and even newer horrors. Canadian mining corporations evict entire communities, poison rivers with chemical effluent, raze forest and excavate fields to develop what they consider their properties. The Guatemalan army or private forces are paid to burn homes, rape women and kill indigenous farmers, especially activists. Lawsuits have been filed in Vancouver, Toronto and elsewhere against these crimes as the Maya bravely continue to defend their homes, persons, and livelihoods.

In San Juan there is a facility, the Centro Maya Servicio Integral, which treats people from the town and surrounding rural mountainous area for their illnesses from infancy to advanced age. Though small, it is modern, with gardens, workshops, and kitchens to train those who are able, for the job market. It also offers therapies for physical, emotional, mental or behavioural problems. The group I was with visited it, partly because our guide, Luis, is from San Juan. (Luis studied for the priesthood but didn't finish: he dislikes public speaking, and his order was a preaching order. Thanks

to his work as a certified guide, he can help his parents—who gave us a wonderful lunch of chicken pepian in their house—and have his own house with tile, not earthen, floors and big TV. Recently Luis was married in two ceremonies a couple of months apart: a civil service and a church one.).

Our tour of the Centro was led by its Director, Madelyn Ardon, who explained their work and some of the challenges they face. Some clients believe that having a disabled child is punishment for one's sins and that it's wrong to interfere with God's will; a

few, she said, weren't sure of the connection between sex and pregnancy. I was moved by our visit and resolved to help this place. Some years ago, with the help of Vancouver's Rotary Club World Help Network (WHN) and the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association, I organized three 40' containers and sent them to Havana, filled with large and small medical equipment, computers and other goods. (There was also one to Haiti and one to Poland.) Now, with WHN, we are organizing a container for the Centro. It will be shipped to Guatemala City and be received by Rotary there, then trucked up to the Centro; what they can't use will be donated to the hospital. The project will be paid for partly by Rotary, partly by individual donors; thanks to those who responded to my pitch during July and August; anyone else who'd like to help out can contact me at [sdelany@sfu.ca](mailto:sdelany@sfu.ca) . ❖



<http://www.centromayasi.org>

decreasing slowly, which is a good thing since my ability to handle the stress of travel is decreasing also.

Not all surprises in retirement were good. I have found it interesting that the current faculty of the Department of Economics at SFU has shown no interest in maintaining any relationship with me, even as recently Research Gate informed me that my citation counts topped those of all of its current members. Talking to other SFU retirees from different disciplines about this problem I have learned that they have the same experience.

We all had expected that our successors were interested in drawing on our stock of knowledge about teaching, finding good colleagues, departmental fights over financing and the granting of tenure, relationship with the administration and so on, which we had experienced over many years.

But, after some thought I can understand the lack of interest of the new generation of economists at SFU has in the knowledge accumulated by me. The new faculty members are fully occupied writing their own papers, mostly in new fields unfamiliar to me. They also face problems with teaching, political correctness, administration, finances and others, to the solution of which my past experience could contribute little. Consulting with me would only take time away from carrying out their current responsibilities without bringing them any benefits.

Moreover, the new generation has to learn about how the world works by making its own mistakes, just as we had when we were in the saddle.

I wish them good luck with their careers. ❖

## ***SFU Retirees Association's 50th Anniversary Scholarship***

We received a letter this week from Natalie Brenton, the Manager of Donor Relations at SFU, recognizing the funds received from SFURA to support students with scholarships that draw on the 50th Anniversary Endowment established by the Retirees Association.

The letter said, "Receiving a scholarship, bursary or award gives Simon Fraser University students the recognition and financial support they need to pursue their academic goals. Your ongoing encouragement of our students through the SFU Retirees Association's 50th Anniversary Endowment makes a tremendous difference in their lives. Thank you."

In the spring term of 2017, the SFU Retirees Association's 50th Anniversary Scholarship was awarded to Jocelyn Pollock and Matthew Lynn. ❖



# IT'S ALL ABOUT YOU

Evelyn Palmer

**T**om Poiker was recently awarded a Distinguished Scholarship

Award by the *Austrian Academy of Sciences, the Waldo Tobler GIScience Prize*. The Academy sent a distinguished representative, Professor **Josef Strobl**, to Burnaby to present Tom with the award at a small dinner party at the Hart House. **Len Evenden** represented SFU at the event.

A story in the SFU News explains how Tom is the “grandfather of geoinformatics” and how he became a pioneer in geographic information systems research. He was also a co-founder of SFU’s computing science department. Read the article at: <https://www.sfu.ca/sfunews/stories/2017/07/grandfather-of-geoinformatics-wins-international-prize.html>



Photo: Len Evenden

Congratulations are also in order to **Tom Calvert** who won two awards in computer science. One was the *Canadian Digital Media Pioneer Award* for making a significant contribution to the development of digital media in Canada. Tom has had many roles in teaching and administration at SFU. Details of the award and his many accomplishments at SFU are at: <http://graphicsinterface.org/awards/cdmp/tom-calvert/>

Tom’s second award was one of three presented to SFU researchers who have demonstrated excellence in computer graphics and human-computer interaction. See the story on the Faculty of Applied Sciences web page at: <http://www.sfu.ca/fas/news-and-outreach/years/2017/sfu-celebrates-three-canadian-computer-science-awards.html>

**Marilyn Bowman’s** book on the brilliant Scot James Legge is featured on BC Book World’s online website Booklook at: <http://bcbooklook.com/2017/06/02/the-resuscitation-of-james-legge/> Marilyn favoured us with two talks in the Seminar Series/Speakers Program about her James Legge book. A description of her book launch at Corpus Christi College at the University of Oxford was in a previous newsletter. The Booklook review has many photographs and details from her book, so if you did not attend her talks or buy her book, you will get a taste of it from this review. She will give a free public lecture about James Legge at 2:00 pm Thursday September 28, 2017 at the Cominco Policy Room at SFU Harbour Centre Harbour Centre. Registration is required, see: [http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/news/FREE\\_Lecture\\_JamesLegge.html](http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/news/FREE_Lecture_JamesLegge.html)

Our President **Frances Atkinson** was awarded her PhD last November from the University of Bath. In July she was back in the UK to formally receive the degree at a graduation ceremony at the beautiful Bath Abby, a magnificent location for such a ceremony. Check it out at: Bath Abbey, UK . As well as family visits, she spent two weeks hiking on the islands of Jersey and Guernsey with hiking groups. The Jersey hike was put on by the *Ramblers Association of Britain* which offers many hiking trips around the world. Members of the Ramblers are from all walks of life and income brackets, united by a love of walking.

Frances is a regular member of the SFURA walking group.

SFURA members have been generous donors of scholarships, awards and bursaries to students over the years, both as individuals and through contributions to the SFURA scholarship. The Endowment Stewardship Report of 2017 published by the Office of Advancement has a feature article on **Professor 'Som'** and his wife **Geeta Somjee**. New endowments were also recently established by **Shaughn** and **Sharon Clements**, **Ted** and **Shirley Cohn**, **John** and **Lyn Webster** and by **Marianne Gibson** honouring her late husband **Edward Gibson**. These are listed in the Report.

The report is not available online but a pdf file with the complete report may be obtained from **Kendra Pryor** <pryor@sfu.ca> or from me <evelyn@sfu.ca>.

The SFURA is a member of CURAC, College and University Retiree Associations of Canada. In 2016 **Marg Jones** was given CURAC's Tribute Award, and in 2017 our editor **Maurice Gibbons** was given the same award. There is more about CURAC on our website at: <http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/CURAC.html>

We are sending you this note about travel planning on behalf of CURAC. This is for information only, not an endorsement of Collette Travel. CURAC has now had two successful years of partnership with Collette Travel. Members planning future travel may wish to check out the broad range of tours available to them at the following website: <http://www.gocollette.com/en-ca/landing-pages/2015/partner/curac> . Inquiries about tours, or bookings, can be made by calling 800.468.5955. Alternatively, bookings can be made through your local Travel Agent. Make sure to mention your membership in a CURAC association for additional savings!

AND (drumbeat) a report on the solar eclipse from Percilla Groves: *From Here to Totality* -- **Percilla Groves** and **Andrew Seary**

At 5 am on the morning of August 21st we awoke in a campground on the banks of the Columbia about 40 miles east of Portland Oregon. We quickly packed up our Dodge Caravan camper and set out East along Highway I84 as the day dawned pink and gold over the cliffs above the river. At Highway 197 we turned south and drove to the spot chosen by Andrew based on Google Earth research as being well within the 'area of totality': Cow Canyon Rest Area! (Oddly named as it had neither cow nor canyon.) Traffic was a steady stream by the point where this small two lane road joined the busier Highway 97. About a thousand people and ca. 200 dogs were shoehorned into an area meant for about fifty cars and ten trucks. By 8 am Andrew had cooked a beans and bacon breakfast on our BBQ and we had introduced ourselves to the Coquitlam people in the car behind us and the New West people in the car parked in front of us. Everyone was in high spirits. Cow Canyon is high up (3000 feet) on the grasslands with a view of over thirty miles in each direction. To the west Mount Jefferson shone white under the clear sky. The temperature dropped slowly at first and cries of "it's started" prompted us to look through our protective glasses. Indeed the sun had a small bite out of one side. Time went

by and the bite grew larger and larger. Shadows appeared doubled and distorted. The temperature continued to fall. Percilla kept her eyes on Mount Jefferson and as predicted the shadow of the moon suddenly darkened it. The shadow then raced across the

plain toward us. Then the darkness fell. (Because we were so high light was shining on the land at the extremes of our sight so we were never in total dark – more like the light in our North Burnaby home in the middle of the night.) As the light returned the air slowly warmed again. Dozens of people drove off as soon as the light came back so almost immediately the small intersection of Highway 97 and



Photo: Jasman Mander

Highway 197 was a parking lot and as the security people at the site said “Accidents are happening”. We stayed put till mid-afternoon. At this age with so much of life uncertain and unpredictable the eclipse felt like a miracle. We drove the hundred miles back to the campground warmed by the certainty that we are indeed part of an enormous and awesome universe. ❖

## IN MEMORIAM



We are sorry to report the deaths of three more of our members.

**Raquel Ciria** passed away on August 3, 2017. Raquel was the widow of Alberto Ciria who was a member of the SFURA until his death in 2005. Raquel continued as a member and attended many of our events in the intervening years.

**Geoff Lister** was a member of the Department of Biosciences from the 1960's and a longtime member of the SFURA. He died on March 17, 2017. His obituary is on our website.

His obituary from the SFU News is at: <http://www.sfu.ca/content/dam/sfu/retirees/memorial/JohnBuchananOBIT.pdf>

**Bill Vidaver** died on August 31, 2017 at age 96. He was a charter faculty member of SFU, arriving in 1965. At SFU he worked with Don Nelson and colleagues to establish the Department of Biological Sciences and the Photobiology Group. His obituary will be posted on the SFURA website.

*The In Memoriam page of our website is at: <http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/sfu-community/in-memoriam/>*

# Looking After Yourself



## *POLYPHARMACY*

### **Parveen Bawa**

#### **Definition:**

'Polypharmacy' , refers to the unnecessary use of multiple medications, at the same time, to treat several coexisting medical conditions. 'Medications' don't only refer to prescribed pills, but also include herbal remedies, vitamins and over the counter (OTC) tablets (e.g. Tylenol/Advil/Gravol). Polypharmacy is typically used to describe situations where patients are taking five medications or more - this is very common among elderly patients. Older adults use 30-40% of the prescription drugs, and 40% of the over the counter (OTC) medicines prescribed or purchased in the US. Further, approximately 50% of seniors (>85 years) in Canada take at least one prescription medicine that is not necessary; a few are taking up to 25 different medicines concurrently, with 60 separate doses daily!

#### ***Consequences of polypharmacy:***

Polypharmacy is risky in any age demographic, but the consequences of taking too many medications can be particularly high in the elderly population. There are many physiological changes that seniors experience that make taking multiple drugs more risky. These changes include: an increase in body fat, increasing the chance that drugs may get trapped in fat cells and remain in the body for longer periods of time; a decrease in body fluids, which increases the concentration of certain medications; a slowing down of the gastro-intestinal system, resulting in longer time for absorption of drugs; as well as a natural decline in liver and kidney function, which changes the rates at which various drugs are metabolized and excreted. Finally, decreases in memory, vision, hearing and dexterity can make opening bottles and reading instructions more difficult - medication errors can easily occur.

#### ***Reasons for polypharmacy:***

Polypharmacy can occur because of inherent patient factors- for example when a patient with multiple medical conditions is prescribed multiple necessary drugs; or, it can arise secondary to systemic issues - as is seen when a patient is under the care of several specialists. If a patient is getting different medications from a cardiologist, urologist, dermatologist and nephrologist, he or she may be on multiple medications that interact without even knowing it. Further, with knowledge acquired from the internet, people are self medicating and mixing Allopathic, Homeopathic, Ayurvedic, Chinese and other herbal medicines at home. Some of these alternative medications are safe when taken on their own, but can have serious consequences when added to a cocktail of other drugs. Finally, certain physician factors can make polypharmacy more likely. Unfortunately, some doctors may not clearly document why a particular medication is started. This lack of documentation makes

it difficult for a new physician to safely discontinue previously prescribed medications. Further, some physicians may be hesitant to discontinue older medications as they prefer not to ‘rock the boat’ and risk potential withdrawal. These physician factors can inadvertently lead to the prescription of one too many medications on top of the others.

**Prevention:**

Polypharmacy is very serious; in order to avoid dangerous drug interactions, your family doctor or an internist needs to coordinate all prescribed and purchased medications - this includes OTC pills, vitamins, herbal remedies as well as externally applied creams. Beyond that, it is important to learn as much as possible about the drugs you are prescribed, and be clear about their uses, side effects, and interactions when talking to your physician/nurse/pharmacist. Make sure you are aware of which foods may interact with any of the drugs you are on; and if possible, use just one pharmacy for all your prescription and OTC drug needs. Before starting a new medication, make sure

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***Before starting a new medication, make sure it is not for the treatment of a side effect of another drug.***”

it is not for the treatment of a side effect of another drug. Finally it is important to put a strategy in place so that you will remember to take all medications correctly. Certain side effects or interactions can occur simply because you’ve taken your medication at the wrong time or with the wrong meal.

**Practical Suggestions:**

Make a Table of medications, both prescribed and OTC. Take a copy with you when you visit any physician for any physical or mental problem. Know your drug and food tolerance; you might have a rare reaction to a drug, which others don’t. When a medicine is prescribed, write down the reason for prescription, the date, dose, and side effects that may be associated with its use. This information should be easily accessible to you or anyone else who is giving you medication. Get a review of your drug intake regularly. Most pharmacies in BC will offer free drug interaction checks and free drug education. And finally, if in doubt, don’t hesitate to talk to your pharmacist or doctor about any questions or concerns you have.

If you would like to further educate yourself, some information on drugs and their interactions can be found at the following web sites:

<http://www.webmd.com/drugs/2/index>

<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/resourcesforyou/ucm163354.htm>

<https://www.verywell.com/drug-safety-for-seniors-3859688> ❖



## Editorial

*Maurice Gibbons, Editor*

The SFURA is an organization that is wholly devoted to providing services to retirees from our University whether they were faculty or staff. One of those services is helping members facing retirement both to prepare for it and to adjust to it once it happens. The newly retired are often full of energy and switch easily to the life they planned for once their formal careers are over. But time catches up with us all, and eventually many of us experience physical, emotional and/or cognitive deficiencies. These occur at different times in people's lives, sometimes early and sometimes later, but if it is a serious deficiency it can be devastating both to the people stricken and those who know and care for them.

The other dimension of the aging experience is that you live longer,

your family, friends, colleagues, and acquaintances begin to fall away; they move away, become ill or die. Sometimes they can fall away in droves, and suddenly we can find ourselves without the

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***But something is missing. I feel the need to give back ... When we care about others we are less absorbed with ourselves.”***

irreplaceable people who knew us in our finest and worst moments and still remained our friends. I am very sensitive to this situation;

at eighty-six I have lost many old friends and associates, and just recently I lost a good friend I have known since grade two, a fine artisan who worked on an exhibition of carvings with me, and my close colleague Gary Phillips, all within a few months. We are all vulnerable to such loss and the loneliness that results.

To deal with it I am active in a number of groups--SFURA, tennis, men's group, golf, church, and so on. But something is missing. I feel the need to give back. I have taken the palliative care program, but I have not been active. I wonder if we have members that we can serve by being available to visit, have coffee with them or drive them to where they need to go? When we care about others we are less absorbed with ourselves. Do you think that we should provide such a service? Let us know. ❖