

The **Steller's Quill**

BCGREA New Westminster & District Branch 800 "Fall 2014" Newsletter

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Branch 800 Annual Christmas Dinner

The Branch annual Christmas Dinner is on Tuesday, December 2, 2014, served at 12 noon sharp, in the Centennial Lodge in Queen's Park, accessible off McBride Boulevard or from 1st Street and 3rd Ave, New Westminster. Ticket sales are limited to 88 and available on a "first come first serve" basis. Ticket price has increased to \$25.00, and they are available from **Pansy Wong**, 604-525-4922 and at the November 19 general meeting. Cut-off date for ticket sales is November 25. Donations of gifts for door prizes and non-perishable items for the Food Bank will be gratefully accepted. **Please remember to bring your ticket along to the dinner as these numbered tickets are used for the Door Prize Draw.**

2014 Branch Bursary Awards

Eight Bursary Applications were reviewed this year. Bursaries were awarded to **Kyle McComb**, grandson of **Ron Smyth** (\$400.00), **Madison James Cooley**, grandson of **Mary Cooley** (\$200.00), and **Claire Felker**, granddaughter of **Brenda Felker** (\$200.00). The Bursary Committee found Mr **McComb's** application "outstanding".

Meeting Dates

The coloured card accompanying this newsletter gives the contact information for your Branch Officers and Directors. Also, at the foot of the card, it provides information on timing and location of our monthly Branch Meetings. The meetings take place on the 3rd Tuesday of the month, September through June, except for December. There are no meetings in July or August. The monthly general meetings are held in the River Room of the Centennial Community Centre at 6th and Cumberland in New Westminster, next door to the Canada Games Pool. The meetings start at 1.00pm and refreshments are served. The meeting dates for 2014/2015 are: November 19, January 20, February 17, March 17, April 21, May 19 and June 16.

Branch 800 Election Results

The Branch Annual General Meeting took place on Tuesday, October 21st. **Fred Bennett** has stepped down from the Chair - a position he has held for the past 17 years. A hearty 'thank you' to **Fred** for a good job well done! **Fred** now fills the Past Chairperson position; and **Bill Speers**, who has been Past Chairperson for the past 17 years, can now take a well deserved break. Thank you, Bill! **Myrna Cresswell** was elected Branch Chairperson. **Wendell Ratcliffe** continues as 1st Vice-Chairperson and **Navin Goburdhun** continues as 2nd Vice-Chairperson. Unfortunately, there were no candidates for the positions of Secretary and Treasurer. **Alan Davies** continues as Membership Secretary/Privacy Officer. **Jean Ing** continues as Branch Goodwill coordinator and **Sheila Halvorson** continues as Phone Convenor. There is no change in the line-up of Directors, namely; **Andy McColl, Rita Pollock, Anna Tremere, Marleine Wagner, Bonnie Billington** and **Robert Langley**. The new terms are effective January 1st, 2015.

A "Thank You" goes to **Pansy Wong** for stepping in and filling in for former Secretary **Angela Shaw** who had to resign the position due to other commitments.

NB. We urgently need a Secretary and a Treasurer for the Branch. If any member out there has been thinking of taking a more active role in the Branch and is interested in either position please contact **Fred**, 604-939-1773, or **Myrna**, 604-526-2383. Executive meetings take place on the first Tuesday of the month, except June, July and December.

And if you *haven't* been thinking of taking a more active role but would like to work with a good bunch of people...you could do worse.

Welcome New Members

Welcome to new members who have joined the Branch since the Spring newsletter: **Grant S Gray, Sheryl H Hewitt, Sandra L Miller, Wayne Santineau, Fern Slawson, Jean Stirling, Mark A Perry, Florence Siemens, Amanda Calica, Anna Elder, Mark Chiu, Douglas Billington, Iris and Peter Hill, Gladys Mackie and June Pocock.**

Report on Oktoberfest

In keeping with past efforts on recruitment and retention we organized this event for the AGM, to follow the election of Officers, with the objective of attracting new members to Branch 800 and to determine what the membership wants in future to maintain interest. There was a pretty good turnout in comparison to previous meetings and we did manage to sign up a few new members. Overall a good start but there is work to do in terms of engaging and retaining members.

Open discussion following the business meeting brought forward some of the topics of interest for future speakers: Engaging Seniors, Exercises for maintaining balance, Elder Abuse, Seniors and Sexuality, Wills and Estate Planning and Healthy Eating.

Unfortunately we did not have enough time to discuss the *format* for future meetings in any depth. However we did receive positive feedback for recent efforts to shorten business meetings in terms of presenting written minutes and financial reports vs reading them word for word. Some of the comments (as have been raised in the past) reflect concern about the business portion of the meeting taking priority over guest speakers who wait in the wings then have people leaving to avoid rush hour traffic. This will be a topic to bring forward again in future. In addition it is evident that members will welcome a change of seating arrangements to promote more face to face discussion and perhaps have a table to write on. Name tags were also mentioned. Another suggestion was car pooling. A thought on that topic – maybe if people connect with each other informally, car pooling will catch on more readily than trying to match people up with a driver.

Jean Ing did a great job with the raffle. With those proceeds added to the previous COSCO donation along with those from our community sponsors (Thrifty Foods and Cobs Bread Lougheed) we came in well under budget for this event.

We received many positive comments about how much members enjoyed the “Oktoberfest” food and refreshments. Great sauerkraut **Marleine!** While the Branch cannot afford to cover costs on an ongoing basis, it is evident that future gatherings around food will be welcome.

A special thanks to all who donated and to those who helped with preparation, music, serving and clean up.

Bonnie Billington, AGM Planning Committee.

After 17 Years as Chair of Branch 800...

Fred Bennett is stepping down. Following years of strong leadership and dedication to the BCGREA Membership, this decision is not taken lightly...but as **Fred** says “It’s time to go.”

Looking back:

Fred began his training as a Psychiatric Nurse on March 3 1959 at the Riverview Hospital School of Nursing. He became a Nurse 2 (“Second”) at Riverview in 1966 and Nurse 3 (“Charge”) in 1971. The following year Fred applied for an LOA to attend the BCIT General Nursing Program with the intent to work (at Riverview) as an on-call Nurse 1 in order to support his family.

However, in those days one could not retain two positions in the Public Service at the same time so he was turned down. Since Fred is not one to sit back and accept defeat, he decided to go all the way to the top! He wrote a letter to then Premier Dave Barrett who personally intervened on his behalf. As a result, Fred was given permission to work on-call while on LOA; a first to be granted at Riverview. Two years later, on completion of his training, Fred returned to his Nurse 3 position where he remained until retirement in 1996. At that time he was among a group of nurses advocating for student time to count as pensionable service. That came about some years later. (**Editor's note:** The clincher came when member **Ken Miyoshi** provided documentation showing his employee number dated back to his student time.)

Immediately after retirement Fred joined his colleagues as a member of BCGREA Branch 800. At that time membership numbers had peaked at 1300 and dues were \$10.00 per year. Fred soon became a Director and in the following year (1997) he was approached by **Val Davies** to take the position as Branch 800 Chair "for a year". The rest is history!

Fred was given the task of reviewing criteria for honorary membership by **Ed Bodner**, BCGREA Provincial President at that time. Subsequently, branches have retained autonomy for developing their own guidelines. He was also part of a group working to bring about greater harmony between the Branches and the Provincial Executive.

In those days Branch 800 was active with a dedicated Executive but the business at hand was much less structured than it is today. The Executive took turns hosting meetings in their homes. There was no budget and no circulated agendas for either Executive or General meetings. The newsletter was a collective effort that was produced once a year with allocated funds at that time. When the New Westminister Parks & Recreation Dept proposed rent increases for the Community Centre "River Room" at 6th & Cumberland, Fred protested against doing this to "a bunch of old people." This spurred him to approach the BC Govt. Employees Union for assistance and in the end the results were positive in several ways. Branch 800 secured free space at the BCGEU headquarters for Executive and other small meetings along with subsidized copying and mailing; a significant benefit to the Branch. The cost savings allowed for the newsletter to be published twice a year. It turned out that rent for the River Room never did increase.

From the original boundaries of Branch 800, New Westminister & District, Fred was instrumental in organizing the Langley/Surrey Branch as independent within the Association. The Golden Ears Branch was established a few years later after one failed attempt. Through

Branch 800's partnership with the Langley/Surrey Branch and collaboration with the other 4 Lower Mainland branches, the Annual Multi-Branch Picnic is now approaching its 12th year.

Fred was elected as First Vice-President of the *Provincial* BCGREA in 2001, serving continuously until he stepped down in 2013. As with the Branches, the Provincial organization is more complex now. His first task was to review existing by-laws and rewrite them to incorporate policies and procedures for the Provincial body as the branches do not have their own.

In an attempt to regain lost post-retirement benefits for public servants, Fred represented BCGREA members as the plaintiff in a 10 year class action lawsuit which, in his words, "we lost". When the Province of BC created privacy legislation, Fred became the Privacy Officer for the BCGREA. However this was not an onerous task.

During the past year Fred worked in collaboration with Branch 800 Membership & Recruitment Committee to advocate for the reinstatement of BCGREA presentations at Public Service Pension Pre-Retirement Seminars.

Under Fred's leadership Branch 800 now has:

- Executive members with defined roles.
- An editor for the Branch Newsletter with twice yearly publication.
- Shut-in visiting established.
- Agendas for general and executive meetings.
- Budgets developed at the Branch level. Operating costs are accurately tracked, including donated time and expenses by Executive members.
- Honourary membership recognition at the Annual Christmas Luncheon.

In parting from the Chair of Branch 800, Fred will miss the involvement and stepping down will leave "a big hole" in his life. However he will remain on the Executive in the position of Past Chairperson in charge of recruitment and election of officers. He says "I have always been proud of Branch 800 members and executive and I look forward to seeing them at future meetings".

Fred's vast knowledge of the BCGREA history and operations will be most valuable to all who follow in his footsteps. We wish him well!

Bonnie Billington Steller's Quill Roving Reporter.

In Memoriam

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

Mary Collins	Helen Dagg	J Frank Dawes	Donald French
Lindsey McCormick	Grace Malm	Barbara Merz	Leila Nygard
Nathaniel Shapira	Jack W Sims	Marie Wainwright	Edmond Wong
John Rehaluk	Sylvia Halabourda	Helen Jones	David Rennie
Barry Smith	Mary Constantineau	Jean Douglas	Christine Gustafson
Shirley Law	Earl Jewitt		

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

Comments from the Chair

This will be my last “Comments” for the Steller’s Quill. Many times I have sat and thought “what am I going to write this time?”

I have many good memories of the people I have known and activities I have been part of. I have always, and still do, taken great pride in the New Westminster & District Branch and the BCGREA. I strongly feel that our Branch has “led the pack!”

Now it is time for me to step back and watch the Branch carry on. I will still be there to assist.

I have much confidence in **Myrna Cresswell**, our new Chairperson, and all of our Executive, long and short term. Thank you.

Onward and Upward.

Fred Bennett

Chairperson, New Westminster & District Branch, BCGREA

Congratulations

Congratulations go to **Bonnie Billington** and **Sheila Halvorson** who were confirmed as Honourary Members at the October 15th AGM.

Report from Provincial BCGREA Annual General Meeting to Branch 800

The Provincial BCGREA AGM was conducted on October 15, 2014 in Tsawwassen, chaired by President Sarjit Manhas, with 72 members from 26 Branches in attendance.

The following is a resume of what was accomplished.

1. Mission Statement

A new mission statement was presented and carried. It is very significant and is as follows;

“The BCGREA is committed to representing all members, in good standing, of the Association, that are in receipt of a Superannuation Allowance, under the Public Service Pension Act of B.C.

Representation includes, but is not limited to, maintaining strong communications and negotiations with the Government of B.C. and Canada on behalf of the Membership.

Membership in the Association may also access the services and benefits that accrue through the affiliation of Companies and other Associations having specific plans and services designed for the benefit of retirees in B.C. & Canada”.

2. In order to address the issue of membership “Recruitment & Retention”

- An updating of website
- brochure
- new poster

are in progress and will be on-line by the end of November 2014.

3. Honourary Membership

- 12 members from 5 Branches were nominated and confirmed
- Branch 800 Members are, **Bonnie Billington** and **Sheila Halvorson**.

4. Recognition of Services by members of the BCGREA Provincial Executive – carried.

5. Seniors’ Advocate

- Isobel MacKenzie appointed since March 2014 and attached to the Ministry of Health.

- Isobel was Guest Speaker and spoke on her work as it relates to;

a) the issues affecting the 15% of B.C. population aged 65+ years
b) the areas of Seniors' Services e.g. Health Care Services, Personal Support, Housing, Transportation.
c) the challenges incurred to provide and meet the needs of Seniors.

6. Election of Executive – 2015

- President - **Sarjit Manhas**
- 1st Vice-President - **Ken Pendergast**
- 2nd Vice-President - **Carrie Mulcahy**

The above members were elected by acclamation and installed.

7. Next AGM

- October 21st 2015. With the spring Directors' Meeting set for March 18, 2015.

Navin Goburdhun

Branch 800 2nd Vice-Chairperson, and Branch 800 representative to Provincial AGM.

Boys and their Bikes

In the 1980's, the A82, which runs west from Glasgow up Loch Lomondside on the way to the West Highlands, was realigned higher up the hillside and widened. This road replaced a narrow 2 laner which followed every curve of the shoreline and ran through the village of Luss. Some time before the new road opened, I stopped in at the Luss Hotel with my wife and mother for some refreshment. I was seated facing the car-park and watched a works-van pull in. Four or five young road construction workers piled out of it. A length of 2"X6" was placed as a ramp from the ground up into the rear of the van and one of the workers manhandled a motorbike out from between the parked cars, sat astride, and began stomping on the kick-start.

I got this mental picture in my head of him; a) driving up the ramp and banging his head in the roof of the van, or b) driving up the ramp and getting thrown over the handlebars into the front seats. I took my eyes off them to draw my company's attention to this impending event, and when I looked back found I had missed the crucial moment.

The motorbike was lying on its side, the would-be rider was rolling on the ground clutching his right ankle, and his mates were holding each other up, laughing. But I got this mental picture...

Andy McColl