

SFURA NEWSLETTER, OCTOBER 2003

EVENTS and Future Plans

- October 2003. SFURA fall dinner, October 29/03, at the Burnaby Mountain Golf Club.
- November 2003. Horseracing at Hastings Park on November 15/03, notification has been sent to members.
- December 2003. No SFURA events are planned.
- January 2004. Vancouver Symphony Orchestra Tea & Trumpet Concert – “Shall We Dance” See enclosed notice.
- February 2004 Jacques Brel (Is Alive and Well and Living in Paris) See enclosed notice.

For further information or details on upcoming events please contact:

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For **SFU Theatre** events on campus, you may phone 604-291-3514, or send an e-mail to theatre@sfu.ca

Canadian University Retirees Association of Canada (CURAC). www.curac.ca

On Thursday, October 2/03, members of the SFURA Executive Committee met with Dr. Ken Rea, who joined the committee in his capacity as a member of the Canadian University Retirees Association of Canada (CURAC). The purpose of this gathering was to discuss the function of CURAC vis-à-vis individual university retirees' associations. SFURA is a member of this organization.

Dr. Rea outlined the genesis of CURAC, an association of associations. He noted that in May of 2003 a meeting had been held in Halifax, at which a constitution and a steering committee had been established. The essential purposes of this organization would be:

- To establish a national voice for university retirees.
- To initiate linkages with other retirees' organizations, for example the Canadian Association of Retired Persons (CARP).
- To raise the profile and increase the effectiveness of university retirees associations in dealing with such issues as health benefits and insurance.

An important function of a national umbrella organization of university retirees' associations would be to provide communication and information, to provide representation, and to undertake research into variations in benefits and other areas that are important to university retirees.

CURAC planners are committed to keeping this new organization small and without an unwieldy bureaucracy, and maintaining a reasonable balance among individual university retirees' associations across the country such that there is fair national representation.

Questions that might be addressed by CURAC included university retirees' benefits, travel insurance, seniors' housing and long term care.

Dr. Rea emphasized the fact that the purpose of CURAC is to be inclusive, to avoid domination by any one group or region, and to improve the effectiveness and visibility of university retirees' organizations on a national scale.

As always, the SFURA Executive Committee welcomes input and direction on this matter from the SFURA membership. What do you think this group can do that would be useful? What are the issues that you would like to see addressed?

TRAVELS and CHANGES

Following are excerpts from a September bulletin from Frank Manuel, who is currently teaching English in China with his partner Victoria. They have been in Dalian for just over a year. Frank notes that the city of Dalian is situated in the province of Liaoning "which has a population of 43 million in an area of 150,000 square kilometres, compared to Canada's 30 million in over 9 million square kilometres. Dalian itself has 6 million people." He goes on to describe a visit to Acheng, near Haerbin, where he and Victoria were to be guests at the home of one of their students.

"When we arrived we found that in addition to the family, there were two police cars and a police mini-bus waiting on the platform. Several large policemen jumped aboard (the train) and grabbed all of our considerable baggage and loaded it, us, and the family into the mini-bus, then set off for the Tang Dynasty museum which we were to visit before lunch.

As we moved through the museum with the family of our student, Kiki, translation was handled by Kiki and his sister so we had excellent explanations of the exhibits. At one point I was looking at some 900-year-old copper coins. They were circular in shape with a square hole in the centre. Kiki's mother whispered to her daughter who whispered to me 'We'll be giving you some of those at lunch.' 'Some' of the coins turned out to be 68 of them on a string. The farm land outside the ancient walls of the royal city has been fertile and productive for over 1,000 years and farmers still turn up these coins on a regular basis.

Lunch was a gala affair. Everywhere we've been in China we've been treated to an incredible variety of wonderful food, and this was no exception. There was lamb, beef, pork, all manner of seafood and fish, and, unfortunately, some little frogs on sticks. Everyone at the table considered them a delicacy, and they couldn't wait to offer me the first one. I could wait. It was covered in a black sauce and didn't look at all like anything I wanted to find in my mouth, but the situation seemed to call for it so I popped one in and chewed. It put me in mind of the Monty Python 'Crunchy Frog' sketch. There wasn't much flavour and the sauce was like river mud, and the frog was crunchy. I was thankful that it was small, so we got on with the fine meal.

Every sip of beer or slug of 'bijoe' called for a speech by one or another at the sizable table, welcoming us and wishing us good health and happiness in China. Bijoe is a rather diabolically high-potency concoction with a dreadful flavour which for me lasts about 12 hours, but men are men wherever we go, so I drank as much as was required; a lot, and enjoyed the day. I have an idea how bijoe got its name. Some visiting Brit back in antiquity was being 'wined and dined' and when the bijoe was proffered he did as he was obliged to do and took a swig. His eyes bulged, his face turned red and when he recovered sufficiently he sputtered 'By Jove!' and the name stuck."

Frank goes on to say that he and Victoria have opened their home on Sunday mornings to people who would like to practise English, and that they will travel to Dan Dong, "the place on the Yalu River where the Americans bombed the bridges to North Korea during the Korean War, and their remnants still stand." He hopes to obtain pictures of the area.

Editor's Note:

Following such a lively account of travels far away, my own summer seems relatively mundane. A friend and I drove from Vancouver to Ottawa and return; we left Vancouver in mid-June and took 5 weeks for the journey. We drove east on a southerly route through the Crows Nest Pass, across southern Alberta and Saskatchewan, through Manitoba (we got lost in Winnipeg) and along the top of Lake Superior. We turned south across Manitoulin Island and continued down the coast of Lake Huron and through southern Ontario until we turned north to Ottawa, where we stayed with friends. From Ottawa we took the train to Montreal. On the return journey we followed a more northerly route via Dauphin, Saskatoon and Drumheller, where we visited the dinosaurs before returning to British Columbia just ahead of the explosion of fires. It was a fascinating journey, and a learning experience. Highlights of the trip included Writing-on-Stone Park in southern Alberta, a play at Stratford and a visit to the Canoe Museum in Peterborough. A hiking trip in the southern Kananaskis area in Alberta completed the summer.

Please send accounts of your travels to the Executive Committee so that we may enliven the SFURA Newsletter from time to time. Please also let us know of favourite restaurants and any other discoveries that you think the members of SFURA would enjoy.