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Welcome

Abe Ross

Welcome to the first issue of the first volume of the newsletter of the CPA Section on Psychologists and Retirement. In this edition we have a report from the section co-chairs, three articles from presentations at the section Conversation Session at the convention in Vancouver and also, a column entitled "IMHO". The three articles relate the authors' experiences post-retirement; two are by academic psychologists and one is by a psychologist who worked in what, in graduate school, we used to call the real world (RW). IMHO is an opinion piece. Whether or not our newsletter develops depends more on you than on me. My title is "Editor" and that means I edit, I don't write the articles. Send me articles about your retirement experiences, good or bad, and how you dealt with them. What preparation did you do for your retirement, are you satisfied with your post-retirement life? Are you doing research? Does it have to do with retirement, with the effect of retirement on psychological functions (as opposed to the effect of aging *per se* on psychological functions)? Do you have strong opinions about topics which you would like to get a reaction to from other retired psychologists? Don't be concerned about length. One of the benefits of using a .pdf format is that you can read this on-line or download it to your computer or print it and read it at your leisure. Submissions should be sent to me <abeross@live.com>.

Co-Chairs Report for SPAR Newsletter

Message from the SPAR Co-Chairs

Welcome to the first edition of the Canadian Psychological Association (CPA) Newsletter of the Section on Psychologists and Retirement (SPAR). A sincere thank you to our volunteer Newsletter Editor, Abe Ross, a past president of CPA.

SPAR is now two years old and celebrated its second birthday in Vancouver, June 6 amid the activities for CPAs 75th Anniversary. Unfortunately Co-Chair Juanita Mureika was unable to be present due to knee surgery. Festivities began with a series of presentations on "How I spent my retirement". The conversation session was hosted by John Conway, CPA's archivist, and the

contributors were Elinor Ames, Harvey Brooker, Sandra Pyke, Peter Suedfeld and Bob Wilson. Note the heavy representation here of Past Presidents and Directors. The accounts of retirement activities were varied and humorous; hopefully one or more will appear in this or other issues of the Newsletter. [Editor's note - three of them are in this newsletter.]

The section was fortunate to have as its keynote speaker, Gloria Gutman, a distinguished scholar and recipient of many awards who is currently Professor Emerita of the Simon Fraser University Gerontology Department and founder and Director of the Gerontology Research Centre. Dr. Gutman is an internationally recognized authority on the topic of elder abuse and since 2010 has held the position of President of the International Network of Prevention of Elder Abuse. She addressed the topic of population aging and opportunities for psychologists. Data suggest that the 85+ age group are the fastest growing age cohort in the population effectively constituting a grey tsunami. In the future we will have many more centenarians and super centenarians. Among the opportunities for psychologists in this aging context, Dr. Gutman cited the screening, training and supporting of caregivers, dying with dignity, social isolation and depression of the elderly, over medication, non-compliance, effectiveness of cognitive games, etc.

The program concluded with the AGM which was attended by a small and select group of nine individuals. cursory investigation revealed that low attendance at Section AGMs is not unusual. For example, one well established section with a very large membership had even fewer people present than ours. All the business of the Section was duly conducted - passage of the by-laws, approval of the minutes of the inaugural AGM, appointment of officers. With respect to this latter, Juanita and Sandra agreed to continue for another year as co-chairs, as noted above, Abe Ross agreed to edit the newsletter, and John Conway agreed to serve as program chair for the 2015 CPA convention in Ottawa. The final item on the agenda was a report on the Section Chairs meeting which preceded the Convention proper. Items discussed included: updating of the manual for section chairs; publishing a schedule of deadlines for chairs; Tyler Stacey-Holmes gave an excellent presentation on the use of social media; in order to facilitate the transfer of finances for sections, CPA has centralized banking with the Scotia bank; a new section logo has been developed to be used on official documents [Editor's note - see newsletter heading]; the newsletter award was won by the Clinical

Section again; Dawn Hanson will be attending section events as our representative from the CPA board.

Remember, you do not have to be a member of CPA to be an affiliate member of SPAR. Just send \$10.00 and the attached membership form to Juanita Mureika, 21 Caribou Point Lane, Harvey Station, NB E6K 2Z1. If you are already a CPA member or would like to join CPA as well as the section, contact Josee Paliquin – jpaliquin@cpa.ca [Editor's note – if you are already a member, feel free to pass the form on to any friends who are retired psychologists and might be interested in joining.]

Retirement as a Dabbler

Elinor Ames

Sometimes plans for retirement don't pan out... I had always thought I would like to sing in a chorus, but because of years of allergies, by the time I retired my singing voice was only a croak. I had taken a few pre-retirement courses on Teaching English as a Second Language but when I volunteered, no one was willing to take me as a helper. I was considered "over-qualified", and offered only what sounded like fulltime work at a second profession, which I didn't want. Several of my SFU colleagues have developed their interests into second professions – as artists, musicians, quilters, or gardeners. For me, on the other hand, 40 years in the first profession was enough, and in retirement I have been quite happy as a dabbler.

During 17 years of retirement, I've gone through several phases. In the first year, travel to Massachusetts, Puerto Rico, Hawaii, Arizona, Stockholm, and Finland above the Arctic Circle. A couple of trips were professionally related, but by 4 years post-retirement I realized that having graduated my last Ph.D., written my last research article, given 40 talks on international adoption (my last research area) and stopped reading psychological research, I was no longer a psychologist but a former psychologist.

This doesn't mean that I stopped using the skills I practiced as a psychology professor, just that they now are used mainly in community service. After acting as President of a B.C. child advocacy group for 7 years, I switched to the other end of the age spectrum and have served for 8 years on the board and as president of the North Shore Keep Well Society, a seniors' wellness program of exercise, blood pressure monitoring, nutrition and health education at 7 sites across North and West Vancouver. I've done a program evaluation of the Keep Well program and kept its statistics; edited and written articles for its newsletter; given talks; prepared informational handouts and helped develop nutrition PowerPoints.

My current knowledge base focuses on nutrition more than on psychology.

One aspect of retirement life that has stopped being optional is exercise. If I'm to continue walking in my 80s, I must attend balance classes and pump iron in circuit training classes. Besides this necessity there are other, chosen, activities. Two book clubs, one mostly for fun and sociability, the other a college class in which I occasionally have to present a report. Non-credit courses, some serious like "Empires" (the Persian, Roman, and American), "Doris Lessing", "Preservation of Wildlife in Kenya", and "World War I". Others just for fun like "The 20 Best Musical Comedies of the 20th Century", "The Gershwins" and "Norman Jewison Films". I play the bass recorder, quite badly, in a Seniors' Center recorder group that doesn't take itself too seriously even though many of its other members are excellent musicians.

And for things to anticipate, festivals and travel. I see the Vancouver Folk Festival through new eyes when accompanied by my 4-year-old grandson. At the Sunshine Coast Festival of the Written Arts friends and I sit in a lovely outdoor setting for 3 days listening to authors' readings. I have enjoyed Vancouver's Bard on the Beach for Shakespeare and, a couple of times, trips to the Ashland, Oregon, Shakespeare Festival for 7 plays in 6 days.

Overseas trips have included memorable tours to Australia and New Zealand, India, and Kenya, and North American travel has taken me to

Arizona and New Mexico: World Heritage sites in Newfoundland; First Nations Museums in B.C.; Churchill, Manitoba to see the polar bears; and Salem, Massachusetts to study witches (including my hanged witch forebear Samuel).

With age, time with family and friends grows in importance. Last year I was lucky enough to be in Seattle when the Society for Research in Child Development was in town. I didn't attend the convention, but did meet with some former students, now friends of long standing. One had been a grad student at SFU 42 years ago; the other was an undergraduate student of mine 55 years ago. Those visits were very important reminders of the times when I used to be a psychologist.

Retirement Comments

Robert Wilson,

Like the rest of the esteemed panel I too failed at retirement. We sold our psychological services business in July of 2010. At that point we were providing services in locations throughout the world, with 300 full time staff and over 1500 contracted psychologists and allied mental health workers. I started the business in 1979 with the mission of developing a marketplace for services provided

by psychologists. At that time private practice was very limited in Canada with most applied work being done in government run institutions under the guidance of psychiatrists, a completely unacceptable situation. I soon discovered that running a successful professional business was a 24/7, 365 day job. A history of what was a very unique business is in preparation.

By the time we sold the company my responsibilities as CEO and Chairman of the Board seriously compromised my commitment to maintain my interest in professional affairs, my commitment to provide direct service one day a week and to maintain my affiliation with academic colleagues interested in pursuing applied research projects. The realities of the marketplace were forcing quality compromises to our services which I was unwilling to live with, and as a result the executive and Board agreed to sell the business while it enjoyed high value.

The work demands were such that to the day the business was sold I had not given any thought to what life would look like “unemployed.” Prior to starting the business, while a government employee, I built a rather unusual “pattern language” West Coast house we still live in; however, one badly in need of renovation. So I immediately turned my energy to rebuilding the entire house, a project I am about two thirds of the way through at present, almost four years post sale of the business.

I found it took almost two years before I could relax my pace of life and begin to think of developing a “bucket list,” a list I am still working on. At present I spend about 50% of my time renovating our house or helping our children maintain their places. About 10% of my time is spent pursuing challenging wood working projects which have included building some fine furniture, building a fully functional wooden geared wall clock and am part way through turning some unusual bowls and have just started building a celestial mechanical calendar and orrery. Travel for pleasure rather than business now takes up another 10% of our time and we would like to expand that, while grand-parenting, volunteering and a variety of social activities take up another 20% of our time. Being married for the past 52 years to a writer has rubbed off, and I have completed the first draft of an historical novel as well as a number of fictitious interviews from the point of view of a journalist traveling throughout North America.

Throughout my post employment phase I have maintained professional memberships, journal reading, a small private practice and then about a year ago a serious ignored social problem, primarily in the United States, attracted my attention because of an opportunity for our discipline to make a major contribution to resolving the problem. Then breaking a promise to my wife that I would not start another business; I did get her qualified agreement, I contacted a colleague in the United States and we have completed a comprehensive business plan, an exhaustive review of the relevant literature and introductions to key individuals to help us test the plan. This activity has led to my being asked to sit on the Board of an International Venture Capital company specializing in health care businesses.

Retirement for me I have discovered is a gradual slowing pace, a dramatic reduction in stress, an enjoyable expanding of interests and the good fortune of being able to maintain the intellectual stimula-

tion provided by the profession and friends and colleagues gathered over the years.

How I Spent My Retirement

Sandra Pyke

Retirement has been defined as “A rite of passage out of productive endeavor into decline, decrepitude and impending death.” That certainly has not been my experience, far from it.

I confess at the outset that I broke the cardinal rule for retirees – that one should plan for retirement. Instead, at least in the early stages of retirement, I was reactive rather than proactive.

Initially, the transition to retirement was relatively seamless; in effect I did more of the same. At York, I took on the job of Director of the Graduate Programme in Women’s Studies and did that for two years. I maintained my involvement with the University of Windsor special selection committee. I stayed on as the Executive Director of CCDP, and in that capacity sat on the CPA Board of Directors. I continued my membership on the executive committees of APA Division 35 and CPA SWAP.

I did make a number of resolutions which turned out to be of the New Year’s Eve variety. I resolved never to teach or supervise but in the event, I continued supervising graduate students. I resolved never to give another conference presentation, yet here I am today. I resolved never to write or publish another article yet my c.v. has over a half dozen post-retirement additions. I resolved to learn to speak French and am embarrassed to admit that no progress has been made on this commitment.

All of the above reflects the reactive component of this new phase of life. However, once I was over the initial adjustment period to this new form of existence, I did some branching out. I became a volunteer at a shelter for abused women and then joined the Board of Directors of this organization and sat on the Board for four years. This experience revealed the huge gulf between an academic analysis of a social problem and first hand exposure to it.

Like many retirees, retirement brought with it an interest in history. My involvement with the past was tripartite. First, I became concerned about preserving the history of the CPA Section on Women and Psychology and became the Section’s first archivist. Second, I began to record an account of my mother’s life. One of my regrets is that this interest didn’t surface until after her death, too late to explore some of the fascinating life experiences of this feisty lady. Finally, I became an aficionado of historical accounts of life in ancient Rome.

Another aspect of the proactive side of my post-employment era is an involvement in various retirement organizations. I have been very active in the York University Retirees Association, serving as co-president for four years and am still a member of their Executive Committee. I am currently President of a national organization for retirees – the College and University Retiree Associations of Canada, and last but far from least, the Co-Chair with Juanita Mureika of the CPA Section on Psychologists and Retirement.

Let me conclude on a cautionary note; retirement is seductive. For some of us the perceived luxury of infinite amounts of free, unstructured time is short-lived and/or illusory. It is incredibly easy to slide down the slippery slope of being over-committed. Nevertheless, I have found this period of my life to be a wonderfully positive experience – exciting, rewarding, productive. I recommend it highly.

IMHO

Zooming Through Retirement

© J. Barnard Gilmore

There can be something rather noble and reassuring about an aged face, full of character, well wrinkled, and composed. Even in films, where typically we see celebrations of youth, vigor and power, sometimes the archetype of aged wisdom is also portrayed and celebrated, as for instance in the role of a revered Aboriginal chief or a wise European grandmother, a person rich in sun-burnished wrinkles. An aging female celebrity once observed “*I don't want any makeup artist or photographer altering so much as a single wrinkle or blemish on my body. I've paid dearly for every one.*”

But sadly, in Canada today, we have a burgeoning commercial enterprise that is primarily devoted to selling to retirees of rather comfortable means not wrinkles, not wisdom, but selling instead unrealistic hopes, hopes for enduring youthfulness, for enduring vigour (both physical and sexual), and for enduring power (both political and social). More particularly, retirees are being sold hopes for enduring happiness, happiness that is to be achieved by means of an increasing consumption of both goods and services. One prominent mouthpiece for promoting such hopes is the Canadian publication named *Zoomer* magazine. This magazine is but one of many arms of a business empire called ZoomerMedia.

Another arm of ZoomerMedia is called *CARP*. *CARP* was once known as the Canadian Association of Retired Persons. Formerly *CARP* was truly an “Association,” but today it stands transformed into a different kind of marketing vehicle, news about which is primarily communicated through *Zoomer* magazine. Retirees in Canada are specifically being encouraged, though *CARP*, to become consumer-zoomers. In this newest incarnation of *CARP*, it now appears that consumer retirees may simply have become the consumed.

Another of the many arms of ZoomerMedia is one that is called ZoomerCard.ca. In early issues of *Zoomer* magazine this entity purchased full-page advertisements for its “Platinum Plus” ZOOMER MasterCard. One such advertisement featured a lovely coquette of uncertain seniority (perhaps age 50, perhaps not) comfortably seated cross-legged on a plush red couch while gazing directly at the viewer, sharing both her winning smile and her winning cleavage. Beside her, in a large font, were printed the words: “Now it's all about / **Me.**” And just below the super-sized word “me” appeared a large MasterCard with the massive word “ZOOMER” emblazoned from side to side. Ensnared inside the second letter “O” in “ZOOMER” could be seen the sketch of a carp. (The metaphor, sadly, was perfect.)

In this advertisement, in undisguised form, was revealed what the new Zoomer movement seems to concentrate most upon, namely on my “**Me,**” my proud status, my proud health, my proclaimed agelessness, my ability to command copious resources and comforts. Unreflective and unapologetic pride is exhibited and encouraged here. And thus, it seems to me, the Zoomer movement celebrates some socially troubling forms of egotism, ostentation, and denial.

About 30% of each *Zoomer* magazine is filled with distinctly high-end advertising directed to financially comfortable seniors. Another 30% of the magazine contains feature copy praising selected destinations, products, and lifestyles promising further wealth or comfort to retirees who already command large helpings of both. Another 15% of the magazine is generally devoted to polishing the brands of celebrities who have some new book or product that you should buy to confirm your status as a senior sophisticocrat. The remainder of each issue offers advice for avoiding the loss of prized Zoomer traits, particularly traits such as attractiveness and sexual prowess.

For those who admire or profit from this approach to life, Zoomerism may be seen as a fine thing. But for those who cannot admire this full-court marketing press it can be painful and worrying to observe. Is “enough” never enough for Zoomers? One might easily imagine it is not. Are more Shopping and more Travel and more Dining the road to happiness for each of us? One might easily conclude that they are. Are we never to become comfortable with wrinkles or quieted appetites or the other imagined “failings” of old age? Apparently not soon if we buy into the Zoomer philosophy of **Me**.

Zoomerism shows itself as a philosophy of excess: Excess in the service of increasing acquisitions, acquisitions in the service of continued “growth”. But yesterday's livable world is fast disappearing in an excess of excesses: excessive population, excessive greenhouse gasses, excessive waste, even excessive financial inequality and privilege. Reflection suggests that the all-too-likely price tag for more of such excesses might well become oblivion.

Retirement offers us our last best time for reflection. It is also the last best time for gratitude, for giving back, and giving away. It is certainly a time for reading. But alas, reading *Zoomer* magazine and its self-proclaimed “Zoomer philosophy,” may have just the wrong effect on those members of *CARP* who might otherwise be helped to slow down.

Oblivion should not be rushed. Nothing should.

Dr. J. B. Gilmore is Professor Emeritus of Psychology from the University of Toronto. Since retirement Barney has moved to British Columbia and has published the book *On Retirements: Playing Seriously with the Work of Growing Older*. Barney has agreed to contribute occasional opinion pieces, some based on his insight as a psychologist, some based on his insights as a retired person, and some based on little insight at all.

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The annual membership fee in the section is \$10.00
This form with accompanying membership fee should be sent to

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