

Simon Says

Winter 2010

Simon Fraser University Retirees Association



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President's column

The back-to-school season triggers a host of memories. I always loved going to school as a child and could hardly wait for September even though my friends and I enjoyed our summer bike rides and evening games of 'Kick the Can' in the long light of summer days in my northern city, Edmonton. I am always surprised when today's radio shows always feature alarmist discussions about "what your child worries about at school", and interviews children and their mothers about how anxious they are. The topic often moves into bullying, the risks of walking to school, diseases and I don't know what all. My own experience was that returning to school was terrific. It meant connecting with friends who lived in a different direction, and the excitement of facing a new teacher. A real buzz.

I think our years at SFU have always had a similar fall buzz, whether we have been students, faculty or staff. There is excitement in the air at new possibilities of every sort, mixed in with the slight extra edge of knowing that something might be hard, or challenging, or not work out just the way we had expected. At SFU I always loved to go to my department's fall get-together, which has changed a lot over the years. When I first became chair of the department I decided on a fine dinner for faculty and staff, expecting most people to dress up a bit. As I remember it, the venue turned out to be the old "green room" cafeteria, slightly gussied up for the dinner but not truly fine dining in the glare of the overhead fluorescent lights. The menu was fine and the turnout was good and pleasantly spiffed-up, but over the years people seem to have lost interest in dressing up for special university occasions. In another change, our department now routinely includes all graduate students in our fall celebration, which is now a barbeque. These changes are good because they made our party more inclusive; we are all inhabiting the same space for years together, and the informality ensures all feel welcome.

I hope that the fall season elicits good feelings in our members too, about life in our university. In thinking about ways of maintaining a genial connection with SFU, I realized that we have many associations and groups, formal and informal, and some of them welcome help from volunteers for special tasks. The most immediate example is the United Way Book Sale, when volunteers help in the physical efforts of sorting and 'doing boxes' to haul around for the sale. The annual Plant Sale is another example, where everyone is welcome to help and to participate. You probably know many other examples. I know our members participate in entering art into the annual SFU Gallery show. I would be very happy to circulate to our members, any request for help from volunteers for such campus activities so that we can all connect very directly with current and retired colleagues in our 'home' for so many years. Feel free to email me at bowman@sfu.ca with any such requests for volunteer helpers and I will ensure everyone knows about the opportunity.

Marilyn Bowman



The Seniors Lifelong Learners Society

Elizabeth Jones

The membership of the Seniors Lifelong Learners Society consists of past and present senior students of Simon Fraser University ranging in age from fifty-five to eighty-five plus, from varied backgrounds, with diverse interests, and some with a variety of degrees from previous academic studies. As seniors, our love of learning has been rekindled and encouraged by the great variety and excellence of non-credit courses provided for us by The SFU Seniors Program. Using the Greek Lamp of Learning as our emblem reinforces our belief that *The Glow of Lifelong Learning has no age limits*.

Our roots go back to the 1970s when a small group of senior SFU students joined together to form what came to be known as the Opsimath Club (a Greek word meaning “one who learns late in life”). Then, in 2005, this club expanded to become a Registered Society under the B.C. Society Act and our name was changed to The SFU Seniors Lifelong Learners Society. While governed by our own Bylaws and our Board of Directors (members are elected annually at our AGM), the use of SFU in our name maintains our link to the University. Our Society lost a number of members when, in 2008, SFU discontinued tuition-free credit courses for seniors with no allowances made for those students who required only a few additional courses to obtain their degree. It remains our hope that funding will again become available and that this benefit will be reinstated for senior lifelong learners in the not too distant future.

We are the voice of SFU senior students and their connection to the University, the Seniors Program, and the community. How is this accomplished? We achieve these goals by our involvement in a number of activities: We offer our members the opportunity to foster a feeling of friendship and camaraderie among SFU senior students, past and present, through theatrical and cultural events and other social activities. Each semester our social committee organizes at least one group outing to the theatre or other event, preceded or followed by a lunch or dessert and coffee at a nearby restaurant. These events are well-attended and appreciated by our members, many of whom are single senior women who enjoy the chance to socialize with others having similar interests - the pleasures in lifelong learning.

We publish quarterly Newsletters distributed to all members to keep them advised of upcoming events and other items of interest. Two interest-generating Endowment Funds were established by The Opsimath Club; our Society has since inherited these funds. The funds are administered on our behalf by the University. Interest generated by these funds provides financial support to undergraduate SFU students of all ages. The Seniors Program benefits from receipt of financial support for the non-credit courses. Deserving undergraduate SFU students are awarded financial help in achieving their educational goals.

The community at large also benefits from direct financial assistance from our Society. We sponsor six free public forums annually on topics of general current interest, held on Saturday afternoons at Harbour Centre, in Vancouver. Working in conjunction with the Seniors Program, we have provided financial support for the production of six DVDs during the past four years. These “roundtable discussion” DVDs are distributed throughout the province and nationwide. The latest production, “A Place for Everyone: Age-Friendly Communities,” has received rave reviews and the demand has already exceeded the supply. These DVD’s are posted on the Web site -SFU Seniors Program – Outreach.

The SFU Seniors Lifelong Learners Society is a small but active group committed to work together with the Seniors Program to enlighten the lives of seniors and students. New members are always welcome. Membership fees are \$15.00, (\$25.00 per couple).

Make your check payable to-
SFU Seniors Lifelong Learners Society
c/o SFU Continuing Studies
2300- 515 West Hastings St.
Vancouver, BC, V6B 5K3

Members will have a chance to attend our Christmas Lunch to be held on December 15th. You will be forwarded further information. Elizabeth Jones, President, SFU Seniors Lifelong Learners Society, e-mail e_jones@shaw.ca



Brian White (right, with Tom O'Shea), an SFU charter student who went far, gave us a presentation about his work at the SFURA Dinner Party on November 3rd.

Colleague Norman Swartz



Here are the titles of two of Norman's books: *Possible Worlds* and *Beyond Experience*. Perhaps the titles say it all, for Norman began his academic career in Physics but ended it in Philosophy. When pressed, he will acknowledge a yearning to have been a professional musician. Had he achieved that, he would have added a string to his bow, as it were, but that would have taken him away from Philosophy. A short surf of the internet reveals what a loss that would have been. Nonetheless, he combines both worlds, including many of the major composers on his list of heroes -- and Glenn Gould. Norman and I were both on Senate at the time of Gould's unexpected death, and I recall it was Norman who argued that Senate should pass a motion to acknowledge this loss to the world of fine music. It did. Not long ago, in conversation, Norman added Terry Fox to his list.

The Harvard Man

In the recent portrait shown here, sent to Harvard to up-date their alumni information, we see Norman as the Harvard Man. But I have known Norman since we were office-neighbours on the west side of the sixth floor of the AQ, when the middle of the AQ was still a muddy morass and construction site, and before the east side had even been built. With this recollection in mind, I prefer to think of Norman as the SFU Man, that is the Workaholic, as illustrated in a candid shot of him at his home computer. Ah! the computer.



That other great interest. Norman began his work with computers before most of us had heard of them, and put all this knowledge and practical talent to good use in setting up the website for SFURA. He continued as webmaster for over a decade (relieved for a spell by Leigh Palmer) and we have all benefitted from the effort. As the workload eventually became too great, he was at the forefront in finding someone to take over. The Association now has a new website and new webmaster, Stephanie Mitchell.

The SFU Workaholic

Having given so much to SFURA over such a long period, including the presidency and executive duties, Norman now has a new boss. When you enter his and Sylvia's house, you find out who it is. Just to the left of the entrance stands a cabinet, about waist high, the surface completely covered by framed photographs of their grandchildren. With a small gesture towards the cabinet, Norman allows "That's who I work for now." *Possible Worlds* and *Beyond Experience* indeed.

Len Evenden



Looking good with flowers: Tuck Wong, Chuck Crawford and Kersti Jaeger, from left to right.

Membership Statistics

Barbara Diggins

Membership total to date: 358

New members: John Buchanan, Head Golf Coach, Athletics; F. Warren Burton, Computing Science; Judith Denham, Continuing Studies; Stephen Hardy, Engineering Science; Stephen McBride, Political Science

Renewed: Maureen Caufield (Office of Dean, FASS); Manohar Singh

The SFURA Financial Planning Seminar, October 12

Marvin Wideen, Tom O'Shea, Phil Mah

This seminar involved a discussion and reflection among participants about their financial planning during retirement. George Suart and Fred Einstein introduced the session.

George Suart described how his life after retirement had led him to a commitment to manage a significant portion of his retirement funds. He buys and sells blue chip stocks based on historic price range data. He also sells covered calls on these stocks making over 300 trades per year. His day begins at 5:30 A.M. to spend an hour on research before the market opens. His percentage gain using this approach has outperformed other family investments since he began this process several years ago. He shared several stories about his trading to illustrate his successes and losses.

Fred Einstein described his "buy and hold" approach focusing on dividend paying blue chip stocks to hold for several years. Franco Nevada (FNV), for example, provides a royalty income stream for investors. When not on the road traveling, Fred trades options. He described the value of flow through shares and ETFs (Exchange traded funds) such as Vanguard (VTO) which provides some higher risk in emerging markets. He avoids limited partnerships offered by companies. He noted the value of Morningstar as an excellent source of information about mutual funds and stocks.

Tom Poiker saw himself as a happy retiree, enjoying the financial support left to him by the University and the interesting circumstances around that. When he began, the university gave him no choice but join a pension plan that took 5% off his monthly salary. When the university started its own pension plan that was a little more liberal, he was away and didn't go through the pressure to join. His important decision for retirement three decades later was a non-decision: he didn't switch. And that turned out to be a good non-move. When the American fund had to sell its 6000 Canadian members to a Canadian Fund in 1996, the American Dollar was the highest that it ever was in the last decades. Talk about luck.

A related comment comes from Bruce Harwood, who describes himself as a serious investor who now wishes he had taken the monthly pension from SFU instead of the payout. The recent financial crisis has shown him how risky investing can be. He hopes that when he reaches an advanced old age, he is still capable of making good decisions to preserve his income.

Marvin Wideen began with a chart (available on request) describing the several options facing retirees in retirement. He has divided his money purchase plan among the Sun Life funds, two full service brokers and a discount account from which he trades stocks. His trading strategy has three steps: careful selection of stocks; a close study of their charts; and, the application of daily trading and weekly strategies based on buying at the low points and selling higher. This swing trading approach has provided a 31% gain in a tax-free savings account.

Nina Stoppa suggested visiting the Traders Planet.com web site for information on trading and Uncommon Wisdom for investing in general. He will also send along an article on selecting mutual funds on request (nstroppa@hotmail.com)

Parveen Bawa believes that the majority of retirees have no idea of how to handle money and don't know the terminology of the stock market. So, she was impressed to hear academics having shifted their expertise toward handling money. She then asked the question: When one retires, how does one decide where to put one's retirement money to have life long income. She had thought banks or financial companies did it. This third option of managing your own money was new.

Jay Burr responded to Parveen by offering suggestions about selecting a financial planner who can be relied on to manage one's retirement portfolio. He related some of his experience in selecting an advisor, and will share website information with you on request (burr@sfu.ca). Jay's comments also prompted us to consider a session on selecting a financial advisor.

Barbara McDaniel summed up the session by noting the appeal of hearing about the different styles used by different people in managing their finances many of which she had tried. She looks forward to a future session on options trading.

The Socialist's Report

I'm pleased to report on a number of successful SFURA social events held since the last newsletter was published.

1. August 14th: A Day at the Races.

Thirty SFURA members enjoyed buffet lunch and bets on the nags at our Annual Marg Jones Stakes at Hastings Racecourse. The weather indeed was clear and Paul Revere paid 2 to 1 on a winning bet. A highlight of the day was the 2nd annual mascots race featuring last year's winner Bread Head from Cobs Bread. Other entries included the quick Mr. Fox from 99.3 FM Radio, Farmer Kin from Kin's Farm Market, Mr. Peanut, Mr. Jelly Belly, Leo the Lion (BC Lions)...you get the idea. A number tripped over the starting line, others fell over their oversize feet, and a few even managed to finish. Something like our members.

2. September 25th: An Afternoon at the Playhouse.

Twelve members attended an Open House at which the Vancouver Playhouse celebrated the launch of the 2010/11 season and showed off its new Recital Hall that will be used for readings and small productions. Max Reimer, Artistic Managing Director, hosted the event which included design displays throughout the lobby, a backstage tour, and a short performance from David Mamet's play, "A Life in the Theatre." Following the Open House a number of members attended the full performance of the Mamet play.

3. October 31st: BC Lions vs. Saskatchewan Roughriders

Once again Marv Wideen reserved a block of 10 seats for SFURA members to savour the play of our BC Lions. This year, it was a "must win" for the Lions. The game was held at Empire Field...a temporary reincarnation of the old Empire Stadium. The weather was glorious as we reminisced about the glory days of the Vancouver Whitecaps (a different sort of football) and watched the Lions pull off a rare win, keeping their faint playoff hopes alive.

Still to come: November 30th...A Day at the UBC Museum of Anthropology.

Please see the email I sent out recently and let me know if you plan to attend. For those members not on email, the MoA has just completed a major expansion and renewal project. The tour I have arranged will give us the opportunity to explore in depth these new developments at the MoA. The agenda for the day is as follows:

11:30 -- 12:30 Lunch at the Sage Bistro, UBC...near the MoA (optional)

1:00 -- 2:00 Curator's Tour (free, and open to public)

2:15 -- 3:45 Guided tour for SFURA members only

3:45 -- ??? Time on your own to explore the Museum exhibits

The total cost per person will likely be between \$14 and \$18 (not including lunch which would be in the order of \$15 to \$20 per person). Please let me know if you would like to attend (604-294-0986).

Tom O'Shea

SFURA Socialist

The History of Communication over a Lifetime.

Tom Poiker

About eighty years ago, a young woman emigrated from Germany to Bolivia to marry a German mining engineer. She never saw her mother again, letters took three or more weeks and phoning was not possible. The mother had died when the woman returned to Germany twenty years later.

Some thirty years later, her daughter and I married and emigrated to Canada. By that time, letters took about four days, phoning was possible though a three minute call cost about one percent of a monthly salary. We also flew to Germany a few times and my mother-in-law visited twice.

Another thirty years later, our daughter went to Holland. We exchanged emails almost daily, we visited each other every second year and phoning was not exorbitant anymore.

Ten years later, our son moved to Montreal. Phoning is now cheap, emails are still immediate and we visit each other at least once a year.

But the ultimate technology is SKYPE. We talk to each other and can see each other. And it costs nothing. When our grandson was eleven months old and saw us the first time on the computer, he crawled to the laptop that his father had put on the floor and pulled down the lid to see whether we were behind. Was he anticipating a major technology of his generation?

Fall 2010 Seminars

Mike Roberts

Seminar Series - An Update on the Spring semester

January 25th, 2010 John & Jan Pierce: Kefalonia (Greece): An Odyssey

February 22nd, 2010 Charles Crawford: Cooperation and cheating in human reproductive interactions

Mike Roberts
Whig
Seminar Series Convenor



Fall Colours

By

Chris Hildred

The incident in Hanoi

Marilyn Bowman

While our members were enjoying our annual fall dinner earlier this month, I was on a trip in Vietnam that included being robbed by some very clever pickpockets. I was wandering through a street market at night, walking near friends but surrounded by people on all sides in the packed market. Suddenly I received a strong hip check on my left side, with someone pressing hard into my body. I looked down (I am about a foot taller than most people there) and looked at the very hard face of a young woman whose glance evaded mine. I thought it was an innocent blunder in the press of the crowd, but was mildly puzzled that she failed to show any even cursory acknowledgement of her blunder into me. A few minutes later I was again hip-checked and pressed against with considerable force, and it turned out to be the same young woman! I said to a nearby companion, “I think someone is trying to rob me”, but I said it half in jest because from the outset I had been hanging on to my purse. It was a light nylon canvas shoulder bag slung over my left shoulder, then completely hidden under a large white shirt. It was not even visible, but I kept my left hand on my shirt over it continuously. I was sure that no-one could grab it even if they did get the idea it was hiding under my shirt. A few minutes later another very hard hit on the left and strong pressure again, and again it was exactly the same woman. I continued to hang onto my purse pressing against it through my shirt, meandered home to my hotel, and went to sleep.

The next morning I went to my shoulder bag to get my wallet out, and couldn't find it. I peered into all the little zipper compartments, completely puzzled because I was sure I had had the wallet in that bag the previous night – even more certain when I remembered using it to pay for a drink. I peered further inside, and suddenly saw light coming in through a slit. Turning to the outside of the bag I found a perfect slice through the canvas, done by something very sharp like a box-cutter. I had been very cleverly robbed, probably by a pickpocket team, all the time thinking I had everything under control!

Although I lost about \$60 in three different currencies, the only thing that really concerned me was a credit card and a bank ATM card. I got the Canadian phone numbers, realizing that the nice free 1-800 number could be reached only from within Canada and the US. I would have to call collect, but I knew that the hotel would probably refuse to let me do that, as most hotels in that region would not allow collect calls. The solution was Skype. My trusty tour leader fired up his Macintosh, went into Skype and typed in the phone numbers. Within seconds I was talking to the Stolen Card people at the two different banks, reporting the theft and cancelling the cards. They looked at the records and found nothing had been attempted since the late-evening theft, and I was in the clear.

My strongest reaction to the whole episode was a very grudging admiration for the pickpockets, who were surely a duo working together in such a clever way that even though I thought I was hanging onto everything throughout the scrum, very precisely and neatly cut through exactly the one region on my bag that yielded my wallet. Amazing. Just a wallet stolen this time though, not an entire bus!

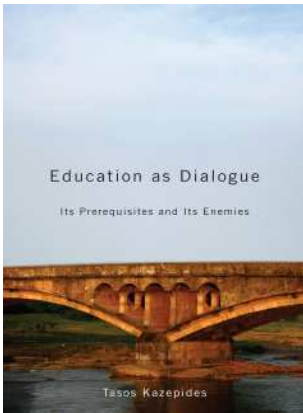


The author before Hanoi

PASSAGES

Retirees who came to SFU in its earliest days will recall **Alan Emmott**, Reeve (Mayor) of Burnaby. SFU was established during his time in office. Alan addressed groups on campus on more than one occasion about the prospects of the university in the development of the municipality. Having served in local politics for some three decades, he chaired the GVRD (now Metro Vancouver) and put his ideas of amalgamated services to the test in the most dramatic way by running for Mayor of Vancouver. Although this attempt failed, he continued his political involvement and the debate about municipal reorganization continues to this day. Alan was a decorated veteran of World War II, having served with the RCAF. He was also a teacher and, when his formal political involvement ended, he became a faculty associate in the SFU Faculty of Education. SFU granted him an honorary degree in 1983. For those interested, a quick Google search would yield several obituaries with differing emphases of the long, varied and energetic career of a local politician who worked to establish SFU. The Vancouver Sun obituary was published on September 25th.

Len Evenden



Check out this book:

Tasos Kazepides
Education as Dialogue

Its Prerequisites and its Enemies

Although talk about dialogue is common, nothing clear, significant, and educationally useful has been written about the nature of dialogue and the principles and conditions that support or undermine it. *Education as Dialogue* argues that true dialogue and education require beliefs, rules, virtues, and habits that facilitate learning while preventing the acquisition of doctrines.

Tasos Kazepides shows that the prerequisites for dialogue and education are similar to Ludwig Wittgenstein's concept of "river-bed propositions" – propositions that are the foundation of our ability to think and to reason. He argues that understanding education as genuine dialogue ought to become central to educational theory and practice because it is the most appropriate and effective way to motivate and engage students and the best way to guard against indoctrination. The pivotal importance of education as dialogue is emphasized for its capacity to encourage critical thought, in contrast to indoctrination, which arrests, limits, or frustrates thought.

Taking a unique approach to thinking about education, Kazepides provides a welcome and instructive work that stresses the importance of seeing education as dialogue.

On a Point of Privilege

Tom Poiker

There is no volunteer for this section, so I take the liberty and tell you another story.

In the early eighties, I had a graduate student, Joe, who was very good. In our field, that meant that he got several offers per year and he accepted one - without finishing the Masters. Twenty years later, I met him at a conference and he told me how his career had evolved, ending up in the most important company of the field. "So, are you o.k. with not finishing your Masters?" I asked. "It's the only sore point in my life".

Well, I had a solution for that: In the meantime I had developed an online program with twelve courses and if he finished that with B or better, he could continue with one of the British members of our online consortium, write his thesis and he had a Masters. He decided to take it, completed it in record time and two weeks after he had his paper work, he was asked whether he wanted to teach part-time at a university nearby. "But you have to have a Masters" was the condition.

All this made Joe very happy and he talked about it all the time to everybody. So his wife thought that inviting me to the birthday bash for his sixtieth would be the biggest surprise for him. So she flew me down to L.A. and I celebrated with 50 others a dinner cruise on a sailboat from the L.A. harbour out to sea.