



## A FAREWELL FROM *patricia*

*As her term as BCRTA draws to a close, Patricia Clough shares her thoughts on the teaching life and the significance of the BCRTA.*

My term as president of the BCRTA is coming to a close and that fills me with a sense of completion because I have been to so many branches and met so many members.

What has my service in the BCRTA meant to me? It has meant listening to members and making changes that will give them the best service possible.

Education was always important to me. I started school when I was 5 in small town Saskatchewan. How small? We were north of North Battleford.

My high school experience was marked by the upheaval of moving to B.C. and being 2 years younger than anyone else in my classes. It may sound fun to be ahead a grade or two, but for me it was frightening and depressing. The first day at my new high school a classmate ran out at recess and

announced to everyone outside: "We have a 12 year-old in our Grade 9 class!"

When it came to higher education, my parents felt that it was the only way to have a future. But when I took that route it was not an easy reality for them. On the day I left for university, I remember my parents were terrified. Not only was I leaving home for university at age 16, but I was doing so via Greyhound Bus. I traveled from the Interior to the coast and on the ferry to Victoria. UVic was to be my home for the next three years.

## SOMETHING WONDERFUL

It was at the University of Victoria that something wonderful happened. I felt that I had found somewhere that I FIT. There was no shortage of work to do - I lived off campus and worked off my room and board by cleaning house. I did not experience any dorm life until summer school.

I certainly remember my first day of teaching. It was 1963. Lester B. Pearson was Prime Minister and John F. Kennedy had just averted the Cuban Missile Crisis. I was 19 years young and some of my Grade 7 students were 14 and 15 years old. A question you might ask is how I had any classroom authority, being just four or five years older than some of the kids. I can tell you that there was no issue with that. The students did not know my age,



*The 16 year-old graduate.*



*“Are you going to stay in this pit of grief or are you going to get out and start helping people again?”*



and in those days students were taught at home to respect and “mind” their teachers.

The subjects I enjoyed teaching most were English and History.

After those long days of work I’d come home and put on albums by Elvis and the Beatles. My Prince George basement apartment was shared with a roommate. Even my living arrangements had been guided by the school board office, which matched new teachers who needed roommates for cost reasons.

## AFTER THE FIRE

One of the stranger classroom experiences I had was when my school burned down in my first year of teaching. The classes in our school were sent out to various schools all over the district – wherever the district found a room, we went. I had to arrive at the burned-out school very early every morning, assemble the students in my class and then ride the bus for 22 miles (yes miles, it was before metric). Then I’d teach them all day (without supplies for the first while) and at the end of the day, get back on the bus and ride the 22 miles back to the burn site, waiting until every child was collected by parents. I had 48 students at the time. How did the kids not go crazy? In fact there was no fussing. They were a close group because they did not know anyone else in the other school.

Later, I got involved with the BCTF and spent my time as chair of Professional Specialist Association

Council (33 PSAs) and later on the BCTF Executive Committee. I made many friends in those years, people I see every year at BCTF and BCRTA gatherings.

## THE BCRTA

I joined the BCRTA because like all teachers I wanted to continue teaching and helping. After 39 years of teaching, that was what I knew, and I have always enjoyed working with and for my peers. That’s the simple answer as to why the BCRTA. The more complete reason is that when my husband died, I had lost so much. My oldest daughter, who was teaching in China, saw how I was doing and came home to be with me. After 6 months, she said to me “Are you going to stay in this pit of grief or are you going to get out and start helping people again?”

She knew what I needed. (This daughter now teaches in Prague, Czech Republic. I think we raised her right.)

So I joined the Retired teachers and Pat Brady (a past BCRTA President) convinced me to run as a Director. I am now completing my term as President.

Thank you for believing in and belonging to the BCRTA.

*Patricia Clough*  
President

