



Retirees Association of Mohawk College News Letter January 2001

The snows came early this year and with it cold and high fuel prices.

Since the last newsletter we have had three events. On October 18, twenty-nine members and their guests visited the Butterfly Conservatory in Niagara Falls, lunched and attended a production of *The Doctors Dilemma* at the Shaw Festival in Niagara on the Lake.

On November 10, twenty members and their guests visited the Royal Winter Fair and attended the Royal Horse Show in the evening.

And on January 15 the **Lion King** was a well deserved sell-out! 47 of us agreed it lived up to all the hype it gets. Creative and believable animal characters, choreography, staging, lighting and singing transferred us to an animal kingdom with humour and worthwhile messages for our humankind. Don't miss it !

Coming Events

The following exciting events are planned for the near future:

Wednesday, Mar. 14 – **Canada Blooms** at the Toronto Convention Centre (see enclosed)

Saturday, April 21 – **A Day at the Races** at Flamboro Downs (see enclosed).

Wed., May 16 – **Mamma Mia** , Royal Alexandra Theatre (see enclosed)

Wednesday, June 27 – **Annual General Meeting** at the Royal Botanical Gardens. Details will be enclosed with the April Newsletter.

August at a yet undetermined date -- visits to **Ruthven Historical Home** and a production at the **Light House Theater** in Port Dover. Details will follow in the April or possibly July Newsletter.

In Memoriam

It is with the deepest regret that we report the passing of the following member: **George Stewart**, retiree from the Mechanical Technology Department. Our deepest sympathy is extended to his family.

Our deepest sympathy is also extended to Wes. Hicks and family on the loss of his wife Margret.

Retirees Association of Mohawk College²

Newsletter

Published four times per year

Board Members:

Alan Gregson –	Chair	627 7448
Geoff Booker –	Vice Chair	(905) 772-5160
David Crossley –	Treasurer	627-3278
Carl Easton: –	Webpage	385-2794
Anne Philip: –	Secretary	627-1787
Doreen Valente –		575-9299
Brian Welsh –	Editor	627-4932
Marie Yakimoff –		522-7370

News of the College

Doreen Allan emailed the following:

Hi Brian We have a number of souvenir 30th Anniversary Booklets left over from the Gala dinner and would like to give the retirees who couldn't make it the opportunity to receive one if they wish. Once again, we would ask you to put an announcement in your next newsletter just in case there are some who may be interested. Just ask those who would like a copy to contact either Frankie McKenzie at (519) 758-6035 or Shelley Kitchen at (519) 758-6046 and we will gladly mail them one

Great Eating, Great Musical Theatre!

I got to Stratford only once last season but what a day out! Apart from the fact that I didn't drive and could admire the early Fall colours from the coach window I joined with 28 others in some really interesting experiences.

We saw another aspect of theatre life by touring Stratford's Costumes and Props Warehouse. I'd done this a couple of years ago but the new and different productions create new "works of art" making a revisit worthwhile.

Lunch was another "eye opener"! Brian Welsh, our Eating Out reporter, directed our driver to the back lanes of downtown Stratford. Our goal was an artistic graffiti-like multicoloured wall sign saying *Chez Jimbo*. What a wild yet worthwhile treat was ahead!

Favourite beers and drinks plus everything made fresh to order - gourmet too - soups, salad, oysters, scrumptious fillings between multigrain or other breads freshly baked two doors away, homemade desserts, coffee or teas. All agreed - fabulous! *Thanks Brian for arranging with your son Jim to open especially for us and feed us so well at lunch time.*

We needed a stroll before settling into our seats at the Festival Theatre to become absorbed by Brent Carver and others as they played their parts in *Fiddler on the Roof*. It was a colourful action filled and beautifully sung recounting of vibrant Jewish community life in early 20th century Russia. Changes were happening in all aspects of life and people were forced to move on. In our after theatre discussion we agreed that in our lifetime we've witnessed similar change and, regrettably it continues. *Fiddler* is truly a classic which spoke of those times and to these times. For us, it was part of a day to be enjoyably remembered.



Sorry if you missed it. A.G.

High Lights of the November Board Meeting

Your board met at the college on November 21. Bob Pando and Frans Brinkman who attended the meeting will be meeting on Dec. 1, together with representatives of eight other colleges with John

Podmore of the Council of Regents on the subject of the high cost of our health insurance plans. For the sake of comparison the retirees pay on average 70% more for Extended Health Plan 1 than the college pays for present staff. Considerable time was spent on this matter.

Bob reported that our pensions will now be indexed to 2014; this is an extension from 2005.

The board also resolved to offer to send newsletters and invitations to our excursions to college employees on long term disability.

High Lights of the January Board Meeting

Franz Brinkman reported on the meeting of November 21. Unfortunately the Council of Regents manager of Human Resources, John Podmore was unable to attend the meeting due to car trouble, but was represented by two members of his department. Representatives from nine colleges were also at the meeting. In order to better present our case, it is planned to form a provincial association of retirees, and to this end a draft constitution is underway. One of the difficulties facing us is that not all colleges have retirees' associations. Another meeting is to be arranged at a later date with John Podmore.

Let's Do Lunch

It is the policy of your humble editor not to disparage a restaurant, so we will say nothing of the Sunday brunch we had at the **Rousseau House** in Ancaster.

Mary and YHE lunched in Dundas at the **Bean and Brew** on King St. Since we wanted to use our "Entertainment Book" we were confined to the dinner menu items. We both had the fish and chips which were good. They also had a very adequate selection of draft ales and beers. Lunch with beer, tax and tip would have been about \$30.00 without the "Entertainment Book.

A great find, thanks to the "Entertainment Book", was the **Tarboosh** at 870 Upper James St., Hamilton, (between Mohawk Rd and Hester St.). The **Tarboosh** specializes in Lebanese and Mediterranean food. Because we were using the "Entertainment Book" we had to order *combination plates*. The *shawarma*, *hummos*, *mujjadara*, *falafel*, and Mediterranean salad were all delicious. Lunch without the discount would have cost about \$25.00 including tax and tip. The **Tarboosh** is not licensed.

Mary and YHE decided to revisit the **Sheik (LaLuna)** at 228 King St. W. We hadn't been there for almost 10 years. The food here is also Lebanese and middle eastern. We both had a delicious lentil soup and shared an order of *baba ghannouj*. Mary had a *falafel* sandwich and YHE had a *shawarma* sandwich. Not your ordinary sandwich but the filling rapt in pita bread and held together at the bottom with an aluminum foil wrapping. There was a good selection of draft beers and an adequate wine list. This absolutely delicious lunch with beer, tax and tip came to \$32.00.

Which is better, the **Sheik** or the **Tarboosh**? Both are excellent; it would depend whether you were on the mountain or the lower city.

Early in the new year we lunched at **LaRossina Ristorante** a smallish Italian restaurant located next to, and part of, but separated from, a billiard hall. It is located in the southwest part of the plaza at the southwest corner of Stone Church road and Upper Ottawa St. Both Mary and YHE had the spaghetti and meat balls – delicious. The portions were small but adequate; other menu items included a variety of pizzas and veal and chicken sandwiches. The only regret was that we had to drink Dutch beer – rather than Italian. Lunch with beer, tax and tip was about \$28.00.

Our Wandering Members Report

Bob Cooper on Vacation in Scotland

.Most visitors to Scotland think in terms of bed and breakfast or a hotel but on our last visit to my home town my wife, Murlis, and I rented an apartment. As I no longer have any relatives in Largs, the town of my birth, we had used B&B for our previous five visits. The cost of this way of vacationing is getting very expensive eating in restaurants for lunch and dinner and especially with the Canadian dollar being at a low exchange rate.

We used the internet to find rental accommodation in Largs and then when we found a likely place, I had the luxury of having one of my old school friends check up on it.

What we found was a one bedroom apartment in Sandringham, a turn-of-the-century red sandstone building on the seafront within walking distance of the main street shopping, the pier, railway station and buses. The rates for Sandringham vary with the time of year. In September, for example, the apartment that we rented costs \$500/week, not including bed linen, which is \$11.50 per set/week. We figured that cooking our own food cost about \$25 per day. Overall we calculated that we saved about \$66 per day by renting and doing our own cooking.

Largs is an attractive resort on the Ayrshire coast. Amenities include two golf courses, tennis, bowls, sailing, indoor heated pool, fishing. The Vikingar building offers a unique experience of the life and times of the Vikings. The romantic islands of Cumbrae, Arran and Bute are easily reached by car ferries. The Argyll mountains, Loch Lomond and the Trossachs are all within easy reach by car. The Burns Country and the Heritage Centre are a short journey along the coast, as is Culzean Castle and Park. Glasgow with its shopping and cultural attractions is within one hour's journey by road or rail. I favour Largs because it is my home town but I am sure there are other attractive towns that would serve equally well.

An enjoyable vacation might be to combine a week staying in a rented apartment and a week on a bus tour. Classique Tours of Paisley run tours of Scotland including an 8 day, Hebridean Tour priced at around 500 pounds sterling. We took this tour some years ago and enjoyed it very much. The tour included accommodation, breakfast and dinner at very good hotels and the pace was not hectic. The address is included below.

Classique Bus Tours, 8 Underwood Road, Paisley, Scotland PA3 1TD

Phone: 0141-332-9090 Ext. 115 Fax 0141-848-7616 Nov to March only

Sandringham address:- Mrs.R.D.Hodsman, 2 Sandringham, Largs, Ayrshire, KA30 8BT, Scotland.

If further information is required contact Bob Cooper by email: mcooper@mcmaster.ca or Phone: 905-388-1978

Editor's Note – Alan and Dorothy Gregson's Report on Tanzania (part 2) will be in the next Newsletter.

Our Readers Write

To the editor:

October 31, 2000

Medical Insurance Premiums

While attending the last general Mohawk retirees' members luncheon, the subject of the recent increase in Sun Life Medical Insurance premiums came up at our table. It seemed that most present no longer took the complete package because of this. In fact some had completely dropped their medical insurance stating that they could no longer afford it.

What we wanted was to be able to purchase coverage at a rate competitive with that paid by the college for a full time employee. Instead we were faced with a premium increase of approximately \$800 per year with no improvements in coverage.

During the business part of the meeting the chairman commented on insurance premiums in response to questions from the floor. A request for volunteers to look into the problem was made and I volunteered along with two other members.

After attending a board meeting to familiarize ourselves with the problem we proceeded to search for alternative insurance providers. We discovered that there are many companies in the business, all providing rates competitive with the rates paid by the college for full time employees. We found two providers who were willing to treat the Mohawk Retirees Association as a group for insurance purposes, providing an alternative to Sun Life. This information was tabulated and presented to the board along with suggestions for future action at the September 2000 board meeting.

For some reason only our letter of suggestions appeared in the newsletter. No information on alternate insurance providers was published. (I could not attend the board meeting and am not fully familiar with exactly what transpired.) In addition the board decided to approach the Council of Regents concerning the Sun Life insurance premium problem. I understand that a committee has been formed to pursue this approach. I was disappointed that the membership was not advised of alternative suppliers.

To further complicate the issue it now appears that OPSEU (Academic) is planning to make Retirees Medical Insurance premiums a bargaining item! They have served notice by placing this item in their Bargaining Book.

All of these actions and non-actions leave the membership in limbo in regards to medical insurance premiums. What is the average member to do? As I see it these are the alternatives:

1. Continue to pay Sun Life's unconscionable rates and hope that something good will come from the Council of Regents and OPSEU involvement. Since OPSEU is making this a bargaining issue I don't imagine that the Council of Regents will now act unilaterally. We will likely have to wait for the next round of bargaining to be resolved. This will take some time.
2. Purchase those parts of Sun Life's coverage that can be afforded and which meet your needs.
3. Abandon Sun Life and deal with an alternate provider as an individual. (I can provide some information. Phone 905-945-5772.)
4. Forget about purchasing Medical insurance and rely on the largess of OHIP and the provincial drug plan.

Alternative 1 may ultimately resolve the problem, but you will have to wait. The other alternatives are less than satisfactory. I suggest that the Mohawk Retirees Association consider those alternative insurance providers who offered us group coverage and not wait on the Council of Regents and/or OPSEU to possibly provide a solution. After all we don't work for the Council of Regents any longer nor are we members of OPSEU any longer and we can't really expect them to solve our problems.

Bob Walling

Chair's Observations.

I have expressed and certainly appreciate the time and thought that Bob Walling, Frans Brinkman and Santosh Dalal have given to this matter of Health Insurance premiums.

Although Bob was not able to attend our September Board meeting Frans and Santosh along with

Bob Pando, Derrick May and Kryss O'Brian (Human Resources) were in attendance and all contributed to the discussion with the Board members.

The premium amounts quoted by the alternate insurance providers mentioned in Bob's letter were subject to so many questions that, finally, the Board consensus was that to publish them without lengthy 'coverage' explanations could lead to misunderstandings and personal decisions which may be regretted later.

Furthermore it was felt that a more appropriate course at this time and for now, would be to try to strengthen the retirees' lobby by joining with other colleges and working through the Council of Regents' channels already available to us.

We, at Mohawk, have since hosted a meeting of nine college retiree groups with sixteen representatives and two members of the Council of Regents' Human Resources staff in attendance. It was a useful start with Bob Pando chairing the meeting and Frans Brinkman and Derrick May being Mohawk's other representatives.

There was much discussion on the health insurance situation from which came the colleges' agreement to formulate a provincial grouping. A constitution has been drafted for consideration at the group's next meeting in March when there will be further discussions with CoR staff people. This retirees' provincial grouping should be able to present the position of college retirees through the channels to Sun Life or other companies.

Retirees' experiences with Sun Life and other insurance companies along with so many different needs of retirees cause us to believe that the provincial grouping will be beneficial in the long run. But, as Bob implies it will take longer. Bob has generously given his phone number and will provide personal information.

Alan Gregson, Chair.

McMaster Invites

Mar 21 – Stage West Dinner Theatre, *The Odd Couple* \$55.00. For information contact:
Joy Baby at (905) 527-2865