



# CHRONICLES & CAPERS

BC Retired Principals' &  
Vice-Principals' Association

Issue 43 • March 2010

## Musings from the President by Joy Ruffeski



I love to travel and explore places I've never been before. Now that I'm retired I have the luxury of being able to go to unique places and meet interesting people. However, no cruises or large organized tours for me! I don't want to be herded around with a group, confined to a bus or even large cruise ship, and not be able to spend an extra half-hour at a place of personal interest or explore a trail that leads to another small crater on Mt. Kilimanjaro.

It doesn't mean that I don't enjoy luxury and being pampered or that my travels mean I stay in one- or two-star accommodations! However, one of the most delightful places that I've stayed in was a hostel on West Lake in Hangzhou, China. My garret of a room, with just a skylight for natural light, was barely big enough to turn around in and I had to climb over my suitcase to get to the toilet, sink and hand shower. However the room and hostel were spotlessly clean, the people were friendly and helpful, and the home-made food was filling and tasty. In comparison, my luxury hotel in Cape Town, South Africa was the ultimate in spaciousness, phenomenal view, heated tile floors, and soft beds; but

it also had no personality or warmth.

People would say I am not so much a traveler as an explorer in that I won't sit back and just observe the scenery and historic places passively. When I go on a holiday, whether it be within the province, country, or internationally, I really want to get out and explore where the "real" people live. I walk and explore back streets and rural areas in an attempt to better understand the way of life of others. Being invited into a person's home or place of business and sharing a cup of coffee or tea is pure joy to me, no matter how simple or luxurious the setting. Shopping in the outdoor markets for fresh produce and bartering about the price, as is the tradition in many other parts of the world, is such fun. Exploring epicurean hideaways and sampling the local cuisine or specialties of the area (rarely asking what I am eating until I've tasted and enjoyed it though) puts a contented smile on my face.

I'm off having some new adventures as this newsletter is sent out. Although I know what my time in Tanzania will be like as I once again do some volunteer English teaching in a village in the central region where most homes and schools don't have running water or electricity, I don't know what my excursions in Egypt and the UAE will be like. However, whatever occurs I know that I'll face each day with curiosity, enthusiasm, and a sense of wonder at the amazing possibilities for learning about other people and their way of life.

Perhaps if more people had the opportunity to really explore other lands and did so with an open mind, we'd have a much better world. That's what I think! 🐼

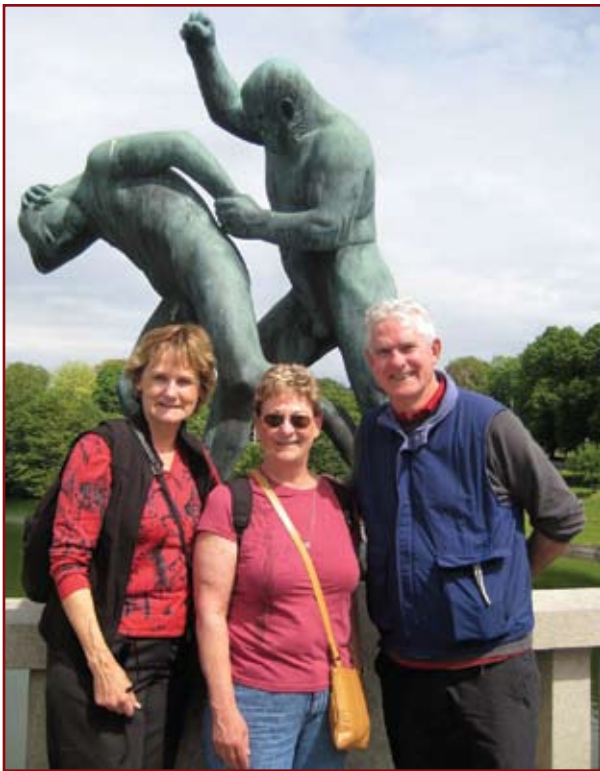
President Joy sends out E-Bulletins to members regarding timely items of interest. If you haven't received them, then she may not have your correct e-mail address. Contact her at [ruffeski@telus.net](mailto:ruffeski@telus.net) to stay in the loop.

## Roots: The Norway Adventure by Ed Youngberg

After days of packing, months of planning and years of bantering and speculating, we were actually taking off on a KLM flight from Vancouver BC on May 22, 2008. bound to Amsterdam and on to Oslo, Norway.

Yes, our Roots trip to connect with part of our past in the land of the Vikings was underway. This trip was a unique adventure involving just me and my two sisters - no spouses along; they had (wisely) opted out of this adventure that had little appeal but for the Youngberg clan. Thankfully, the spouses happily sent us off with lots of support, encouragement and advice: don't blow the annual travel budget on this outing and don't strangle each other during your time together.

Now it has been my fortune to have been blessed with terrific siblings, sisters Cathy, twin Edna and deceased brother, Dennis; we have always been considered quite close as a family but this trip was surely going to test the definition of "closeness"!!



At a young age, there was a smoldering curiosity about our Youngberg family tree. Growing up, we had a lots

of involvement with my mother's side of the family tree and cherished our relationships with them. We knew less about my father Gordon's side which had direct links to Scandanavia. However, the tales of hardships endured by our grandparents reflected perhaps by their rather stern nature, the fascinating world of Vikings and Trolls, the intriguing fondness of my father for sardines and pickled herrings, and the singing of Scandanavian ditties in English, all sparked an increased desire to know more about our Norse blood lines.

There were few records about Grandpa's early life but, thanks to sister Cathy who is the unofficial family historian, we were able to gather significant information about Grandmother Magnhild.

We learned that Grandma Magnhild Youngberg (Noren) had grown up as one of 13 children in a poor farming area in Stor Elvadal, near Koppang in Norway. Her father Mikkell Olsen Noren was a shoe cobbler and farmer but had difficulties providing for the large family. It seems that around 1902, the middle children including Magnhild, brothers Ole and Torgal and sister Andrea were summarily sent to Canada to serve as indentured workers on a relative's farm in Alberta. Magnihild was only 17 years of age! Several years later she met and married a "ship wrecked" Swede. They eventually moved to Kamloops, BC where they raised two boys, Gordon and Theodore. Fifty years would go by until Magnhild was finally able to revisit her cherished home in Norway.

Sparked by correspondence and follow-up emails a few years back from a second cousin living in Oslo, we began to discuss the possibility of one day going to visit Norway. Finally, after many excuses and much teasing, we overcame all of the obstacles to launch our trip to connect with our Roots!!

Given that oil rich Norway is prohibitively costly, we did a lot of careful preplanning which certainly ameliorated expenses. Our stay in a small Oslo apartment as well in hostels and travellers' rooms at Stor Elvdal, Flam, Bergen and later in Stockholm and Copenhagen, usually sharing three to a room, was quite the experience with lots of teasing and tolerance testing. This



ins, visiting the original home and farm of Magnhild and acquiring a taste for such Norwegian favourites as Roast Elk, Rommegrot, (sour cream porridge) and Kvitt, the powerful “national” spirit. We relished getting the story of the descendants of the Noren family first hand and we were thrilled to be accepted as Norwegian kin.

We marvelled at the beauty of our ancestral country and came away impressed with the friendliness of the people and a greater recognition of the significant history, accomplishments and advancements of this proud nation of 5 million residents.

As tourists, we were delighted to be able to leisurely explore the vibrant capital city of Oslo and adjacent Bygdey Peninsula, taking in such fascinating exhibits as the Viking Ship, Kon Tiki, Norwegian Resistance, Munch, Vigeland Park and Holmenkollen ski jump museums. Other highlights included the breath taking beauty of the “Norway in a Nutshell” train-fjord boat trip and the historical Bryggen area of Bergen, featuring the original wooden Hanseatic trading warehouses.

was particularly true given that one of the sisters was an incurable snorer!!

At the start , I am sure that we all wondered if we end up resembling the subject in Edvard Munch’s famous painting “The Scream”! However, we soon settled into a comfortable routine and enjoyed the precious quality time together that this trip afforded us. Almost every evening, we siblings had lots of stories, laughs and misadventures (you had to be there) to share.

The journey was everything we wished it to be and more. We spent ten exciting days in Norway enjoying the warm hospitality and kindness of second cous-

Following our Norway segment, we flew from Bergen to Sweden and then journeyed on to Denmark and Holland. During our entire trip, we enjoyed balmy 30 C type weather every day with long evenings of northern sunlight. Even Bergen, the wettest city in Europe, didn’t disappoint with terrific sunny afternoons.

Yes, this was a true Roots trip for the Youngberg clan. We genuinely connected with our Norwegian past and with our “Viking” kin; and more importantly, as siblings, we also deepened our relationship and roots with each other. 🐾



## Finances Don't Retire by Vince Devries

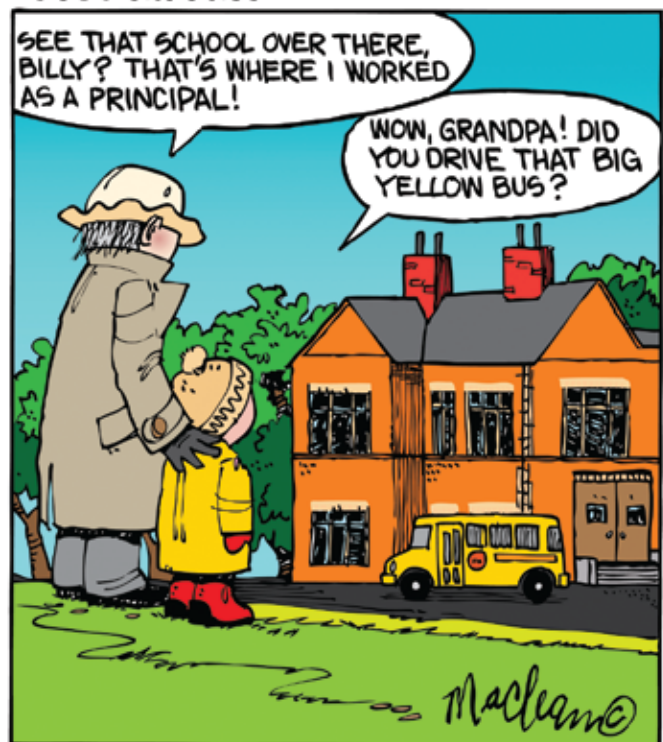
Yesterday we got back to Ladysmith from a few days in Vancouver where we soaked in the "Olympic atmosphere". We very much enjoyed the downtown activities, the banners and flags and the large crowds. I have never seen so many Canadian flags. After 52 years in Canada, there is still a little bit of Dutch in us and this is why we picked the 10,000 meter men's speed skating final as our Olympic activity to attend. Another reason was that we had some family over from Holland who of course wanted to cheer on their hero, Sven Kramer. Sven is to skating in Holland what Sidney Crosby is to hockey in Canada. He even looks like Sidney. Since we had no real Canadian prospects in that race, we were free to cheer on the Dutch skaters along with thousands of Dutch fans who were decked out in the weirdest orange outfits. Those of you who watched it on TV saw the big orange patches in the audience in which Corine and I, in our Canadian red, just were lost. In the special box, opposite our benches, we saw the Dutch Crown Prince and his family, also totally dressed in Orange. I tried to picture Steven Harper in that box, dressed in a Canadian flag with a silly hat on, just not the same. The cheering and banging that went on during Sven's race that saw him break the Olympic record surpassed even the noise level at the Canada-Russia hockey game. You all saw what happened! Sven changed into the wrong lane just before the end, on the direction of his coach, and was disqualified. This compares to Sidney shooting into his own net, losing the game. The raucous in the building changed to a stunned silence. Sad as it was, it was quite an event for us.

Now I am back in the peace and quiet of Ladysmith, with a slight cold and a note asking where my article is. The sort of pressure we retired people have a hard time dealing with.

Well here is what I will do. Given that many of you have lost money in mutual funds and the like, I will talk in the next few articles about simple ways to invest and minimize your risk and avoid the high fees and commissions. Let's face it, in spite of the fees and commis-

sions, by comparison, 98% of mutual funds lose you money over time. Those of you who invested in 5 year Guaranteed Investment Certificates (GICs) over the last 10 years, have outperformed the investment portfolios of pretty well all your friends. Generally, if you have less than \$50,000 to invest, I would stick with GICs. A GIC is an arrangement with a bank, trust, or insurance company under which the principal amount is guaranteed and interest is paid annually or at maturity. They are for periods of 1 to 5 years. Higher amounts can attract higher interest rates. If you have your own investment account through the discount brokerage of your bank, you can shop all institutions, Canada wide, for the best rate. I will talk about setting up your own investment account in a later article. To \$100,000 per banking institutions, the GIC investments are guaranteed by the Bank of Canada. Some GICs can be cashed before maturity but they pay less interest. All this does not mean that I only recommend GICs. For portfolios over \$50,000 there are some other options that I will talk about next time. 🐾

### JUST KIDDING



## Pension Update by Ben Cutcliffe

As a result of the TPP survey, the pension committee will present five recommendations at the March BCTF AGM. Watch for details in the next *Chronicles & Capers*.

## Public Education in BC is Never Dull by Rick Ashe

It will come as no surprise that the issues of relationships, politics and power are still the main ingredients in the dynamics of public education in our province.

Our goal as retired members at Chapter Council is to observe, listen, empathize and hopefully provide a model of life after the fray. It is a reminder of why we were so tired upon retirement and why it takes such an adjustment. Leaving our careers was not like getting off at a station it was more like jumping off a moving train. Often one look at a retired professional is enough to see the magic in their eyes and allay some of the fears in taking that step to another phase in your life.

We have a representative on Chapter Council as a bridge from past, to present, to future. We are provided a chance to speak annually about the benefits of the retired association and we present scholarships on our behalf every autumn.

It is a pleasant welcoming group of people who treat us with great respect and make us feel just like an active member. We in turn show the respect of offering advice if asked but remaining in the background. We acknowledge at each meeting how appreciative we are for the support we receive from practicing members and the provincial office and staff.

Issues and dynamics change with each year it seems but they remain similar to those challenges we faced prior to retirement.

Currently the challenges revolve around three key areas.

Compensation has become a major challenge as there is little flexibility to negotiate and salaries in some cases are the same or less than teaching staff. It seems a creative way is needed to look for non-monetary benefits. In some cases there is little or no transparency in relationships with those that represent the employer making the process unpleasant and unproductive.

Full Day Kindergarten is also looming as a major organizational challenge. Even though the government is dedicating an amount of one hundred fifty million over three years the challenge of hiring qualified staff and implementing the program is huge. Also there is the big question of which children in what schools are first to benefit?

Lastly Bill 33 provided some very uncomfortable moments and some horrendous paperwork this past September as once again school based principals and vice principals were left to pick up the pieces when the BCTF took a stand that left the employer placing those demands on administrators. 🐱

## Downsizing and Decluttering

Need to downsize? Want to get rid of items that clutter your home but don't know where to start? Having trouble deciding what to keep or what should go? What to do with all the kids' stuff that still fills available space in your home? Need help with a spouse or a parent who won't throw anything away? Leslie Wilshire, an expert on downsizing, was the keynote speaker at the January BCRPVPA meeting. She has practical suggestions for all questions relating to downsizing and getting rid of clutter. Leslie is also a Senior Relocation Specialist and can help us – or perhaps our children - when the time comes to move from the family home to a smaller residence. Leslie is a principal of Les Clutter Services. Take a look at her website at <http://www.lesclutterservices.com> for more detailed information about her services.

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We welcome your feedback, suggestions and ideas.

# BCRPVPA Bulletin Board

## Plan to attend a future BCRPVPA meeting

Tuesday, March 9, Surrey

Guildford Golf and Country Club  
Meeting at 10 a.m. Speaker at 11:00,  
lunch  
Guest Speaker: Don Drysdale -  
Powers of Attorney & Representation  
Agreements.

Wednesday May 12, BCPVPA offices

Annual General Meeting

<http://www.bcrta.ca> or phone 604-871-2260 or 1-877-683-2243

## CHES needs you!

A New Westminster based NGO, The Canadian Harambee Education Society (CHES) mandate is to provide secondary education to indigent girls in Kenya and Tanzania. CHES looking for retired educators who have time, energy and talent to:

- Co-ordinate CHES activities from the Surrey office.
- Act as CHES Treasurer (Nov. to Jan. is busier than the rest of the year).
- Serve on the Board and offer varied services throughout the year.
- Act as an Agent-in-Place at CHES House in Kakamega, Kenya for a 6 month period (focus on student selection and support at a number of nearby schools and various other duties).

Anyone interested or wanting further details please to contact:

- Julia Kambeitz at CHES office (778 565 5261) or [canadianharambee@shaw.ca](mailto:canadianharambee@shaw.ca)
- Louise Paulsen (Treasurer) at 604 582 7654 or [lpaulsen@shaw.ca](mailto:lpaulsen@shaw.ca)
- Visit the CHES website at <http://www.canadianharambee.ca>

## Be a Chronicle contributor

Share your travels, stories and ideas with retired colleagues. Your favourite photo could be the next **Editors' Pic**. We welcome and appreciate your submissions e-mailed to the editors. Next deadline is **May 14!**

## Update your information

Didn't receive this edition of Chronicles and Capers? Haven't received E-Bulletins? We may not have your updated postal/email address. Contact Millie at [millie@bcpvpa.bc.ca](mailto:millie@bcpvpa.bc.ca)

## Join the B.C. Retired Teachers' Association

Stay connected with 14,000 other retired teacher colleagues in 43 local branches. Add your voice to promote and protect the interests of retired persons through our own advocacy and affiliation with the Council of Senior Citizens Organization (COSCO) and the Canadian Association of Retired Teachers (ACER-CART). For more information go to

## Get Involved

Got some new ideas for the association? Want to help? Consider running for the board. Contact past president Gord [gmwallington@shaw.ca](mailto:gmwallington@shaw.ca)

## Editor's Pic Oman Vista by Chuck Nelson

