

President's Report

by Richard Giroday www.ergiroday@gmail.com

Dear friends, I am hopeful this finds you, and those you hold dear, to be safe and well. The COVID-19 virus has turned life upside down and we are in times unlike anything we have experienced before. As I write, it is Easter weekend, normally a time of family celebration. Physical distancing separates us from those most precious to us.

We practise physical distancing as directed. We walk safely in our neighbourhoods and feel the sun warming once again as the dark days of winter recede. We may be physical distancing but we are not social distancing. Now is a good time for us all to pick up the phone or message a friend, neighbour or family member. Phone calls, text messaging, FaceTime, Messenger, Messenger Kids, Discord, online games have become our new means to spend time together. Now is a time to take extra effort to keep up social connections safely.

The world economy has been hit hard and the health of our pension comes quick to mind. I can assure you our pension payments are secure. They will continue to be deposited into your bank account as scheduled. The TPP began this year in a surplus position with healthy reserves. TPP Investment managers have diversified investments to reduce losses due to stock market fluctuations. Our pension is a defined benefit plan and is not dependent on day-to-day performance of any markets. For that we should be grateful.

As you will know, our April meeting was cancelled. Elections normally held in April have been moved to our October meeting. The executive will meet in June face-to-face or via electronics to decide at that time if our 'hell with the bell' picnic in the park can proceed. We will continue to keep you informed. This will not last forever. We look forward to the removal of physical distancing from our lives. Please keep safe, well, and healthy.

This Newsletter

by Bob Steventon, editor <bstevent@telus.net>

The newsletter is available only as a pdf. We will not be preparing a paper copy. We want to avoid the physical contact needed to prepare the photocopied version. The newsletter is also a month late. The editor has been delayed by a non-Covid health issue but is on the mend.

The newsletter will be emailed to the usual list of recipients. Jim Caldwell has also prepared a supplemental email list that includes those members who have provided us with an email address but normally get the newsletter in the mail. We will miss some members but hope to include as many as we can. Please do feel free to forward this issue to anyone you think might be interested in it. If you want to add or update your email address, notify Jim at <caldwelljk@shaw.ca>.

The newsletter is usually restricted to 8 pages. That's a limitation imposed by the cost of a stamp and the weight of the printed copy. This issue is a bit longer and includes not one, not two, but three travel articles. The last page is a departure from the usual two-column format. It contains Bonnie-Jean Foulds' financial statement that would normally have been presented to the April meeting.

This issue will be my last as editor. My first was in October 2005. I'm not sure I realized I was taking on a 61-issue commitment when I started but it has been a lot of fun. The strength of this little publication has always been its local content provided by a long list of PGRTA members. To all of you, I say thanks!

PGRTA Election Notice

From Elizabeth Eakin

We will elect the 2020-2021 President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer at the next Annual General Meeting which we hope will be in October.

We will also elect a delegate and an alternate delegate to the BCRTA Annual General Meeting, normally in September, but again there is a great cloud of uncertainty about when or if the meeting will be held.

Members are constrained by our Policies and Procedures to serve for only two years as President or Vice-President. This means no one should ever be stuck in the position forever and ever amen. However, it also encourages selfless individuals to step forward and volunteer! Please.

If you would like to volunteer or suggest someone we should ask to run, contact Nominations Chair Elizabeth Eakin at <ejeakin@gmail.com>.

Nominations to date: President - Debra Page Vice President - volunteer needed Secretary - volunteer needed Treasurer - Bonnie Jean Foulds

Nominations will also be accepted at the meeting.

Newsletter Submissions: The next issue of the newsletter would normally be published in October. We have many details to sort out but we hope to stick to that schedule. Send your announcements or articles to retiring editor, Bob Steventon <bstevent@telus.net>, by September 30, 2020. He will forward articles to the new newsletter editor!

Interested in back issues? You can find copies of newsletters back to August 2000 at <<u>https://tinyurl.com/News-PGRTA></u>.

Retirement Roamings III ... **or The Trials of a Traveller.** *Travel Stories by Wendy Mundie*

It is generally accepted that travel is educational. It teaches you in ways you may not have expected: about yourself, your strengths and your weaknesses. Travel can give you an opportunity to learn, to grow and, perhaps, to become wiser.



I have learned ...

- two brains are better than one, and a third is even better.
- to keep a sense of humour and to try not to be overly embarrassed by any situation I find myself in.
- that, when I panic, my brain shuts down and I cannot process anything. Knowing this hasn't helped me. In fact, it makes me more terrified when things go wrong.
- the worse a situation is, the better the story will be when (and if) I finally make it out of that situation.

In the Vancouver airport my sister and I started up the escalator after our Prince George

flight. She said, "Race you!", then fell flat on her face at the top. She was apparently unhurt although she did limp for awhile. I asked her to re-enact the scene for a photo but she refused. *What I learned: photo ops can be in unexpected places.*

We were staying in San Giustino Valdarno, a small village in Italy, and decided to walk to the local organic winery where we had a tour arranged. It was only "3 km away", so an hour was plenty of time to get there. Yet we walked and walked and walked. It was midday, the sun was blazing, we were hot, tired and didn't like walking on the side of the road with the cars whooshing by us. Finally, convinced the directions were wrong and seeing an elderly lady working in her garden, I stopped and asked her how far we had to go. She told me 3 km. I held up 3 fingers, certain I had misunderstood her Italian. *What I learned: "about 3 km" has no meaning for a local.*



We were in Horta, on the island of Faial, on a trip to the Azores in 2016. It was overcast, then raining. At 1:30 in the afternoon we took ourselves off to lunch at a spot we had discovered down the street, Peter's Café Sport. We had wine and ordered clams and octopus. By then it was pouring so we had another glass of wine. Canadians who we met on the flight over came in, joined us, and we chatted. After a couple of hours, we left and went into the shop

next door. To our surprise, our waiter followed us. We had forgotten to pay. *What I learned: drinking in the afternoon may be unwise*.



Overnighting in a hotel, I contacted the front desk as it was midnight and there was such a strange noise in the room. We checked everything including the smoke detector, but we could not pinpoint the location of the sound. As soon as he could get away from the front desk, the receptionist came to move us to a different room. When he entered our room, he went straight to my backpack asking me if I had a clock with a travel alarm inside. What I learned: I can easily move past embarrassment into mortification.

Buying bus tickets in Italy was never an easy experience, not only because of the seller not speaking any English, but because of the unlabelled buses and not knowing where the bus would stop, or even if it was going to arrive at all. So, there were always a lot of questions to be asked. In the little village store where bus tickets were sold, I struggled in Italian to buy 3 tickets to Arezzo for the next day, then to find out the time the bus would arrive and where we should be waiting. The lady behind the counter, who was helping me, listened carefully as I explained what I needed before turning her back to retrieve the tickets, saying in perfect English. "Ok, that is 3 tickets for tomorrow for Arezzo, euro 2.90 each." What I learned:

Locals are patient and appreciative when someone speaks their language.

During the BC Winter Games held here in February 2015, we hosted a guest who visited family in Cuba every year. As we were heading to Cuba in March, she suggested that we take items that would immensely help poorer Cuban citizens. I took her advice to heart, bought a second hand suitcase and spent \$300 filling it with all types of sports equipment, balls & pumps, toiletries, school supplies, shopping bags. It was a sight to behold and I was so proud of what I had done. Not so great when I got to Varadero airport. After a very stressful hour with absolutely no English spoken and not knowing if our transfer to Havana was still waiting for us, I paid \$135 duty and was able to leave. What I learned: Grandiose gestures can cause a lot of trouble.



At hotels in Europe we frequently had 3 keys outer door, inner door, and room key. I learned early-on to practice opening all the doors when first given the keys. Yet there we were at our hotel in Milan, unable to open the inner door at 11:30 pm. Panic set in and we were trying every key again and again. Although we never gave up trying the keys in the door we took breaks, banging on the door to wake the other guests, phoning back to Canada for help, leaving messages at the numbers on the hotel contact card and planning our fall back positionfinding another hotel for the night. At 12:35 am, not having given up, one of the keys magically opened the inner door. What I learned: What I think I've learned the first time, I haven't.

Luncheon Notice

From Bonnie Lamb and Susan Flynn, PGRTA Social Committee Co-Chairpersons

The Wednesday, April 22, 2020 Luncheon was cancelled due to COVID-19 meeting requirements. The AGM will be held at a later date.

Our next luncheon meeting will be scheduled for October and our AGM, with election of officers and BCRTA AGM delegates, will take place then. The three winners of our free lunch draw for April will be able to receive their free lunches at our October meeting.

Hopefully, the PGRTA Executive will meet in June to plan for the coming year and will, at that time, determine if the "To Hell with The Bell" picnic will go forward.

I'd like to send a huge thank you to Maggie Dunlop who has been my "partner in crime" for the past ten years ... and many more years with my predecessor. Maggie has worked tirelessly to make our luncheon meetings possible. Without her guidance and support, the Social Committee would not have been able to organize and manage our regular meetings, picnics and Salvation Army hamper drives each year. Hats off to you, Maggie.

I'd also like to welcome Maggie's replacement, Susan Flynn, to our Social Committee team. April's meeting was supposed to be her first venture into our wonderful world of luncheon meeting organizing and implementing. While there will not be a meeting, Susan has managed to pick up the reins and get the message out to our luncheon callers who contact our members.

Please stay safe and healthy and we'll see you in the fall.

The Awards Report By Aleta MacFadden

School District 57 Open Scholarship: We received \$265 in donations at the February luncheon. Our balance is currently \$5,350.68 with the addition of interest earned. Of this total, \$1,000 is held in reserve for a bursary that was awarded but not yet claimed. The recipient has until October 2020 to claim this bursary.

The school district received applications for their awards before spring break so the 2020 scholarship will still be awarded — just not in person. The committee will meet remotely to decide on the recipients. Cheques will be mailed out in May or June.

UNBC Education Bursary: As with the school district award, the bursary will still be awarded but not at a ceremony. Our bursary received \$90 from the February book sale. This brings our balance to \$2,442.90. We will be able to offer the bursary this year and next.

Thank you everyone for your continued support and see you in the fall!

Fitness While Self-Isolating

by Debra Page

There are silver linings with all human trials. The silver lining for me is becoming more aware of the options for work-outs which are available on line. I've tried to make an effort to maintain a reasonable level of fitness for years. However, I've tended to focus on the social aspects of fitness training. Meeting people for activities or driving to fitness studios where I enjoy the social aspects has been a motivator. Without the social part of fitness activities available, I decided that I shouldn't neglect the fitness part. I started to become aware of online classes that have become more available.

There are a variety of fitness classes available on YouTube. My personal favourite is one called "HASfit". This offers a variety of options including weight training, HIIT, Cardio classes and fitness for seniors. There are options for different lengths of classes. Many of the fitness studios both in-town and elsewhere are offering classes through YouTube, Instagram and Zoom. I'm now able to continue my twice weekly Pilates classes on Zoom instead of driving across town. I've seen lists of local studios which are offering online classes. Some of the options I've used have no cost, some have a cost substantially less that usual and some are requesting donations through 'Go Fund Me'.

One of my daughters teaches fitness classes at two different studios in Langley. I've been able to participate in her classes because they are posted to Instagram and with the added benefit of getting to see my daughter in action.

Some of these online class options have been so popular that the studios are considering making them a permanent feature. On that note, I would like to recommend online classes as a way to begin or extend your journey in fitness. Moving in front of your Smart TV or computer for half an hour is something most people can fit into their day. It's handy to have some dumbbells or bands available to do online classes but not essential. A matching set of water bottles or tin cans can work if you're trying a weight class. An important benefit for many people is eliminating self-consciousness. With the exception of the options on Zoom, no one can see you! No one can see if you're working out in your pyjamas or doing the easy version of the classes!

Obviously, everyone needs to consult their doctor before beginning any new activity. But all sectors of the the medical community have long advocated being active as a way to help maintain health. The BCRTA has supported this by incorporating fitness breaks into the meetings at the AGM. I've enjoyed these online classes. A combination of these classes plus dog walks and cross-country skiing have helped with my own fitness level.

What a Difference a Week Makes

by Kris Nellis

Phil and I were enjoying our third month in Palm Desert, California, and were in the midst of a week-long visit from our sister-in-law when the Canadian government issued its travel advisory on March 13th. The BNP Paribas Tennis Tournament had been cancelled on March 8th which, for us, meant two things. First, we thought that this would keep the coronavirus out of the Coachella Valley as large groups of tennis fans would no longer be arriving from all over the world. Second, we realized that last year's ladies' champion, Canadian Bianca Andreescu, who had withdrawn from the tournament due to an injury, would now continue to be the champion for another year. We were feeling OK.

On March 11th, we had met a group of friends in a pub and on the 12th we had dinner at a golf course and danced to a Motown band. Then came the advisory which we read as mainly concerning travellers who had to arrange flights. We had our vehicle so we were in no rush. We celebrated "Pi Day" with pizza at an Italian restaurant and had Sunday brunch out on the patio of a popular California bistro. We took our sister-in-law to the airport on the morning of the 16th and, even though every event we had tickets to over the next two weeks had been cancelled, we planned to continue to enjoy the warm weather of the desert. An email on St. Patrick's Day changed our minds in an instant. Johnson Inc. informed us that our MEDOC medical insurance would expire on March 23rd if we were not making an effort to return to Canada. We packed up and left the next day.

Our trip to the border took three days and each day there were more restrictions being put in place for the public's protection. Our first lunch stop had crime scene tape surrounding all the tables so we stretched our legs as we ate in the parking lot beside our car. We spent our first night in a small town in central California where the restaurant near the hotel was closed but the pub was still open. The tables were spread out but, by this time, we were waking up to the importance of distancing ourselves from others so we got take-out.

The next morning we were informed that the breakfast room was closed and we were offered two paper bags containing an apple, juice box and a danish. Things were definitely getting serious. Lunch was a repeat of Day 1 and we stopped for the night in Vancouver, WA. We were given a list of the restaurants nearby that were still open for take-out or delivery only. We opted for delivery and paid for our order with our remaining US cash including about \$10.00 in change. The young delivery man didn't seem too scared of the money that I dumped in his hand. We had another breakfast bag handed to us when we checked out.

Crossing the border at Sumas went smoothly. After being asked the usual questions, we were given a coronavirus sheet and instructed to self-isolate for 14 days. We had stopped for an afternoon visit with my sister in Snohomish (north of Seattle), sitting far apart on the deck, so we spent the night in Chilliwack. The hotel's desk clerk was serious – she wore gloves and immediately wiped down the pen I used. We opted for delivery once again after the first restaurant we called said that no one was allowed inside to pick up take-out. Got it. The next morning we had many breakfast items to choose from that were then put into paper bags for us. A luxury!

We were home by late afternoon on March 21st and were relieved to have successfully run the gauntlet. So much had changed from our perfectly lovely last week in Palm Desert, spent in denial and ignorance, to our arrival back in Prince George. We knew we were definitely in the right place and not unhappy that we were spurred into action by Johnson Inc. We did discover that the Trip Interruption portion of our insurance qualifies us for a refund of the last two weeks of our pre-paid rent so we have mailed off the documents required to receive that. That was good news! We have completed our 14 day self-isolation. We appreciated a woman in our condo building doing our grocery shopping but it is good to be able to take that on ourselves. Going for a walk is now a highlight of our day!

Beware: Canada Pension Scam

From the Senior Times, February 2020

Dear Seniors Resource Centre,

We just heard about this! Are there no depths to which these rotten scammers will sink? We thought you would like to warn people.

We got a call today from "Canada Pension" offering to boost one of our pensions by \$250 a month. All we had to do was provide our full financial account info to CP for research purposes and we would be rewarded. I hope your alarm bells are ringing as loud as ours were. The caller knew our name and that we were CP recipients. So to all my friends out there who are of a certain age, watch yourselves, there's a new scumbag group preying on seniors.

Sincerely, Concerned in PG

Dear Concerned in PG,

YIKES! How many seniors are going to hear "\$250 more a month" and jump without thinking this through? Remember that if it sounds too good to be true, it likely is! Never share personal or account information over the phone — especially if it is a cold call. Don't get scammed!

Sincerely, Seniors Resource Centre

Editor's Note: This scam predates the Canadian government's recent announcement of aid for seniors but could be confused with it. The government is providing a one-time payment of \$300 to seniors eligible for the Old Age Security (OAS) pension with an additional \$200 to seniors eligible for the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS). You do NOT need to apply for these payments.

Some COVID-19 Resources

Providing useful links to information on the novel coronavirus is difficult. Knowledge about the virus and the disease it causes is evolving. Advice and information about programs is updated often. News reports fill the airwaves and the online world. Conspiracy theorists are busily at work. There is as much misleading information out there as there is useful information.

Links go out of date but, hopefully, these links will prove useful to you.

Do this! The BC Centre for Disease Control is surveying British Columbians. The survey is open until May 31. It takes about 20 minutes to finish the survey: <<u>https://tinyurl.com/BCCovid-survey</u>>

BCRTA President Gerry Tiede provided this update: <<u>https://tinyurl.com/TiedeUpdate</u>>

The BCRTA asked Dr. Roger Wong for advice on staying safe for retirees and their families: <https://tinyurl.com/WongAdvice>

The BC Teachers' Pension Plan: <https://tpp.pensionsbc.ca/covid-19-updates>

Northern Health: <https://www.northernhealth.ca>

BC Government Covid-19 information: https://tinyurl.com/BCGovInfo

Government of Canada Covid-19 information: <https://tinyurl.com/FedInfo>

Vancouver-based bc211 provides information and referral regarding community, government and social services in BC. Here is a link to "BC211 Safe Seniors, Strong Communities": <https://tinyurl.com/211Safe>

And Another Scam ... in the Mail From the Senior Times, March 2020

Dear Seniors Resource Centre,

I got this in the mail today. It came with a form for me to fill out from the Canada Revenue Agency. They say they are missing some "required tax information". The form is half filled out with all the basic name and address stuff. They need my SIN number and date of birth.



It also came with a self addressed and stamped envelope. I figured it was a scam and called my bank and they confirmed that it was a scam.

It looks like the real deal. My bank said that unfortunately some people have filled it out and sent it back.

I thought I would share so nobody else falls victim to this scam.

Sincerely, Annoyed on Alward

PGCOS Programs

From Lola-Dawn Fennell

The PG Council of Seniors is keeping the *Meals on Wheels* service running with some necessary modifications and lots of help from community volunteers. We are also keeping our *Friendly Phone Calls* happening with volunteers calling from their homes. Any senior feeling isolated and anxious who would appreciate a *Friendly Phone Call* once or twice a week should contact us. Leave a message at 250-564-5888 or call Susan (our Seniors Housing Info Coordinator) at 250-552-2820. A cheery voice can help make this isolation a little easier!

The fundraising *Diamonds Concerts* (and salute to Bob D'auray) originally scheduled for Sunday May 24 has been postponed. Hang on to your tickets. We hope to reschedule in the healthy future.

Editor's Note: You can download the latest issue of Senior Times from the PGRTA website <www.pgrta.ca/pg-council-of-seniors.html>

Excerpts from a Myanmar Diary *by Wendy Girard*

Nov. 11, 2019: Distant children's voices stir me. Is it my supervision day? Opening my eyes, I study the ceiling fan, basking in being still, with cool air and quiet. Now, I recall the long walk up a very steep, rock paved hill to The Eternity Hotel, and the one-hour cramped ride to get here. Circulation has returned to my numb ankle.

My girlfriend, our guide and I sat cross-legged. We were wedged behind the cab-over style transport truck driver's seat for an hour. Three men rode in front. The switchback road wound down an 18% to 24% grade, sometimes one lane and sometimes two, with grooves for traction. It was harrowing but safe. Our guide had bargained for this upgraded seating situation which was preferable to the bone shattering one hour morning ride up Mount Kyaikhtiyo to the pagoda commonly known as Golden Rock.

That morning we had been packed like sardines, six to a narrow cushioned bench, swaying side to side in unison in the back of an open-air wheeled truck. I chided myself for bringing a small day bag because it left me with only had one hand to brace! The chattering and excited Burmese in the row behind had already helped me to remove my long sleeve linen shirt. Two layers was sweltering. Today was T-shirt advertising day for our travel company, "Myanmar Shalom".



Upon arrival, behind the happy pilgrims, we disembarked unto a raised platform, changed into our longhi skirts, surrendered our shoes and walked barefoot for hours on marble. We explored the famous over-hanging, gold-leafencrusted Golden Rock Buddhist pilgrimage site. The precariously balancing rock itself is a natural wonder and the panoramic views of the landscape were fabulous. Families and friends were staking out their space for an evening and overnight stay, while passing the day snacking, visiting and napping. Those who could not manage the wide low-rise flights of stairs up the mountain side were carried aloft in litters by straining young men. The majestic procession way was lined with braziers roasting meats, foods, skillfully made crafts of gold all for sale. Camping gear could be rented on site. We were a curiosity and by request posed for photos for Buddhists making their once in a life trip on Kahtin Day, or a day of a full moon, to see the sun rise.

Initially our trip had been planned for 2018, before the Rohingya crisis. After soul searching, we decided to go. One guide explained, "The Rohingya were welcome to live in Myanmar peacefully but they wanted their own state. With 132 ethnic groups, if we allowed a state, we would not have a country. Yes, a person could be a Buddhist and be in the army but killing was a big problem."

The border between Pakistan and Myanmar was created in 1948 with the Rohingya left inside Rakhine State. In May, 2012 three Muslim Rohingya men allegedly murdered a Buddhist Rakhine woman. The conflict centres around questions of nationality, scarce land and, some say, racism. An elected but still military government is in charge. Aung San Suu Kyi, no longer under house arrest, is the State Counsellor. There are more questions than answers and the International Court at The Hague, Netherlands will decide. *Editors note:* You can read the Canadian government's position on the Rohingya at <<u>https://tinyurl.com/RohingyaCan></u>.

If the people of Myanmar need something, they just make it. We were amazed by their ingenuity and admired how their interdependent society supported everyone. Twenty percent of their population are novices or monks, an industry in itself. I came away believing in my goal to purchase even more local and Canadian products and services.

A lovely calmness was felt throughout the country where each interaction and action is to gain merit in their faith with Buddha. Politeness is paramount. We felt safe throughout our 26 days of travel and I hope to return. It is one of my favourite three places in the world.

	<u>Budget</u> 2019-2020	Year to Date 2019-2020		Difference
Income				
BCRTA Membership Fees@ \$10 per member	\$4,250.00	\$4,070.00		\$180.00
Individual Membership Fees	\$10.00	\$10.00		\$0.00
BCRTA Recruitment Grant	\$10.00	\$20.00		-\$10.00
Heritage - Book & CD Sales	\$50.00	\$165.00		-\$115.00
Interest Income (included in investments)	\$40.00	\$0.00		\$40.00
Payments for luncheons	\$200.00	\$130.00		\$70.00
PGRTA Grant to Historical Memories	\$0.00	\$0.00		\$0.00
City of PG - Artifact Box	\$0.00	\$100.00		-\$100.00
Investment deposit including interest	\$4,000.00	\$3,509.34		\$490.66
Investment deposit including interest		\$6,059.81		\$6,059.81
Total Income	\$8,560.00	\$14,064.15		\$6,615.47
	<u>Budget</u>	Year to Date		Difference
Expenses	2019-2020	2019-2020		2
Executive Committee	\$3,000.00	\$385.03		\$2,614.97
Heritage Committee	\$600.00	\$308.57		\$291.43
Heritage Book Project	\$2,000.00	\$0.00		\$2,000.00
Membership	\$200.00	\$33.46		\$166.54
Newsletter	\$700.00	\$591.76		\$108.24
Social Committee	\$600.00	\$326.04		\$273.96
Sunshine. Lifetime Members	\$100.00	\$5.59		\$94.41
Luncheon costs	\$2,000.00	\$1,044.00		\$956.00
Service to Members	\$1,000.00	\$0.00		\$1,000.00
Contingency Fund	\$500.00			\$500.00
Transfer to Investments	\$0.00			-\$5,000.00
Transfer to Investments	\$0.00			-\$6,059.81
Total Operating Expenses	\$10,700.00			-\$3,054.26
Operating Account March, 2020	Opening	Debits	Credits	Balance
Operating Account March, 2020	\$4,680.18	\$6,059.81	\$6,059.81	
	\$4,000.10	\$0,059.61	\$0,059.81	\$4,000.10
Assets March, 2020	Chequing	Investments		Total
	\$4,680.18	\$11,059.81		\$15,739.99
Submitted by,				
Bonnie-Jean Foulds, Treasurer				
April, 2020				