

Simon Says

Spring 2011

Simon Fraser University Retirees Association



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Jennifer Harrington

Most of us have good memories dealing with the preparation for retirement. Alan Black and Miranda Brown made us feel confident that everything would work out alright. And if we had any questions, we could always come back and ask. Well, you know, even advisors retire and we can't go back to Miranda to ask her anymore.

But do not despair. First contacts with her successor promise that she will be at least as nice and helpful as Miranda was.

Jennifer Harrington (she calls herself Jennie) worked at Capilano University as Human

Resources Advisor for both faculty and staff matters before she joined SFU in November 2009, in the role of Coordinator, Temporary Support Services. But that job was too "temporary" for her talents and that's why she took over Miranda's job. And she likes her new place, as she tells us. She likes working with Alan Black and the rest of the HR staff.

What can we do to make her job successful? "Generally, it is a good idea for people to keep me informed ahead of time. i.e. if there are changes to their personal information, decisions that need information in order to be made, etc, it is good for people to contact me as soon as possible so that changes don't need to be made retroactively. Good communication is key."

And how should we communicate with her? "I am an email person. However, that being said, sometimes visits or calls are necessary. If you want to drop by, please do make an appointment. Otherwise, I can't guarantee that I will be able to see you."

You might just want to visit to see whether the photo fits the person.

Welcome, Jennifer, we all look forward working with you.

President's column

The Pleasures of Retirement

When I was close to mandatory retirement some of my friends worried about me. What are you going to do? How will you be able to fill up all those hours every day? They knew I worked hard, often long hours including many Saturdays, and that I enjoyed this intense involvement. They feared I would go stir-crazy without work. I was not at all worried because I was full of energy and figured things would just work themselves through. Now, with six years' experience, I know that retirement has brought me some unexpected challenges and losses, but many pleasures, and these are pleasures that I know I share with many of you.

Most of the pleasures I sought out gave me chances to improve my connections with others. I have rediscovered the pleasures of close friendships. Every week I meet a old friend for lunch, and about once every two months I call together a group of six friends for an inexpensive lunch. We all get separate bills so that those with modest tastes and budgets don't have to subsidize big spenders. They didn't all know each other at the outset, but I figured they would enjoy each other's company and it is true. We have a wonderful time together, with travel reports, life event updates, shared photos of family and friends, and even career advice to our youngest members

Other activities can also generate connections with other people that are not quite as personal, but close to home and inexpensive. I started taking painting classes at my community centre. I love the atmosphere in the class as we all work on our pictures, with soft chatter and help from the teacher. I'm creating pictures that I like and the whole thing is extremely satisfying. Occasionally I take Chinese classes at the same centre, knowing that I will never be very good, but the language interests me a lot, the other students are fun, and every time I do this I remember a little bit more. I've signed up for a short course to learn how to create a website, and have just discovered that my Shaw cable/internet service also offers this, so I think I'll give it a whack and see what I can do. I'd like to put my travel photos up for my friends to see, and maybe some of my academic work too.

I have always been interested in distant places with an ancient recorded history, and wanted to travel more. I hoped to travel with someone I knew and experimented by inviting a long-distance friend in Montreal to consider a trip even though we had been only loosely connected over the three decades since I left there. She was keen and we had a great time. Then when my Calgary brother was caring for me while I recovered from surgery, I proposed that we go on an interesting long cruise. We did that and it was very enjoyable. Since then the three of us have gone on many different wonderful trips together, and have formed stronger, warmer bonds than ever before. It was wonderful for me and I was lucky. But I also learned that there are excellent small-group 'adventure tours' where a single person can have a terrific trip without any personal friend in tow, so being solo is no hindrance to exploring interesting places.

Other retirement pleasures can be entirely solitary. At home I do more reading for pleasure than when I was working, and have stacks of wonderful books surrounding me pressing for attention while I sip my afternoon tea. That's when I begin to wind down for the day, which starts at 5:11 AM when I tear out of bed, hurl myself into my car and get to my coffee-shop just as it opens. I help the barista arrange the newspapers for everyone, and then open the New York Times for a beautifully solitary read.

I'm not quite ready for steady volunteering because I travel too much to be reliable, but that will come. I have been happy to help with the work on the Board of SFURA, where one thing led to another, and soon I will be retiring as President after two years of eventful projects and very fine companionship

So being a retired workaholic brought new pleasures into my life, and shifting into this next chapter of life was easy. Despite a challenging health event and even as some personal losses changed the shape of my universe, life has been rich in providing me with the pleasures of renewed warmth with friends and family.

I hope that all our members are finding new pleasures in this retired life even as we have to navigate through challenging losses and changes. I hope that others are enjoying learning a few new things, creating a few new things, and creating circles of friends from those who were formerly only acquaintances. We are lucky to be living in a time when so much is available to us, including many years of retirement in which to enjoy pursuing activities we put off during our working years. Living in beautiful Vancouver is wonderful and I think we are all lucky every day we are here.

Marilyn Bowman



Our Len Evenden, Cathy Daminato (the new VP Advancement and Alumni Relations), our Marilyn Bowman and SFU President Andrew Petter.

Walk/hike group

Bob Horsfall



The walking group has been reasonably active through the past year, although numbers have fallen off during the winter, and winter walks have tended to involve lower altitude trails! David continues to encourage members to venture onto “more interesting” (for which, read “higher”) trails—snowshoeing on Mt Seymour may be in our near future!

The pictures are from our lunch stop on Dog Mountain (western flank of Mt Seymour). Note the two distinct groups: those eating their own lunches, and the few who were sharing with a rather curious raven, a pattern seen on other walks that involved non-human creatures. (Can we have research credit for this work?)



The Socialist Reports

By Tom O'Shea

1. ...a very successful day at the Museum of Anthropology last Nov. 30th.

Twenty-six SFURA members shared conversation over lunch at the Sage Bistro at UBC and then moved on to the Museum of Anthropology to explore the MoA's recent major expansion and renewal project. This included the recent opening of the Reflecting Pool originally intended as part of the new Museum of Anthropology in 1976, and designed by the late Arthur C. Erickson and landscape architect, Cornelia Hahn Oberlander.

Dr. Anthony Shelton, Director of the MoA, led us on a 1-hour Curator's Tour focussing on the theme of Latin American and Sub-Saharan Africa. This was followed by a tour (for those of us who were still up to it) of the new exhibition entitled “Man Ray, African Art and the Modernist Lens” that explored the pivotal role of photography in changing the perception of African objects from artifacts to fine art. Featured were more than 50 photographs by Man Ray from the 1920s and 1930s, and a number of these were presented alongside the original African objects they featured.

2. ...an impending tour of SFU's School of Contemporary Arts at the new Woodward's Campus scheduled for Feb 16th, 2011. Dr. Owen Underhill will lead the group in a tour of our exciting new facilities. I promise this tour will be less taxing than the MoA (see above) expedition. This will be followed by a pub lunch at the famous Irish Heather Gastropub in Gastown.

Membership Statistics

Barbara Diggins and Marg Jones

Membership total to date: 363

New members:

Richard Schwindt -- Economic & Business Administration

Eve Szabo -- Library

Karen Kirkland -- Education

Loekie van Der Wal -- Animal Care Service

Ted Hickin -- Geography

Financial Planning Group

Marvin Wideen, Tom O'Shea & Philip Mah

Our last Newsletter described our October, 2010 seminar that covered several areas of interest. Many attending expressed the view that understanding the use of options as a money-making strategy should be an important part of our investment knowledge. Konrad Colbow, who has used the options strategy successfully for many years, was seen as an excellent resource for this seminar. He responded to our request and led the November seminar on options trading. At our request he took us back to the 'grade one level' by first taking us through the meaning of terms such as call options, put options, and other related terms. He demonstrated how using the internet for the trading of options can improve our investment performance. He used a power point projector to demonstrate every step along the way.

For the first meeting of 2011, to be held February 15, Alan Black, manager of Pensions & Benefits at SFU & Robert Grauer, chairman of the Pensions and Benefits Trustees will give us an update. They will first provide a visual overview of how faculty and staff groups are connected to and can benefit from pension services and the Sun Life funds. They will then report on their last review with managers of the funds in the Sun Life Group that many of us hold in our retirement portfolio. Next, they will offer their perspectives on how to best plan our resources within the current financial climate. This session offers a unique opportunity to hear from and raise questions with the two persons who head up Pensions & Benefits and the Sun Life Funds at SFU.

Our March 22 seminar will be led by Doug Puffer from University Advancement who will discuss the Gift Annuity Program recently introduced at SFU. A very real concern among seniors is that giving a large gift today will affect their income for the future. This unique financial plan enables retirees to make a gift to SFU while enjoying higher income and the added security of guaranteed tax-favorable income for life. He will describe how it frees up investment and money management concerns, provides tax-free income, provides a charitable gift for income-tax purposes, and improves with time.

The Financial Planning Group's purpose is to organize sessions that will provide information to retirees and other groups at SFU on financial matters and how best to plan for and manage financial resources in retirement. Thus, we ask that you advise us of topics that would be of interest to you in the future. Please send along an email or phone any of us listed below.

Marv Wideen – wideen@sfu.ca (604) 461 0376

Tom O'Shea – oshea@sfu.ca (604) 551 5542

Phillip Mah – pmah@sfu.ca (604) 438 1941

Spring 2011 Seminars

Mike Roberts

January 25th, Tuesday, 12.00 to 1.00. Halpern Centre, Room 126

John & Jan Pierce: 'Kefalonia (Greece) - An Odyssey'

Kefalonia is a strategically located island off the western coast of Greece in the southern Ionian Sea. Referred to as the 'other Greece', it is a place of great natural beauty and historical importance matched by a culture of survival and adaptation. We explore our own personal odyssey of the island against this rich and complex political, natural and cultural history from Homer to the present.

February 22nd, Tuesday, 12.00 to 1.00., Halpern Centre, Room 126.

Charles Crawford: 'Co-operation, negotiation and cheating in human reproductive interactions'

Darwin's theory of sexual selection dominates evolutionary psychologist's thinking on reproductive interactions. In this talk I will attempt to combine sexual selection theory with reciprocity theory to provide a more general treatment of mating interactions. I imagine a male and a female negotiating a price of a house - the amount the male (buyer) must pay to obtain sexual access (the house), with the female as the seller. The currency is parental investment - investment in the offspring of the current mating at the cost of investing in offspring from future matings. Although male gross cheating (ie. seduction and desertion) and female gross cheating (cuckoldry) can be selected, my emphasis is on co-operation with subtle cheating (continuing co-operation while attempting to give a little less than received). I hope that combining sexual selection and reciprocity theory provides a more complete model of human reproductive interactions.



SFU in Winter

**From The London Times: A Well-Planned Retirement
A perfect example of government mismanagement.**

Outside England 's Bristol Zoo there is a parking lot for 150 cars and 8 buses. For 25 years, it's parking fees were managed by a very pleasant attendant. The fees were for cars (£1.40), for buses (about £7).

Then, one day, after 25 solid years of never missing a day of work, he just didn't show up.

So the Zoo Management called the City Council and asked it to send them another parking agent. The Council did some research and replied that the parking lot was the Zoo's own responsibility. The Zoo advised the Council that the attendant was a City employee. The City Council responded that the lot attendant had never been on the City payroll.

Meanwhile, sitting in his villa somewhere on the coast of Spain or France or Italy ... is a man who'd apparently had a ticket machine installed completely on his own and then had simply begun to show up every day, commencing to collect and keep the parking fees, estimated at about £560 per day -- for 25 years.

Assuming 7 days a week, this amounts to just over 7 million pounds ... and no one even knows his name.



SFU with snow on the ground

New Interest Group on Personal Technologies

Marilyn Bowman

The Personal Technologies Interest Group held its first meeting on 27 January in AQ 6106. About 22 people attended the meeting, which was on the topic of cellphones and smartphones. Leader Adam Horvath took us through a very interesting history of increasingly smart phones that merged early cellphone functions with the “personal desk assistant” or PDA gadgets that people were using before integration of their functions into devices such as the Blackberry and iPhone. Adam brought with him a bag of goodies to use in demonstrating each gadget along this developmental history, and answered many questions from members.

We all enjoyed it, then created a small working group to continue organizing future PTIG meetings. Barb Diggins of our Board, along with Leigh Palmer and Jay Burr will organize similar PTIG meetings in the future, perhaps two in the remainder of the semester. They will select a topic and find a speaker, date, and room and will announce this to our members.

The organizing committee welcomes your suggestions for future topics. Some have been suggested (e.g. Facebook and social media for keeping in touch with family and friends; Using the internet to share photos), but nothing has been decided yet. Feel free to leave a phone message at our new SFURA Phone number: 778.782.2297 if you have ideas for a topic or a good speaker.

Our new website

Marilyn Bowman

SFURA’s website has a new look. By now many of you will have discovered that our website at <http://SFU.ca/retirees> looks and operates differently. For many years Norman Swartz served valiantly as our webmaster (Leugh Palmer served in that role while Norman was President), but wished to retire. In considering how to carry on, we realized that it would be a good time to update our look, and to have a website that would not require the same level of expertise to post events. Soon we discovered our member Stephanie Mitchell was willing to create a new website for us that would give us new features that would make it easy for all Board Members to post events. We signed a contract with Stephanie in the spring of 2010, and by October the new site was up and running. Every now and then we encounter a minor problem, but Stephanie agreed to continue helping us for a year as web supervisor, and these minor problems are quickly solved.

We think the new site is quite wonderful. It has a clean look, members can easily increase the font size for viewing, and events that are coming up are prominently displayed on the home page, while also being listed within the Calendar. I hope you take a run through the site and see what we have posted there.

Our Board is very grateful for all the years of work that Norm put into the site, and now are also very pleased with the new site that Stephanie has created. We expect a further upgrade within the year, as the university gradually adopts a new and simple system that everyone can use. Our plan is to make the migration to the new SFU system in about 8 months with the help of the IT staff, and to have the Board receive training in the new system. We look forward to having increasing numbers of new retirees join us with the full training already completed."

SFURA Archives

Evelyn Palmer

A committee has been set up by the SFURA Executive Board to build archives to manage SFURA documents. Committee members are Evelyn Palmer, Chair, Janet Blanchet and Len Evenden. The documents are kept in the SFURA Office Suite in AQ 3048. Collecting and cataloging documents has been a lengthy process, but some of our files are now complete. It is our intention to make the documents available to members to view at some point in the near future. Items of possible interest will include the documents registering SFURA under the Societies Act, lists of social events, information from other Retirement Associations, minutes of Annual General Meetings, old newsletters, photograph albums compiled by Bev Carlson while she was Chair of Social Events, and booklets produced by Human Resources for receptions and dinners honoring retirees from SFU for the past several years.

Jennifer Harrington of the Human Resources Office provided some for us. On February 2, 2011 I sent an email to members asking for spare copies of some which we were still missing. Responses from members has been prompt and generous. At this point we are missing only the 2004 booklet and would like to have one if any member has an extra copy. If not, we will photocopy the one in the Human Resources Office. I believe that there was no booklet produced before the 1999 Reception.

When the archives are available for viewing I will send an email to members with details of the documents and information about when the office will be open to members. Members who are not on email may call the SFURA office telephone, 778-782-2297 to ask when the office will be open. We will be pleased to share these documents with you.

We also encourage you to visit the SFURA website:<http://www.sfu.ca/retirees/> There is a wealth of information .

Towards a Working Photo Archive

Tom Poiker

A couple of months ago, we started talking about adding photos to our archival development. It was clear that this job could not be added to the duties of the SFURA archival team, not just because the additional work was beyond their capabilities but also because archiving photos needs special technical backgrounds. So Marilyn asked Chris Hildred whether he wanted to take over the job and he agreed. Very quickly, we also realized that the cooperation by Stephanie Mitchell, our new webmaster, was absolutely necessary.

A photo archive works best when it is accessible by many at the same time, without having to turn physical pages. There are several programs/websites that allow this, the most popular being Flickr and Picasaweb (Google), but an organization like ours needs more in terms of flexibility and security. We are lucky that Stephanie has ample experience with Menalto Gallery.

At this time, we are still working on the basics and don't want to go into too much detail. However, if you want to see what can be done with Gallery, have a look at Stephanie's photo archive at smphoto.kulekats.com. It will give you a good overview and will make further descriptions easier for us.