



CHRONICLES & CAPERS

BC Retired Principals' &
Vice-Principals' Association

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Musings from the President by Rick Ashe



A Feeling of Belonging is Important

The survey conducted in January 2011 was reassuring in that it supports what the executive is trying to do. We had 58 responses to our survey, better than 10% of our membership. After tabulating the results and comments the following themes emerged.

Chronicles and Capers continues to be

popular, respected by members and rated as very good to excellent. Items most read, in priority, are: pension information, musings from the President, travel and travel tips and financial information. Thanks to several members who volunteered to contribute future articles and left their email addresses as contacts. E-bulletins were also popular with members indicating they found them useful.

While most people use the website, some said they have never looked at it. Information most sought after was pension news, newsletters, Blue Cross information, and BCPVPA items. Keeping in touch about retirement and educational issues, important retired member information and affiliation with BCPVPA were highlighted in comments. Adding more travel information is welcomed. It should be noted that the results were based on the old web site not the new www.bcrpvpa.ca that went live this March.

A number of respondents do not live in the Lower Mainland and therefore cannot attend meetings. Most of those able to attend felt the locations worked and that the format of meetings was about right. Meeting topics suggested more than once were: travel, volunteer work opportunities in other countries and issues around health, taxation, wills and estates.

Respondents felt our scholarships were about right. New members were attracted by information from the BCPVPA, retirement packages for those about to retire and by word of mouth. Benefits of membership most appreciated are: a sense of keeping in touch and hearing about what others are doing in retirement (the newsletter), affinity programs, pensions, benefits, travel and medical insurance for travel. The most widely used affinity programs were Medoc travel insurance and Johnson Inc. home insurance. There were comments about special rates at hotels but realizing our membership is small we may need to join with larger group programs such as BCPVPA and RTA.

Suggestions for future association priorities are (in order): representing the membership in any pension plan or benefit plan changes, travel, medical issues, finances, investment planning and communications (website, newsletters, meetings and presentations).

What we learned from the survey in January is that belonging is important to retired members. This is true for new members as they transition from their career to retirement but it is also true for those who have been retired for several years. We, as an executive, try to make your association relevant and meaningful no matter where you are in your personal journey. On behalf of the executive I wish you all a happy, healthy and enjoyable summer with family and friends. 🍷

P-J's Travels - Bhutan by Nick Parker-Jervis

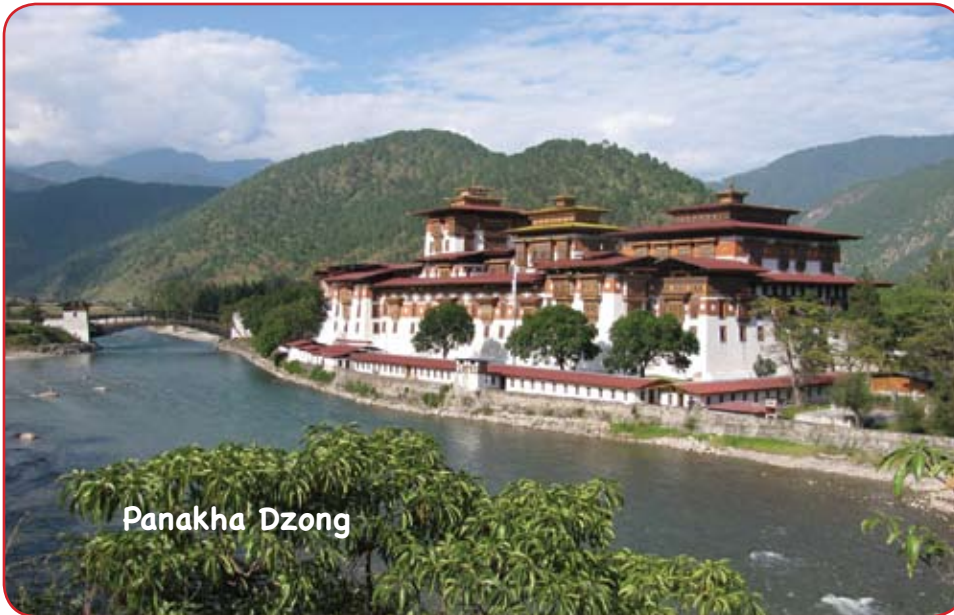
“Japan?” I asked our well-traveled friend somewhat incredulously. “You want to go to Japan?” “No, **Bhutan**”, she said thus planting a seed and confirming my need to see an audiologist. Since that conversation several months ago, the seed has germinated and Hazel and I spent five days in Bhutan en route to India. I still have not made an appointment with an audiologist!

cluded in the per diem. We found the accommodations to be very satisfactory and the food was good too! Last year about 30,000 tourists visited Bhutan. The goal is to increase this to 100,000 per year. This would definitely strain the existing facilities.

One evening we shared some wine with Kesang, the CEO of Bhutan Wilderness Travel the company that we booked with. He impressed us as a dynamic individual and a real entrepreneur who is totally “in sync” with the government’s plans to promote Bhutan tourism while preserving traditional values and ways of life. Kesang has all sorts of plans for developing Bhutan as a mountain biking destination. He is promoting an 86 K circuit around the capital, Thimphu, and is working to develop an annual 200+ K ride across Bhutan that will involve cycling up and down four 10 to 12,000 foot mountain passes. Can’t wait! He told us one of his dreams is to go mountain biking at Whistler – it is difficult be-

cause his business is busiest in the summer.

The monarchy has only recently begun to share power by allowing elections to a Parliament with limited re-



Panakha Dzong

Bhutan is an isolated 47,000 square kilometer kingdom situated on the northeast border of India. The population is officially about 700,000 but may be significantly higher when all the non-Bhutan citizens – mostly Nepalese and Indians – are included.

The government tightly controls tourism. There is no “doing Bhutan on your own”. You must contract with a licensed tourist company and pay a per diem of US\$200 per person. As we were not traveling in a group, we had to pay a supplement for the privilege of having a guide, car and driver all to ourselves. Visitors need a visa and must enter the country via Druk Air, the only airline. We flew in from Bangkok. Our guide announced quite happily that there are no “backpackers” in Bhutan. All accommodation, food and sightseeing fees are in-



Bhutan Vista

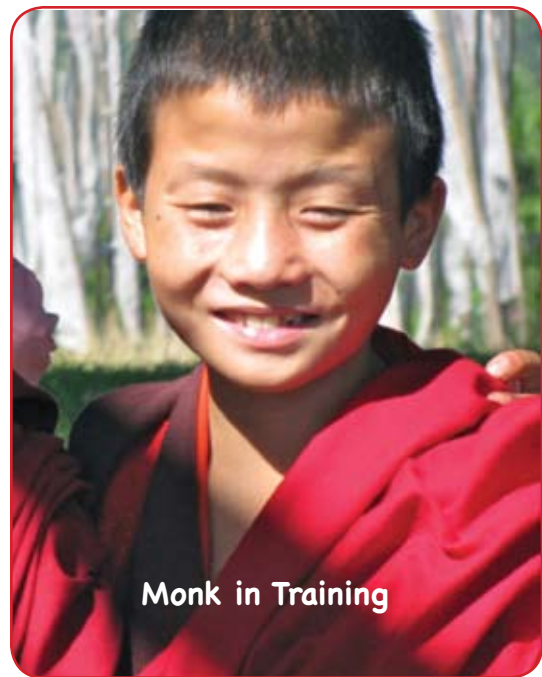


Thimphu Traffic Control

toward. It was difficult for us to determine if their feelings are shared by the most of their countrymen.

Visitors to Bhutan can focus on a trekking, a cultural experience or a combination of the two. We'd signed up for a cultural tour combined with some "mild" hiking.

And, oh yes we took in some awesome scenery, hiked breathlessly up perpendicular trails, shared a Bhutanese meal at a farmhouse, toured a series of picturesque monasteries and Dzongs – combination monastery, administrative centre and fort - and thoroughly enjoyed our short visit to the Dragon Kingdom. If you're interested in a trip check out www.bhutanwilderness.com or contact Kesang at bhutanwilderness@gmail.com



Monk in Training

sponsibilities. The former King who abdicated in favour of his son in 2006 believed that a nation's gross national happiness is more important than its gross national product. Thus Bhutan is the only country with a Gross National Happiness policy. The four pillars of this policy are to: Preserve the nation's Culture; Provide good governance; Develop socially and economically and Protect the environment. One consequence of this is that all new construction must conform in appearance to traditional Bhutanese architecture resulting in a country a bit like Leavenworth on steroids. People like Kesang, our guide and our driver are very supportive of the monarchy and the direction that Bhutan is moving

Update on the new Extended Health Care Plan by Ben Cutcliffe

The Teachers Pension Plan has contracted Pacific Blue Cross as the carrier of the new EHC Plan. All enquiries about the plan should be directed to PBC.

To date there has been about 7000 applications and about 3500 have been processed by PBC. Anyone not responding to the enrolment form will be contacted again by PBC. This additional contact to non-responders is planned for June and July. Members can also phone PBC to find out the status of their application if they have a concern. In Nov./Dec. the new EHC cards will be distributed by mail. PBC is currently working on the new detailed document. They plan to combine the EHC and Dental information in one booklet. Members can now make e-claims for paramedicals, eye glasses and hearing aids. Receipts must be kept in case PBC audits them.

A Grad With a Difference by Chris Harker

Thanks to the combined efforts of two of its principals, Hillcrest Elementary School in Victoria has supported two primary (1-7) schools in Katesh, Tanzania, for the last seven years. Now both retired, Tracy Shaw and her husband Douglas, visited Katesh in 2007 while Catriona Harker visits on a regular basis to support the CHES (Canadian Harambee Education Society: www.canadianharambee.ca) programme.

Tracy and Douglas, the Harkers and seven others from Victoria left for Katesh in late October, 2010. In their honour, the schools declared that they would hold a combined Grade 7 grad at which Tracy would be the

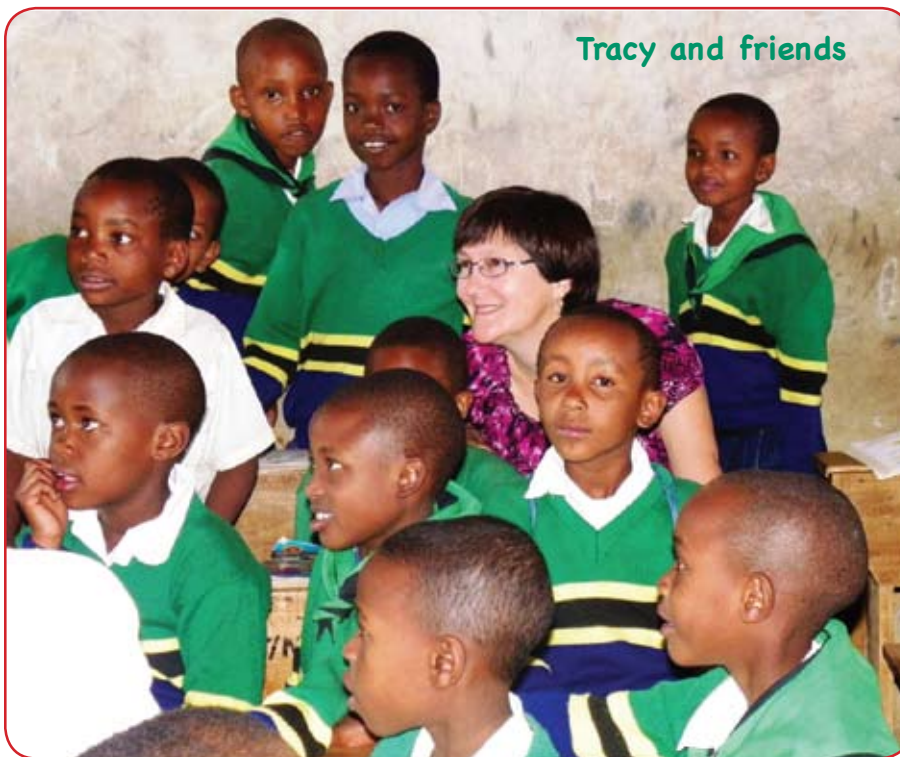
As this was deemed to be a very special event, all Canadians plus the local CHES staff, were assigned places on the stage, facing an audience of well over a thousand kids, parents and teachers. To further dignify the occasion, a PA system had been acquired. It consisted of a microphone, an amplifier, a jumble of wires and a technician. Unhappily, the power for the entire region had been shut off at some point during our walk to the compound. Tanzanians are not deterred by such events, perhaps because they occur so frequently. So by the time we were in our seats, a generator had been found and placed on the stage. It was already chugging away at a volume that indeed necessitated a PA system if anything at all was to be heard. It also produced clouds of blue smoke that, in short order, established a haze over the stage that soon had those sitting closest to it coughing and feeling dizzy.

When this was pointed out to the MC, she arranged to have it moved to the centre of the compound, among the smallest kids. The assumption perhaps was that the fumes would more easily disperse from there and, if they didn't, the lungs of the youngsters were in better shape than ours.

The PA system appeared to have a mind of its own. During the short interval between a guest being introduced and this person walking across the stage to the microphone, a blast of inspirational music filled the time-gap and presumably put the audience in a sufficiently excited frame of mind to ensure that the speech that followed

would be listened to. This worked well for the first two or three speakers but the technician then lost control of his creation. A speaker would begin to talk only to be cut off in mid sentence by a musical blast. The speaker would pause until an offending wire was disengaged and then continue on with what they had to say. Thirty seconds later the blast would be repeated. This went on for some time, so it is fair to say that the technician received considerably more attention than did any of the speakers.

Tracy was number 11 on the program. She made a stirring



Tracy and friends

keynote speaker.

On the appointed day, we were told to remain at CHES House until "your escort" arrives. In due course, rounding the corner came a phalanx of small children, all dressed in blue sweaters and blue shorts or skirts. They were led by a band of noisy, rhythmic drums and simple tin horns. Specially chosen escorts led us by the hand at the head of the column on the journey to the graduation site, a compound enclosed by high walls usually used for political meetings.

speech in English to the kids, who spoke only Swahili, sitting in the hot African sun. Our translator, hardly able to stand due to the fumes from the generator, did his best to interpret her sentiments for the audience. The true feelings of those assembled became evident moments after the MC closed the meeting. Kids and parents alike all descended on Tracy and Catriona demanding to shake their hands, thank them and have pictures taken with them. Both ex-principals have attended a number of grads but this one was more than special. Hillcrest's support has made a great and meaningful difference to a large number of kids from Katesh. The "pass into secondary school" rate jumped from 58% to over 95%. Getting into secondary school tends to assure a much more secure future, so this "pass" is life changing. Tracy states that the highpoint of her successful and memorable career is her school's association with the two schools in Katesh. She points out that student letters and messages brought to Hillcrest by Catriona have created an awareness and sensitivity regarding

both third world conditions and the pride involved in being a citizen of a stable, peaceful African nation. 🇰🇪



Proud graduate

Unfinished Business by Maureen MacDonald

Adventure in an exotic country is a fantasy many entertain when approaching retirement. Bobbie Harvey took that plunge. One month after retiring, she was off to Sorowako, Indonesia, to be head teacher of a tiny three-room school. Bobbie has now been there for eight years.

As the principal, Bobby loved her work but not

the demands of leading White Rock Elementary, a quadruple-tracked school that boasted English, early and late French immersion, and a unique fine arts strand. Multiple programs meant multiple politics. In the months leading up to her retirement while leisurely reading the *Saturday Globe and Mail*, possibilities screamed out to her. The International Nickel Company of Canada's ad for a teacher outlined terrific benefits with tempered risks. The job offered a furnished house, vehicle, annual travel home, vacation bonus, and an attractive salary. The introduction to the company required a four-day orientation in Toronto and a ten-day language immersion at a Bali resort. How could she resist?



Bobbie with her school

In March 2008 I made my first trip to Bobbie's equatorial home. Indonesia unfolded itself in stages, Bali, Jakarta, and finally the large island of Sulawesi to overnight in the provincial capital Makassar. Soon after landing, I was taxiing through the backstreets dodging vehicles, goats, and mothers with flowing hijabs ferrying children home on

noisy motorbikes. Next morning, at the airport, I joined the public weigh-in of passengers and their baggage to ensure the older turbo-prop was not overloaded.

The 80-minute flight passed over patchwork farms, terraced hillsides, fishing villages and finally jungled mountain terrain. Bobbie's Sorowako destination emerged—a massive industrial site draped over the mountainside, smokestacks punctuating the sky. Suburban homes hugged the lakeshore and bordered on a golf course while a few kilometers away dust billowed on the jumbled streets of older Sorowako, home of most national employees. The crowd greeting the plane engulfed the eighteen passengers. Bobbie introduced me to friends, effortlessly switching from English to Indonesian, and then whisked me to her air conditioned SUV explaining we had work to do. She wanted me to live just as she did; at school, socials, hashing, boating, golfing.

As we circumnavigated Bobbie's community, I was reminded of a military base. Or, a bubble Canadian town dropped into the tropics, with 1970s two-storey bungalows, hedges and luscious flower gardens. Almost half of the 200 ex-pat community were Canadian.

“Hi, Miss Bobbie!” The sixteen children and their three teachers greeted us from the school's wide veranda. Two vibrant young Indonesian women introduced themselves as the kindergarten/pre-school team, Hera wearing a patterned hijab while Desy was dressed in western attire. Next we followed Cathy, the primary teacher and the wife of the company's Canadian vice president, into three classrooms where the students confidently chatted about their experiences while moving from individual assignments, to computers, to peer projects. These seemed like transplanted BC classes except for the tropical setting and the company supported 500-student Indonesian school that shared the campus.

Hosting visitors, Bobbie told me, was rare and a time for celebration. Her cocktail party on that first evening introduced me to her many friends. To ward off the

feelings of isolation and absence of family members, they had formed an active social community that planned daily events. The next day was the weekly hash run. We joined adults and children completing a one-hour mystery track that crossed streams, jungle and local farms. By dusk, sweaty and muddy, we huffed into the awards circle where the grandmaster regaled us with humorous awards and raucous rugby-type songs. Thursday was golf. The first four holes was a panorama of lake and hillside while the next few wound through active rice paddies where eager boys waited to dive into water hazards for stray balls. We finished in time for our caddies to join the 6:00 call for prayers, and for us to relax as the glowing hillside of slag backlight the sky.

The weekend revealed secrets of tectonic Lake Montano, one of the deepest lakes on earth. Friday night was a



Author, Maureen, and friends

lakeshore bonfire complete with wieners and guitars. Saturday Bobbie and I pattered the two miles across the lake in a katinkatink to buy baskets directly from the women crafters at isolated Nuha. Sunday, on Bobbie's spacious pontooned-raft, we explored camouflaged coves and caves.

Sorowako mimics the remote mining town of Bobbie's youth, Yellowknife. Both welcome newcomers like extended family members. By the end of my two-week stay I understood Sorowako's grip on Bobbie and why she describes it as a slice of paradise although some

guests have called it desolate. She asks, “Where else might I golf among rice paddies, anchor my lake-raft at my door and teach a class of six capable cosmopolitan children?” For Bobbie, the students formed the strongest bond. Their lives intertwined both in and out of school. She teaches some children for three consecutive years, a class that would fit around a dinner table. In this intimate educational setting, Bobbie has reclaimed the

joy of her early professional years.

Times are changing in Sorowako. The mine was sold in 2007 to a Brazilian company and the ex-pat community is diminishing. Bobbie is planning her ninth and final year. She writes, “Then I will return to my unfinished business in Canada, and I will leave new unfinished business here. Cycles within cycles.” 🐱

Finances Don't Retire by Vince Devries

We are going to be away for 6 weeks, doing a home and car exchange with friends in Friesland, a province in the north of Holland. That is a change from our previous visits, where we would alternate between the west and the south of Holland. My wife Corine is from the west; big cities, big harbours, dense population, and lots of trade and commerce. I am from the south; fairly poor soil, small farms scraping by, mainly Catholic, and a history of large families. No surprise that business people saw cheap labour and industrialized the area in the early 20th century, not unlike industry looks toward India and China today. That is how my parents moved from the North of Holland, where my family has its roots, to the South where my Dad got a job in sales in early 1929 with Philips, long before it became a worldwide industrial giant and where he experienced the start of the Great Depression. In January 1930 he was told that he was doing an excellent job and he would not be fired as had so many others and his salary would only be reduced by 20%. Then came the world war but it all ended well with him retiring as a Vice President.

We are looking forward to spending time in the north, taking a look at the former homes of my grandparents and one set of great grandparents, where I spent many summer holidays. Some of you no doubt share that experience of staying with grandparents, where there are no chores, where you can do no wrong, where they love you as you are, where you get your favourite dishes and if you are lucky, a few quarters to take the streetcar into town and see the latest movie. Being further north we may take the opportunity to travel to Copenhagen

and Berlin, two cities that intrigue us. Our oldest daughter Denise, turned 50 this year and we gave her a trip to Holland where we will spend two weeks with her roaming around France and of course, Holland, sharing some of the places with her where we grew up, visiting relatives and shopping. It is now 63 years ago that I left Holland as a single person, to find a (Dutch) wife in Canada and I think this is the last time I will go there. Sure, it is the place where you spend the first 24 years of your life, but in 53 years the country has changed, a couple new generations have grown up there and in many ways it now feels more like any other foreign country, except it looks vaguely familiar and you know the language

Six weeks is a long time in today's stock markets. So I reduced my stock holdings and now have lots of cash that will allow me to get back into the market, most likely in the fall which tends to be a good buying time. I have shares in RIM (Research In Motion) which recently dropped (again) but I feel that the market over reacted and bought some more. We will see what we see when we get back. These are strange times and anything is possible. Happily today we check our bank and access our e-mail from any computer while abroad. It can be a friend's or an “Internet Café” but we can do our banking, pay our bills as if we are at home. We can access our bank account for cash at most ATMs and usually you are greeted and guided in English as the system recognizes your Canadian debit or credit card. So different from the days when we bought travellers cheques and carried cash. I wish you all a splendid summer. 🐱

New Editors

Joy Ruffeski (ruffeski@telus.net) and Vivian Rygnestad (vrygnestad@gmail.com)

Comments, feedback, contributions and suggestions are welcome!

BCRPVPA Bulletin Board

Sign-up Deadline for Blue Cross EHC
Sept 30, 2011

Meeting dates for 2011/2012:

Tues. Oct. 25, 2011, BCRPVA Office
Wed. Jan. 18, 2012, Guildford Golf Course - Surrey
Tues. Mar. 6, 2012, BCRPVA Office
Wed. May 9, 2012, BCRPVA Office (AGM)

Newsletter Deadlines:

Sept. 15, 2011 Mar. 1, 2012
Nov. 12, 2011 May 14, 2012

Medoc Travel Insurance News

Johnston Inc has just announced the following Medoc revisions:

- a 2% rate decrease
- the option of a 17-day Annual Base Plan on multiple trips in one policy year.
- for more info go to www.johnson.ca

JUST KIDDING



Speakers

Know of good speaker or presentation that would interest members at a general meeting? Let Lucy and Ron know – rcbain@telus.net or call 604-270-9663

Editorial - A Last Hurrah

Sometimes you just know it is time for change; time to get out of the way; time to do something else. So, this is our last edition as the C & C editors. The last 2 plus years has been interesting, challenging, exciting, frustrating, and satisfying, sometimes all at the same time. Often it was feast or famine; scrambling to find enough “stuff” to make the deadline, while at other times deciding what to cut or what could wait. We hope we provided you with a newsletter that was useful, interesting and entertaining. Our *Chronicles and Capers* would not have been possible without the contributions of past editor Ann who established *C & C*, the risk taking colleagues who contributed articles and stories, sometimes after a little arm twisting, the columnists, the presidents, the photographers, and the mail crew. We owe a big thanks to Richard Williams for his guidance, assistance and especially his patience as he steered us through the twists and turns of Adobe Creative Suite 4. We have appreciated our readers’ suggestions, support and kind words. It has been a hoot and we have been privileged! *C & C* is in good hands with new editors and our best wishes to them. Thanks again. Enjoy a great summer! 🌞

Nick Parker-Jervis
Gord Wallington