



The Steller's Quill

BCGREA New Westminster & District

Branch 800

“Spring 2022” Newsletter

Contact info:

Branch Chair: **Bonnie Billington** 604-761-5768

Membership Chair: **Rita Pollock** 604-939-8166

Newsletter: bcgrea800news@yahoo.ca

Editor: **Andy McColl** 604-421-1546



2022 Membership Dues Reminder

Membership dues of \$20 are payable each year by January 2nd (Dues are in arrears after March 15th) For members not on automatic deduction from their February pension, your cheque 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

Welcome New Members:

Patricia Begg, Helen Shun Hing Chiu, Margaret Marie Cormier, Marie Anna Forsyth, Lynn Greenaway-King, Fredrick (Rick) George King, Robbie Edward Kent, Wendy Matson, Linda McKenzie Sweeney, Richard Sweeney, Joyce Choi Mei Yap.

Virtual Branch Meetings:

2022 General Meeting dates (via Zoom until further notice)

February 15; March 15; April 19; May 17; June 21 (AGM)

Zoom Meeting Links:

***Note: meeting ID & codes are the same for electronic devices and telephone call-in**

Electronic Devices: Click on

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/74691034411?pwd=TFBOYIZKUS9uajhZYnB5c3FJYUphdz09>

Phone-In: 778-907-2071

Meeting ID: 746 9103 4411 Press #

Participant ID: Press #

Passcode: 172722

BCGREA DIAMOND JUBILEE 2022

Dear members,

Seventy-five years ago this year, 50 retired civil servants formed the B.C. Retired Civil Servants Association. Nine years later the association was renamed the B.C. Government Retired Employees Association (BCGREA) to include retirees from government boards and commissions.

It's interesting to note the similarities they faced are ongoing concerns in our organization today. It also shows the determination to improve the welfare of our retirees. This remains the BCGREA purpose.

To celebrate our diamond jubilee, we want to share your branch history in the 2022 Spring and Fall editions of *The Pen*. Do you have a story about your branch? Its creation, struggles, past and/or present executive, or a poignant moment.

Email your story (**up to 500 words**) as an attachment in a Word document or typed in your email message to: thepen@bcgre.ca.

Pictures are encouraged, but please provide high-quality scans of non-digital photographs and/or high-resolution digital photographs in .jpeg or .jpg formats. Be sure to tell us *who* is in the photo, *when* and *where* it was taken (approximately), along with *what* happened to mark the occasion.

We look forward to receiving your submissions.

Many thanks,

Your Communications Committee (Provincial BCGREA)

CHAIR REPORT

Branch 800 AGM is scheduled for Tuesday June 21, 2022 at 1:00 p.m. on Zoom

HELP WANTED - Call for Nominations

Under the Branch 800 regulations, elections are held at the AGM in June of each year to fill the Executive board positions as follows:

Chairperson

1st Vice Chairperson

2nd Vice Chairperson

Secretary

Treasurer

Membership Chairperson

Telephone Convener

Goodwill Convener

Six Directors

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* 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 nominate a member to serve on the branch executive. Anyone interested in possibly serving on the board, please contact **Myrna Cresswell** 604-209-0492 Email: myrna818@gmail.com

Provincial BCGREA Logo: At the Provincial AGM Oct. 20, 2021 (on Zoom), attendees voted to retain the original image of the logo. The updated version bears some variation in shading on the bird and color of the surrounding lettering as shown on page 1.

COSCO recently released the January edition of *COSCO Highlights* on www.coscobc.org profiling important issues in the forefront and a list of goals for 2022. A recording of the 2021 COSCO Conference '*Living in the 21st Century: A Senior's Strategy*' is still available www.coscoconference2021.com

The BC Notaries Association publishes a tri-annual magazine - *The Scrivener* that is accessible on their website: www.bcnotaryassociation.ca The Scrivener Fall 2021 edition, Vol. 30 #2 has a theme: SENIORS and covers a wide range of topics and articles related to seniors, such as BC Government services, Will instructions, Aging Positively, etc.

The Office of the Senior's Advocate posted an updated report Dec 8th on Seniors Abuse and Neglect in British Columbia: <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/osa-reports/hidden-and-invisible-report/>. If you wish to subscribe to the OSA mailing list, please go to: <https://www.seniorsadvocatebc.ca/newsletter-sign-up/> To request a paper copy of reports / publications call the OSA at **1-877-952-3181**

'Gluu Society' Digital Skills for Older Adults: offers free online classes for seniors using electronic devices:

"Our easy-to-follow courses and other online learning resources will help you learn to use the technology that's in your life. Thanks in part to funding from the Government of Canada, **lifetime access is free for Canadian seniors until March 31, 2022**". As members, you will have access to online classes and blog posts on a range of topics. Gluu's new website: <https://gluusociety.org/> Tap 'join now'. This is a valuable resource for cyber security issues.

Branch 800 Donations: A motion was passed at the November 16, 2021 General Meeting to donate \$200.00 to each of three non-profit community agencies serving seniors in need: Neighbourhood Houses in Burnaby (North and South), Seniors Services Society in New Westminster and (Tri-cities) SHARE Family and Community Services Society. Thank You letters have been received by the Branch in appreciation of our members' generous support.

Thank You BCGEU!

BCGEU has remained steadfast in supporting Branch 800 during the pandemic. Services provided by the print room staff are invaluable and we appreciate their ongoing assistance with our copying needs and newsletter mailout.

For Sale



**Canvas Tote Bag 13" high x 19" wide x 7" deep with 12 inch drop handles.
Stylus Metal Pen with BCGREA lettering**

\$20 for both

Contact Branch 800 Director Kathy Nelson at: 604-942-5770

We encourage members with electronic devices to join the **Branch 800 Facebook Page**. This is a great way to share announcements, access up and coming events and connect with other members, especially now that we are unable to meet in person. This page has a high security setting, and you must be invited in. To join, please make your request to **Donna Dunedin Main** via email @ donnaemain@gmail.com and place 'Branch 800 FB page' in the subject line.

“Time for a Laugh!”

Pickin' Lemons:

Sally Mulligan of Coral Springs, Florida, read an ad in the newspaper for one of the jobs that most Americans are not willing to do, and decided to apply:

“LEMON PICKERS NEEDED IN FLORIDA – ONLY U.S. CITIZENS OR LEGAL IMMIGRANTS NEED APPLY”

She submitted her resume to a Florida lemon grove, but seemed far too qualified for the job. She has a liberal arts degree from the University of Michigan, and a master's degree from Michigan State University. For a number of years she had worked as a social worker, and also as a school teacher.

The foreman studied her application, frowned, and said “I see you are well educated, and have an impressive resume. However, I must ask whether you have any actual experience in picking lemons?”

“Well, as a matter of fact I have,” she said. “I’ve been divorced three times, owned two Fords, and voted for Trump.”

She started work yesterday.

Blond Joke:

A blonde heard that bathing in milk would make her beautiful. She left a note for her milkman to leave 25 gallons of milk.

When the milkman read the note he felt there must be a mistake. He thought she probably meant 2.5 gallons so he knocked on the door to clarify the point.

The blonde came to the door and the milkman said “I found your note asking me to leave 25 gallons of milk. Did you mean 2.5 gallons?”

The blonde said “No, I want 25 gallons. I’m going to fill my bathtub up with milk and take a milk bath so I can look young and beautiful again.”

The milkman asked “Do you want it pasteurized?”

Wait for it...

The blonde said “No, just up to my bust. I can splash it on my eyes if I need to!”

P.S. To all members:

Stay Home, Happy & Healthy!

Safe, Sane & Sober!

We are thinking of you and wishing you all well!

Submitted by **Jean Ing**.

Fun & Games (Part 2) by Andy Mc Coll

A year ago I wrote about some of the stunts we pulled on our co-workers “back in the day”. It wasn’t me who stretched clear plastic wrap over the toilet bowl in West 4’s staff washroom (used by both sexes) then lowered the seat. But I know who did!

Not all of these pranks turned out as expected. Before emigrating in 1965, and before the Brits became serious about cleaning up the air they breathed, my first chore of the day, after filling and plugging in the electric kettle and putting a pot of water on the stove to heat (my flat had an indoor toilet but no bath or hot water) was setting and lighting the coal fire. And, contrary to some opinions I’ve heard in recent years – there is no such thing as “clean coal”.

Every household with a coal fireplace also owned what was called a “companion set”. This was a stand that held a poker, brush, shovel and tongs. The fire from the previous night was generally burned out. The residue would be given a thorough poking with the poker so the ash would drop through the grate and into the floor of the fireplace, leaving pieces of partially burned coal in the grate. These would be placed aside in the hearth, using the tongs as sometimes these embers were still hot.

A couple of sheets of newspaper would be wadded up and placed in the grate. Then kindling would be laid in a lattice like arrangement over the newspaper. Kindling was wood, cut into lengths between six or seven inches and a foot, and split lengthways into pieces about one inch

thick. Then the pieces of partly burned coal would go on top of the kindling. These were easier to set alight than fresh coal. A few lumps of coal would go on last. The fire was now ready to be lit. The paper would be lit and then an opened out sheet from the paper would be held by the corners across the front of the fireplace. This would be held in place by the hands at the upper corners, and your toes (wear shoes for this) at floor level corners. This sets up a draft to help the kindling catch alight. You have to be careful this sheet doesn't catch fire. If it does and gets hauled up the chimney it can ignite any accumulation of soot there. The Fire Brigade has to put it out and there would be a hefty fine. Not to mention the mess the water and soot makes in your house. Of course, if your fire didn't catch you had to reset it and try again. Once the cinders had caught alight you could add more coal. Then you cleaned the ash out from below the grate and carried it out to the dustbins. By that time your water was ready to make tea and wash yourself up.

At Dykebar Hospital in Paisley we were paid weekly. Payment was made in cash. Your earnings were calculated and your net pay was counted into individual pay packets and distributed from an office in the hospital's main building. Before the office opened for business some patients would bring up a handcart loaded with produce from the hospital's allotments and packets of kindling to sell to staff.

The kindling was sold, three bunches of about 10 or 12 sticks about a foot long, all wrapped up in a brown paper parcel tied up with twine. Pricing was reasonable and I would pick up a pack on a weekly basis.

Bobby, one of my colleagues, was unmarried and, like many unmarried adult children in Britain in those days, still lived at home with his mother. With someone making meals, doing laundry and housework, why reinvent the wheel? Bobby always bought two packs of kindling. One Friday he went off duty but forgot to take his kindling with him. It was an opportunity not to be passed up.

As a young married man I was struck by how much the abdominal dressing material we used in the hospital, cotton wool padding sandwiched between layers of gauze, resembled the feminine hygiene pads used in those days. Nothing like the product we see advertised on TV nowadays! So.. one of the packs was opened and a piece of kindling was removed. A piece of abdominal dressing was cut to size and wrapped round the stick, with a piece of one inch bandage forming loops at each end. (These items were worn with an elastic belt fitted through the loops.) The decorated kindling was put back in it's bundle and rewrapped in the parcel.

Bobby, unsuspecting anything, took his kindling home the next day. We waited each day to get a blast from him, but time passed with no reaction. I think it was the following Friday we had waited enough and asked him if he had any problems lighting the fire with the previous week's kindling.

Bobby was distracted about something, giving us only part of his attention, but told us "Oh, I don't set the fires in oor hoose. My mother is always up first and *she* sets the fires."

!!

What in military parlance is called "collateral damage". "Ah...um..did yer mother notice anything about the kindling?" Bobby's manner was still casual. But he got us good. "She never said anything to me. But a couple of days back she asked me what kind of people I had to work beside."



In Memory of Mary Brown

Mary passed away peacefully on December 24, 2021. As a long-standing member of Branch 800, she received a life membership award in 2014, marking 20 years with the BCGREA. Many will remember Mary getting up at our monthly membership meetings in the not too distant past to bring us up to date on the fate of the "Riverview Lands" and the efforts being made to preserve the park-like grounds. The land the facility stands on, (otherwise known as Essondale in the early years of the 20th century) was the location of UBC's research forest, therefore host to many trees not native to British Columbia. As a member of the *Riverview Horticultural Society*, Mary was a tireless promoter of Riverview's "Tree Walks". Several days each year the general public could participate in walks around the grounds, accompanied by a qualified individual who would explain the features of various trees, many of them planted before the First World War. For several years the tree walk schedule was printed in our newsletter. Mary was a warm and gracious lady, always ready to offer assistance. She will be missed.

In Memoriam

We regret to announce the passing of the following members in 2021:

Mary Christina Brown, William Gerald (Gerry) Barber,

Vivian Ruth Friesen, Constance Winnifred Herrington

Donald Muir Isenor, Brian Richard Lawler, Valerie M Purchase,

Gary Bruce Rawluk, Joan Ellen Sandra Rogers, Lillian M Stevenson,

Marie Antoinette Pauline (Paula) Wardle, June Irene Williams

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