

North Island Retired Teachers' Association

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Spring Newsletter 2021

Here we go again. I am constantly amazed at just how fast a year goes by. In the movie "Meet Joe Black" William Parrish (Anthony Hopkins) says "Doesn't your life go by in a blink."

It is so true. Blink your eyes and your kids have grown up, your favourite pet is just a memory, and your life partner is growing old. But having someone to grow old with is a key to longevity.

I was playing with a ray of sunshine coming through a peephole on our front door. It showed a marvelous circle of rejuvenating rays on my hand but I realized that the hand is wrinkled and showing signs of age. This is inevitable.

As I was growing older, I would run into "senior discounts" available at many stores. For a long while, I resisted, but as this process continued, I began to accept it.

I got into theaters for a reduced rate. Many businesses offered discounts on purchased items, services were offered for a better price. Dinners were still delicious for less money.

This started me thinking. Maybe the discounts aren't a bad thing. Just maybe there is a reward for getting older. Many cultures revere their "elders". Just maybe, the senior discounts are an honest reward, a prize, for getting old. They are a gift, in

recognition of your experience, and a thank you for your years of involvement in making our society a better place to be.

I don't feel old. Granted that my medications seem to increase with the number of years. This is kind of a joke in the senior community but it also got me to thinking. If the medications are my badge of success, can I change it?

Researching and reading a lot, I decided that I could reduce my medications. They were being supplied to supplement chemistry in my body that was weakening as I was aging.

My research uncovered chemicals, vitamins and processes that reduced as I aged. By using supplements and activities, I could replace these deficits and extend my lifespan. Could it be this easy? Am I able to defy the statisticians and live the 120 years that they report as a suggested lifespan for a human being?

If I eat mindfully, exercise (this doesn't mean gym training) and stay social, I have a good chance of extending my stay on this earth considerably.

That means extending my enjoyment of waking up every morning and feeling the warm sunshine on my face, realizing that I have been given another day to live as I see fit, to take advantage of the time and live it to the fullest.

Your senior years are not the "Autumn Years". Retiring is, simply, a change in jobs. You have completed one career, and have many years in front of you to do whatever you choose to do.

Some of us are tired and wanting to relax, slowly declining into completion of a life. Others decide to start a new career and discover a whole new world of interests and goals. New goals can regenerate. New goals can recharge your soul and make you aware that you still be a fully functional member of this society.

Grandchildren. I had forgotten about grandchildren. The cycle repeats itself. A hug from a grandchild recharges my soul. They will remember me. My legacy lives on through them. I can take my time to teach them, to counsel them, to make their lives better because of it.

I have five hundred photos of me with my grandchildren. Anyone want to see them? 😊

Even when I am gone, they will remember me. Just as I remember my grandfather and grandmother, they have helped me to get through the trials of my own life. Their legacy lives with me. Their teaching is ingrained in my DNA and is passed on to my own children. They will continue the “chain of life” the strength of ancestry, the power of “family”.

My being here has a purpose and that purpose will continue on long after I have gone. That thought gives me peace. My children’s lives are better because I’ve been here.

Retirement is just an event. It is not a time to let your life’s drive go. It is not a time to slowly decline. It is a time to rejoice. Enjoy your skills, your desires, your passions. Take the time to build the other things that you desire. Take the time to be yourself.

You are a retired teacher. Remember the lives that you have helped. Think of the students who remember you. Take heart in the good that you have done and rejoice in the longevity of the effort.

"You are never too old to set another goal or dream a new dream" C.S. Lewis



Brad Adams, a local conservation officer, speaking to a NIRTA lunch meeting in Port McNeill.

Our Members

Even in our small branch we have so many people that have accomplished major adventure items in their lives.

Bill McCormick has sailed around Cape Horn, one of the most treacherous ocean areas in the world. His story is intriguing. He has also beaten cancer.

Fran Jenkins has started her own hypnotherapy business and is now a producer of a North Island television show, which can be seen on Check TV.

Greg Murray has been in an automobile crash that ripped his car apart, was a pilot in a plane crash, and was a trainman in a railroad accident. Greg has also petted six gill sharks and Moray Eels as an open ocean diver.

As a pilot, his favourite activity is taking people flying at New Years to see the sunlight shining off the curve of the earth at midnight.

Since retirement, Werner Manke has published ten books that are available at Amazon.com. He has just finished his eleventh book. Look for the titles. Werner is well on his way to an entirely fruitful career as a writer. He has taken the advantage of building his new career. We can all do this.

These are only some of the experiences and skills that our small branch offers. Our members display some of the coveted skills that we all wish to attain in our lifetimes.

Be brave. Your retirement is just the beginning of a whole new career.

If you have experiences that you would like to share, please pass them on to an executive member and we can include them in a future newsletter.

Medical Changes

The Provincial Government, in their wisdom, has finally enacted the legislation where you don't have to pay for your medical plan every month. Your MSP Premiums are history. As one of the last areas in North America to do so, you will notice on your pension statements that these fees have disappeared.

It is a welcome advancement and very overdue.

"You don't stop laughing when you age, you age when you stop laughing."

Hardy Bay Seniors' Center

Just a reminder that the Seniors' Center is doing a lot of work to keep seniors supplied with food and packages over the pandemic. They are looking for volunteers to help in food preparation, crafts and deliveries.

Remembering Sue Shelley

Sue was an active member of our North Island RTA branch. As she didn't have a computer, I would drop off minutes and take time to chat with her.

She would make a warm beverage and share her terrific apple crisp. I noticed Sue's eyes would brighten up when we talked and I always enjoyed her company.

It is because of members, like Sue, that our branches function as well as they do.

Her memory lives on in each of us.

"The longer you look back, the farther you can look forward."

Winston Churchill

Life Experiences

In 1989 I got divorced from the love of my life. It hit me like a brick. I lost 37 pounds and don't remember several months of going to work.

I took a job as a taxi driver during the summer because I had to do something to keep me sane. This job rejuvenated me in ways I had not thought possible.

During my six weeks of being a taxi driver I heard stories from people that would make your hair curl. I was just a taxi driver so they would share their experiences in detail. They thought they would never see me again so they dumped their pain, their experiences and their desires. It was like being a bartender. They should get an award for being a good listener.

Because it's a small town, however, the next morning I would pick them up only to see consternation in their faces as they recognized the driver and what they had said.

One of my passengers started talking about the price of gas in Canada and the majesty of the surroundings. I realized that I was talking to Majel Barret, the wife of Gene Roddenberry (of Star Trek fame). She was a lovely lady, full of grace, and easy to talk to.

When she realized that I recognized her she said, "You don't react like most fans." I explained to her that I believed in the protection of your well-being and your personal space.

Her reaction surprised me. She said, “Many people get carried away in the moment. I just smile and move on. You are different, and I appreciate your courtesy.”

Ms. Barret has since left us but what she said to me has stuck with me over the years. Whatever you do, how famous you become, never forget the courtesy, the empathy and respect that we show each other in our daily encounters.

This is what makes us who we are.



Jane Hutton, from Port Hardy Museum, speaking to our NIRTA luncheon about the history of our area.

“You always had the power, my dear. You just had to learn it for yourself.” The Wizard of Oz

Provincial Senior Advantages

There are quite a number of senior advantages that have been enacted by our present government.

The senior discounts on ferry travel during the week, escooters for seniors integrated into the Motor Vehicle Act and MSP Premiums disappear for seniors.

We do have a voice in this government. It is a pleasure to see these enactments taking place.

BCRTA Committees

The BCRTA has published a list of all of the chairs of their committees. I have made this available to all of our members so that, if there is an issue to be resolved, they have a person to direct their comments to.

Port Hardy Return Depot

Our local Return-It depot has recently re-opened its doors to return everything. There is a never ending list of items that can be returned for recycling.

As a senior I realize that I use a tremendous amount of over-packaging in my daily life. It is a “feel good moment” to find a place to return this material (some of which is paid) and save the sea creatures who will, eventually, have to deal with it all.

You can make a difference. It really does mean our survival in the end.

Hearing Life

This is not an ad for a company but Hearing Life contacts me on a regular basis to advertise their services and to offer special advantages.

I ran into them at an AGM several years ago and took advantage of the free pens and other items. I then got to thinking that they had offered to come to our local and present their systems.

Looking at our small contingent of retired teachers in our branch I thought that some of our members would benefit from their offered service.

They send me coupons on a regular basis and I share these at meetings

I recently had an ophthalmologist tell me that “You are resisting aging.” And I told him “You bet I am.” But, as I age, I realize that these services are not just a cash grab, but a legitimate service to people that increasingly need it. It is an opportunity for commerce but a real opportunity to improve the quality of life for seniors.

If you need hearing support, take advantage of the offer. What have you got to lose?

Universal Pharmacare Plan

I get a lot of emails from a group called the Well-Being Committee of the BCRTA. Now, I am all for well-being. It sounds great and offers a feeling of gentle serenity. Who wouldn't go for that?

But, as it turns out, the government is vacillating on a single payer Universal Medical Plan. This is a plan that would pay for all prescriptions etc. etc. etc.

The government is vacillating for a good reason. Paying for everyone's prescriptions is extremely expensive. Every senior can expect to add one new prescription per year to their regime. By the time you are ninety you would need a box to carry all of this stuff.

The conundrum, however, is to pay for all of these prescriptions, and medical services, on a limited income.

There are two ways out of this predicament. The first is to grab hold of your medical information and fight to the death for supplements, exercise and other informed conclusions that help you to deal with whatever you are dealing with.

The second is to go along with it. Put your trust in "Big Pharma" and let them waft you to your eventual rest.

I chose to fight. Over the last several years I have reduced my eyesight from 20/40 in one eye and 20/30 in the other eye, to 20/16 in both eyes. That means I can read the union label at the

bottom of the eye chart and have been able to remove eye glasses from all of my licenses.

Through the use of supplements, exercise and “mindful” eating I have been able to, somewhat, reverse the aging process.

The color is returning to my “silver-haired” head.

Again, we have two choices. Accept the Pharmacare Plan and slowly fade away into oblivion under a chemically induced, but lucrative medical plan, or fight for what you believe.

Your life-span should be 120 years. Make it so (a Picard euphemism). I feel so good about losing weight, getting my vision back, my hair is showing color again, my muscles are lifting weights and my stamina has returned. I don't wheeze going up stairs. My new rule is never walk upstairs. Run upstairs, if you can. It's great fun. There is a reward at the end.

Senior Songs

The First Time Ever I Forgot Your Face - Roberta Flack

I Can't See Clearly Now - Johnny Cash

A Whiter Shade of Hair - Procol Harem

Bald Thing - The Troggs

Annual BCRTA Virtual AGM

This year's conference and AGM was totally virtual. Done over Zoom, we listened to three speakers who shared a lot of relevant information on living as a senior.

We heard about health practices in Senior facilities (Isobel Mackenzie – Seniors Advocate) along with lots of statistical information about being old. It helped to clarify why some of the government programs are the way they are.

Dr. Steve Martin addressed changes to Pharmacare and how they will affect us while Dr. Roger Wong talked about self-care during the Covid outbreak.

I hope that some of you were able to view the speakers.



The AGM, attended by myself and Anne Lebeau, was a good source of BCRTA financial standing, committee activities, election of officers and lifetime awards.

Some questions were answered live but Zoom cannot cover all of the questions and side conversations that a physical meeting would have entailed. All in all, it was an adequate way of sharing for the one hundred and thirty delegates attending.

Kudos to the organizers but I can't wait to get back to the real thing, the world class chefs, the down-filled quilt beds overlooking the city at night but, most of all, the human interactions and the sense of belonging to an organization that does very good work for seniors.

“I don't feel eighty, in fact, I don't feel anything until noon.”

Bob Hope

Hardy Bay Senior Citizens Centre

Just a quick note to remind everyone about the seniors' center. This is a very active group with over two hundred members. They just delivered goody bags to seniors and are in the process of cooking up meals for next week.

If you are looking for another place to show your skills, phone (250-949-7252). They would love to meet you.

NIRTA AGM

Our local AGM is coming up on June 25th, at the Seven Hills Golf and Country Club. The meeting begins at 12 noon and continues to 2pm.

Our presentation this year, by Kyle Walker from Applewood, is on electric vehicles. Thanks to Bill McCormick for his suggestion.

I took a look at the vehicle, a 2021 Mustang designed to compete with a Tesla. You have to see this.

A reminder that members are encouraged to bring along potential members as visitors. There is a restaurant menu delivered to your seats, which will be socially distanced.

We are also looking for contributions to this newsletter. If you have any stories that you would like to share, jokes, photos from events or trips or events that are coming up, please forward them to faggins@telus.net and they can be included in a future issue.

If you are a retired teacher, from anywhere, please feel free to drop in to our meetings. We are always looking for potential members.