



The Steller's Quill

BCGREA New Westminster & District Branch 800

“Spring 2019” Newsletter

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Report from the Chair – Bonnie Billington

Branch 800 membership is currently 729, slightly down from this time last year however meeting attendance has been steady with well over 40 members at each since our last newsletter. We have maintained a focus on social and educational activities, bringing back “Oktoberfest” for our fall food event and engaging a variety of excellent speakers at the monthly General Meetings. Following a survey of preferred speaker topics, we engaged computer technician **Ray Fournier** who led a lively and informative discussion on November 20th about *Navigating the Internet Safely*. On January 15th we were delighted by accomplished humourist **Janice Bannister** on the topic of *Laughter and Wellness*.

For the balance of this fiscal year, meeting dates, speakers and activities include:

Feb 19th – Burnaby “Scottish Country Dancers”

March 19th – Branch Meeting and Spring Lunch

April 16th – Shawn Marsolais: “Living with Vision Loss”

May 21st – Kevin Coughlin from the Public Guardian & Trustee speaking on personal planning & available resources

June 18th – Branch AGM and Summer Social

Branch 800 Director **Verna Cadwallader** is welcomed to the Nominating Committee as we look for candidates willing to stand for all executive positions at the AGM. *Branch 800 Executive Duties Guidelines* have been developed to assist new board members. Presently the 2nd Vice-Chair position remains vacant and our current Secretary will not be standing for re-election in June.

Thank you to all the Executive who volunteer tirelessly and to all the Branch members who contribute at our meetings and events. Executive members continue to attend Public Service Pension pre-retirement workshops to raise our profile and potentially recruit new members. Nine workshops are scheduled between January 1st and June 30th, 2019.

Notice to all BCGREA members: BC Government and Service Employees Union Centennial Celebration (1919-2019). The “Centennial Committee” is looking for input (experience and stories) from BCGREA members regarding the impact and evolution of the Union on its

members and their communities over the past 100 years. Stories and queries on the centennial celebration activities can be forwarded to a centralized e-mail address: centennial@bcgeu.ca

Branch 800 Executive wishes to acknowledge the **BC Government and Service Employees Union** for their long-standing support of our members by providing invaluable printing services and office space for our Executive meetings. A letter of appreciation has been sent.

Christmas Luncheon Report

Tickets sold out quickly for the Annual Christmas Luncheon, held in the Centennial Community Centre River Room on Dec 4th with 65 members attending. The deli style buffet lunch was nicely prepared by *Greens and Beans* again this year. Attending members supplied extra treats for dessert. Their generosity was extended to the Greater Vancouver & District Food Bank with a total donation of \$200 plus a substantial amount of non-perishable food items.

A big THANK YOU to all the Executive and Branch members who organized, volunteered and donated to make the Christmas Luncheon a success again this year. Poinsettias and cards were delivered by **Anna & Ross Tremere** to members in extended care facilities and at home. Thank you to **Christine and Harry Demchuk** and **Marilyn Melville** for collecting door prizes **generously donated by:**

- Canadian Tire at Market Crossing – Burnaby
- Garden Works at Mandeville – Burnaby
- London Drugs - 6th St – New Westminster
- Safeway at McBride – New Westminster
- Real Canadian Superstore – North Delta
- Save on Foods at Market Crossing – Burnaby

Recommendations for 2019:

Given the positive response to the Christmas Luncheon again this year, the Branch 800 Executive and membership supports the same venue again on **December 3rd, 2019.**



Ida wins the poinsettia



*Navin 1st VC
- Branch gift basket*



Marleine – the gift elf



Bonnie, Branch Chair presents gift to Harold, life member

Shingles Vaccine

As of October 2018 Greenshield covers the new Shingrix vaccine at 70% (subject to the deductible/co pay) on our plan. The vaccine is given in two separate doses and a prescription is required for purchase. We recommend that you contact Greenshield Customer Service Centre at 1-888-711-1119 to confirm your eligibility prior to purchase.

Welcome New Members

Welcome to the following new members who have joined Branch 800 since our last newsletter:

Michael Cassimer Dooly
Stuart Irvine Johnston

Elizabeth Louisa Johnston
Viji Siva

Milestones

Congratulations go to **Terry** and **Harry Vagg** who are celebrating their 60th Wedding anniversary this summer with a cruise taking in Eastern Canada and New England. And a little bird told me that **Mary Cooley** and her family celebrated her 90th birthday last August. Way to go, **Mary!**

Report of Fall Prevention & Seniors Pedestrian Safety Workshop Nov 22, 2018

Pedestrian Safety: Presentation by RCMP Traffic Services report pedestrian accidents as most prevalent at intersections in winter months – mid week between 3:00 & 6:00 pm. The increase in silent vehicles such as hybrid/electric and bicycles require extra vigilance by pedestrians.

- Never assume the driver sees you – attempt to make eye contact or wave
- Stand back from corner – extra large vehicles making turns often go over curbs
- Do not begin crossing intersections when pedestrian signal is in countdown mode
- *Reflective strips* are available at dollar stores, running stores and Canadian Tire. Wear on arm/ankle/vest or on accessories such as umbrellas
- Report “near misses” - time/date/location; vehicle description; colour & plate, and description of driver. Be a witness if needed.

Fall Prevention: Presentation by OT/Physiotherapist and Fraser Health spoke on the benefits of exercise as a critical factor in long term health. Risk of inactivity is three times higher than smoking. Research shows slow motion exercises as most effective in maintaining balance. To reduce tripping hazards in and around the home it is important to wear shoes with sufficient tread; remove throw rugs/loose scatter mats from high traffic areas and keep all pathways clear and well lit.

Resources:

- Lifeline device with fall sensitivity features
- 211 info line for services; 811 for Nurse line; 911 for emergencies
- **Falls Prevention Mobile Clinics** run by Fraser Health are free if you qualify: **Call: 604-587-7866** to determine eligibility, referral info and registration, or: Email: fallsprevention@fraserhealth.ca
- **Fraser Health Patient Education Materials: “Your Guide to Independent Living – Keeping you safe from falls and injuries Package (264151)”**. This booklet is available in paper copy on request or via email by calling the phone # listed above.

Bonnie Billington
Marilyn Melville

Membership Dues Notice

Membership dues of \$20 are payable each year by January 2nd. Cheques should be made payable to BCGREA and mailed to the Membership Secretary for the branch: **Rita Pollock**, 302-1110 Howie Ave, Coquitlam, BC, V3J 1V1.

The deadline for 2019 membership dues was Jan 2nd. Members whose dues are in arrears for 2019 and any previous years are requested to pay their dues no later than March 15, 2019 or be removed from the membership list. To be reinstated you must reapply with a new application and pay dues by automatic deduction from your pension cheque (dues check off).

HELP WANTED – Call for Nominations

Under the branch regulations, elections are held at the AGM in June of each year to fill the executive board positions as follows:

Chairperson
2nd Vice-Chairperson

Secretary

Membership Chairperson

Goodwill Coordinator

1st Vice – Chairperson

Immediate Past Chairperson

Treasurer

Six Directors

Phone Convenor

The regulations state: “Nominees must be nominated by a member in good standing and will provide written consent to stand for office and may submit background information along with their names.”

It is important that we have both some continuity of service on the board and also new people joining the branch executive to provide new ideas and energy to our organization. A number of branches have closed because new people have not volunteered to serve on the executive and long-term board members have refused to take on the tasks until death!

Please consider volunteering to serve, or nominating a member to serve, on the branch executive. Anyone interested in possibly serving on the board are asked to discuss the matter with any member of the nominating committee who are: **Myrna Cresswell** 604-209-0492 Email: myrna818@gmail.com; **Donna Main** 604-525-9013 Email: donnaemain@gmail.com; **Verna Cadwallader** 604-291-8844 Email: v.cadwallader@yahoo.ca .

Any nominations of a person to serve on the board should be given to **Myrna Cresswell**, Chair of the Nominating Committee.

In Memoriam

We regret to announce the passing of the following members since the last newsletter:

Gilbert (Burt) Hermann Clever
Howard Norman Garbe
Carmen Kuhl
Ella Birnie Reid

Senia Eyton
Kenneth W. Kelly
Phyllis Madden
Matthew Vaalburg

Douglas Mark Filby
Paul Fritz Jurgen Kuhl
Ada McChesney
David Aylmer Vernon

The Executive and members of the BCGREA, New Westminster & District Branch 800
express sincere condolences to these families and their friends.

A Manhunt

When Scotland's Argyll & Bute Hospital, or Asylum as it was known then, was built, farming was the main occupation in the county. As part of their therapy, those who could work were enrolled in the farm work force, as labour in the various workshops or as groundskeepers. Those unable to benefit from one of these settings relied on exercise parties for their activation. So, sixty years back, weather permitting, the hospital's two 'locked' wards would send out a walking party consisting of 25 to 30 patients and 2 (or 3) staff, twice a day. In wet weather everyone was cooped up inside. It was on these outings that many of these escapes took place. When it involved someone from the refractory ward the third staff member would be sent in pursuit, while the remainder would immediately return to the ward to report there was 'a man away'.

Angus' first escape didn't follow this pattern. He was initially admitted to Cowal, an 'open' ward, and had ground parole which he used to familiarize himself with the hospital and its surroundings. He had been in the hospital for a week or so when he let slip in an interview that he was thinking of leaving. His doctor had him transferred to the locked Argyll ward.

Our routine in the mornings was to congregate at the foot of the stairs to the dormitories and be sent to specified dorms to assist bringing the patients down to their wards. The nurse in charge of the dorm would issue each staff member with a 'propensity card' and we would have to escort that specific patient to his home ward. One of the off-going night staff would lead the way to the foot of the stairs and stand there to ensure everyone turned towards their proper ward.

We worked two shifts, days 7am to 8pm, and nights, 8pm to 7am. The following morning as the patients came downstairs Angus gave the night man his usual cheery 'good morning' and turned right towards Cowal ward, just as he had been doing each morning for the previous week. Being an 'open' ward, Cowal's door was unlocked at 7am. Angus walked on through the ward, out the door and took to his heels.

Off-going night staff raised the alarm and two of the male staff took off in pursuit. Angus fled down past the staff cottages to the burn (creek) where he was able to cross by a makeshift dam built some years before. Angus' occupation was gamekeeper and he was quite accustomed to rough country. He got onto the neighbouring hill, sheep pasture belonging to a farm on the far side of the hill close to the main road to Oban and began to leave his pursuers far behind. They gave up the chase.

I had delivered my charge to his ward and was headed to the Male Infirmary when I saw our Deputy Chief Male Nurse dash across the 'T' junction of the corridors, also headed for the Infirmary. When I reached the door, I had to step smartly aside to avoid being trampled by four bodies rushing out! This was the first I knew that Angus had gone AWOL. The DCMN returned to his office to 'hold the fort', while Jimmy, the Charge Nurse, Norrie, his Assistant Charge Nurse, and Billie, one of the student nurses, ran outside and piled into Jimmy's car to take up the chase.

Jimmy drove down past the staff houses and farther along the glen. They spotted Angus near the hilltop. Jimmy stopped the car, got out, and shouted "Ye're wasting yer time, Angus. Ye can't get away!" Angus' response was to wave and vanish over the brow of the hill.

Jimmy had a reputation for acting quickly in a crisis. Unfortunately, and to the amusement of the rest of us, any planning as to how to deal with the crisis generally came later. Jimmy decided they would follow on foot. They had to cross a field, climb over a dike, cross some waste ground and wade the burn to get onto the hill. Jimmy decided they should leave their shoes in the car rather than ruin them wading the burn. Billie, being a student, didn't have a say. Norrie had been 'on the toot' the night before and was in too fragile a state to put up any argument. Jimmy locked all three pairs of shoes and socks in the car, "They'll be safe there till we come back."

Once across the burn all three started up the hill. Billie gave up after a hundred yards or so, the heather was too rough on his feet. Back at the car he found it locked and had to walk barefoot to the Nurses Residence to fetch a change of socks and shoes.

At 7:30 I was sent on first breakfast (we had 30 mins for breakfast, 40 mins for dinner (midday) and 40 mins for 'tea'). On my way home I could see a black clad figure on the hill so, wondering which of the three it was, I got my father's binoculars focused in on Norrie just in time to see him double over and upchuck. Did I mention he'd been on the toot the night before and was feeling fragile? The image was sufficiently distant not to affect my appetite and there was no sign of him when I was heading back to work.

Jimmy came padding onto the ward at 8:30. And I mean 'padding'. Barefoot, and clasping three pairs of socks and shoes across his chest. I had learned enough by that age to keep my sense of humour under wraps. (I could do a pretty good impression of a doorpost). He asked, "Is Norrie back yet?" I kept my face in neutral and told him "Naw, There's been nae sign o' him." (Editor's note: Note the two different pronunciations for the word "no". English can be such a versatile language!)

Norrie showed up about 9:30, he'd gone over the hill almost to the main Campbeltown to Oban road and returned to the hospital via the farm road linking the hospital with a former farm property. His feet and legs to mid calf were the colour of tomatoes. While he soaked them in epsom salts over the next 20 minutes he filled us in on his adventures. The outlying farm's new owner ran a dairy herd and the entrance to the pasture had been thoroughly churned up by the hooves. Norrie had us almost envious when he described standing for 10 minutes in this mixture of mud and cowdung, feeling the heat getting drawn out of his feet and ankles. Almost.

The Scottish climate being what it is, the Scots have a word, "plowtering", to describe traversing waterlogged or muddy ground on foot. The male staff were issued a 3 piece uniform suit each year, and could have these suits dry cleaned twice a year. Jimmy decided he and Norrie would nip home at noon, change into a clean uniform and rush their soiled suits to Stores to be picked up by the cleaners.

In those days few people in the town had fridges. Most of the food shopping was done on a daily basis. Housewives would get out to the shops and catch up with the gossip as they made their purchases. Norrie didn't normally go home at midday, so Isa, his wife, was surprised to see him walk in; but her first words to him were "Whit were ye doin' at the Oban road in yer bare feet this morning?" (She'd already been out to the shops).

Andy McColl