



# CHRONICLES & CAPERS

BC Retired Principals' &  
Vice-Principals' Association

Issue 45 • September 2010

## Musings from the President by Rick Ashe



*May the road  
rise up to  
meet you,  
may the wind be ever  
at your back.* Just  
having returned from  
Ireland, it seemed fit-  
ting to begin my first  
newsletter article of  
the year with this  
Irish blessing!

To those of you who  
retired this year, con-  
gratulations on a well

deserved reward for hard work and dedication over your career. I am a relative newcomer to retirement, just entering my fifth year. I have the good fortune of learning from those who have more practice.

It's funny where life takes you and I felt somewhat like a high school grad upon retirement. The world was in front of me, the choices were mine to make. The exception being that this time I had some money and I did not have to wonder what I would do in my life.

The BCRPVPA is a group of seasoned people. Though we no longer take part in the daily business of schooling, we have great empathy and respect for those that do. We are able to join our working colleagues for meetings such as chapter council and scholarship presentations. Respect between the two groups is immediately obvious. Though our paths head in slightly different directions, we share common themes such as pensions, investment finances, elder care, estates, travel, down-

sizing, grand parenting, post career work and so on. Help and support from our provincial office is greatly appreciated. The cost to join our association is kept to a minimum in order to pay for services such as a first class newsletter providing both informal and formal topics. Currently at fifteen dollars a year, it may need a minor adjustment in the next year or two. Networking among members can provide opportunities for contract work, teaching overseas and other types of work outside of education.

For many people retirement is a transition that is not always easy. We hope that knowing a growing number of us are out there can provide some assurance and excitement at this new stage. Who would have ever thought the "walk about" could also occur after retirement! The retirement journey can be fulfilling whether you are just beginning or have been at it for some time. Life will continue to present us with opportunities and challenges; however we have the gift of time to reflect, adjust and deal with each. We hope that retirement will come easy to you.

My thanks to other members of our executive for the work they do. Information online is currently available through [www.bcpvpa.bc.ca](http://www.bcpvpa.bc.ca) and click on Retired PVPA link midway down the left hand side. If you are still interested in the member only area, generic access remains as it was prior to your retirement.

Have a good year. Please attend a meeting if you are able. And please consider contributing to our newsletter from your part of the world. As always any feedback or suggestions are welcome. 

## South America Tour Without a Group by Chris Harker



**T**he trouble with package tours is that although they take you to most of the places you want to see, they often also take you to places that are of little interest to you or alternatively, omit places that you really want to visit. Organized tours tend also to be terribly programmed, with little down time or op-

portunity for exploration and spontaneity. My wife, Catriona, and I faced these issues when we determined to visit Peru and Bolivia a couple of years ago.

Then, by great good fortune, we stumbled upon Rick, an Australian who, with his wife Wendy, lived in western South America for many years and now organize tours for their countrymen and, more to the point, arrange customized tours for individuals who have specific destinations in mind.

I entered into an email dialogue with Rick outlining what I had in mind. He wrote back, suggesting I was spending too long in certain locations, not enough in others, recommending one or two places to see that we had never considered and suggesting a totally unprogrammed day here and there to use as we wished. Once we had a rough itinerary mapped out, he then wanted to know how we'd like to travel between destinations and what standard of accommodation we wanted. In short order Rick responded with a detailed itinerary that appeared to dot all the "i's", cross all the "t's" and at a price per person that was substantially lower than any



organized tour we had seen.

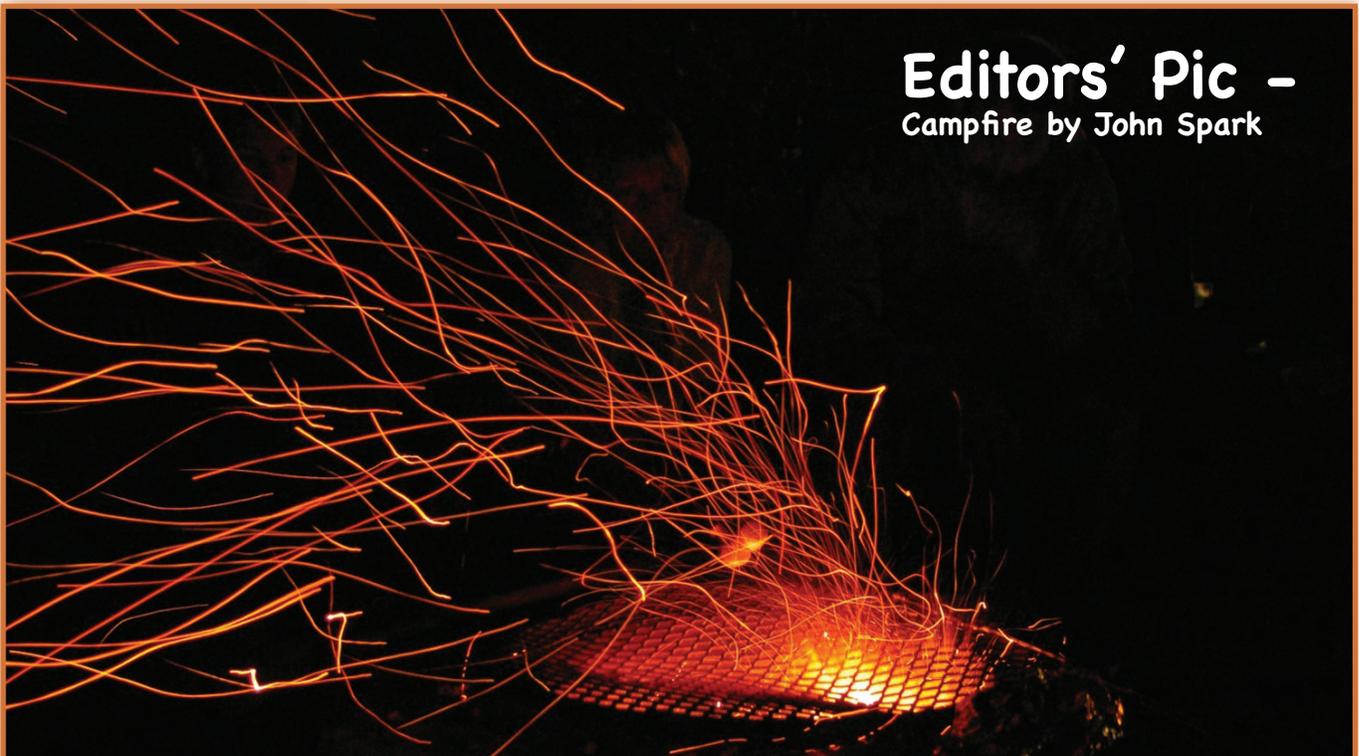
Trusting that we were not about to be victims of internet fraud, my wife, daughter and I sent off the money and got on a plane to Lima. From the moment we arrived, everything worked like clockwork. At every location we were met by an English speaking guide together with a car and driver. We were escorted to our hotel, checked in and then had explained to us what tours and meals were included for the next few days, what times we had to be ready and what free time was at our disposal. For meals that were on our own, restaurants were recommended. Tours were sometimes just for us while on other occasions, we were imbedded into other larger groups. Any extra fees we had to pay had been explained before we left so there were no unpleasant surprises. In fact, the opposite occurred for often we were given visitor tickets that provided us with entrance to museums, cathedrals and other places of interest without charge. On one occasion, our delightful tour guide travelled with us for several days.

After a couple of days in Lima, our tour took us by bus to Nasca where we flew over the mysterious creatures etched in the desert floor below. Then again by bus, to Arequipa where we side-tripped over a 16,000 ft pass to the Colca Canyon to observe the soaring condors. We flew onwards to Cuzco and enjoyed a few days in the city before bussing up the valley to visit a number of intriguing Incan ruins. A train took us further to Agua

Caliente, jumping off town for the can't-be-missed site of awesome Machu Pichu. We bussed again to Puna on the shores of Lake Titicaca and soon thereafter by boat, visited the floating communities of the Uros and later spent a night as homestay guests on an island in the middle of this high altitude lake. Another bus ride around the lake brought us to Copacabana, just inside Bolivia and close to Isla del Sol, supposed birthplace of the progenitor of the Incas. It was on this bus ride that I sat next to a tourist from New Zealand who was doing much the same trip as we were, taking five days less and spending about \$1000 more. The final leg was on to La Paz, capital of Bolivia. There, at 12,000 feet, we spent our last five days before flying back to Lima to catch our homeward flight.

The trip was glitchless, the accommodation more than adequate, the transportation arrangements faultless as were the numerous tours. We all found the food excellent and affordable though my daughter was not too keen on roasted guinea pigs or llama steaks. Nor did we have problems with the beer and wine though one had to be cautious not to overdo it at high altitudes as the headaches this provoked were horrendous.

In short, we had a superb trip and would highly recommend Rick as a tour organizer. He can be contacted at [rickandwendy@intitour.com](mailto:rickandwendy@intitour.com) at or visit [www.Intitour.com](http://www.Intitour.com) Chris Harker is available for questions at [chriscat@pacificcoast.net](mailto:chriscat@pacificcoast.net) 🐾



**Editors' Pic -**  
Campfire by John Spark

## Paris Will Make You Sing by Graham Mulligan

Paris will make you sing, or at least hum as you come up out of the *métro* into the daylight of a busy boulevard and into the daily life of ordinary Parisians. This is the city of love and light and revolution, filled with history, art, busy markets and lazy bistros. So much to do!

A friend and former colleague owns an apartment in the city, well a bachelor suite more like, let's call it a studio, in fact let's call it by its name "Studio *Gaité*". My wife and I stayed there for a week in April and enjoyed immersing ourselves in the ambience of our little corner of *Montparnasse*, picking our way through small streets and large, looking for groceries or entertainment, enjoying the fiction of living as a native Parisian. It's not hard to pretend, as there are so many people from elsewhere living in Paris. And to reinforce the fiction, we had an apartment, not a hotel room!

Parisians don't start their day too early if they can help it. *Le Tournesol* (sunflower) *café bistro* on the corner serves a lush *petit déjeuner* but not too early. We learned to satisfy our early morning hunger with fresh fruit bought at a market before making our first *sortie* of the day. Neighbourhood markets actually became our favourite lunch and dinner food source, provided we could find a market on any given day. Lucky for us there was one of the best street markets right near our studio digs and it sets up *samedi et mercredi*. We had *lundi* covered with another great market at *Place d'Italie*.

Pam has furnished the studio with useful items for visitors, like a journal so you can read what others have enjoyed during their stay. There were guidebooks and videos and internet, so we could do some research while enjoying a glass of sauterne with some gooey goat cheese on crackers. We watched *La vie en rose*, the story of Edith Piaf, the great songstress of the '40's and '50's and visited Belleville market the following day, where this diva lived her impoverished early life. There is a legend that she was born on the pavement of *Rue de Belleville 72*. We walked through the crypt of the *Panthéon* seeking out the tombs of great literary giants like Rousseau, Voltaire, Hugo, Zola or the scientists Marie and Pierre Curie or the teacher Louis Braille.

You may have visited the Vancouver Art Gallery exhibition of Impressionist works by Degas, Manet, Gauguin and Toulouse-Lautrec. We wanted to see the home of this collection, the *Musée d'Orsay* itself. Originally a

train station beside the River Seine noted for its' architecture, it was converted to a museum in 1977. There are many small and large museums and galleries in Paris satisfying anyone's artistic tastes. We visited Montmartre in search of more artistic ambience but found a circus atmosphere of tourist kitsch instead.

A more successful tourist oriented trip was to the two towers of Paris, *Eiffel* and *Montparnasse*. Monsieur Eiffel's grand structure is best visited early in the day. In fact, line up before it opens if you want to beat the tour groups that all make an obligatory stop. The *Montparnasse* tower is less crowded and enclosed but provides an equally dramatic vista of this mostly level city. The *Montparnasse* cemetery is worth a visit too, with such notables as Jean Paul Sartre entombed there. You notice the hundreds of *métro* tickets left on his grave-stone by admiring fans.

When contemplating a visit to Paris it is wise to do a bit of homework beforehand. You'll need a map of the *métro* and look into buying the Navigo pass or Paris Visite. If you are a photographer you will enjoy better cityscapes in the spring before the tree foliage obscures the views of the buildings from the sidewalk. What about the language? Old stories about stuck-up Parisians are just that, old stories. I found Paris full of friendly people and English is not frowned upon. Nevertheless, if you can take a conversation class before you go, do it. It will reward you. Prepare for the time of your life. Enjoy! 🍷



## Finances Don't Retire by Vince Devries

Given current economic conditions, chances are that interest rates will continue to be at the low end of the scale. This is good news for our kids who have mortgages, but what about us retired folks who want to earn some interest on our savings. The cost of our day to day needs seems to be going up (inflation), even though economists warn about the possibility of deflation. To combat low interest returns, people who normally invest in Guaranteed Investment Certificates (insured up to \$100,000 for each Canadian institution where you buy them) are now looking at bonds and the stock market as a way to improve their returns. At the best of time, investing in bonds and stocks, either directly or through a fund, takes some education. As you no doubt have found out, leaving it to a “professional” does not guarantee you a reasonable return, on the contrary.

Today, the stock market is even more unpredictable since we are dealing with so many new and untested products, sovereign deficits and looming investment losses, all of them spread over an ever increasing global area. This will help to explain why the market can be up many points one day and down those points plus some, the next day. Everybody reacts to the latest bit of news and we have a lot of day traders as well. Buy one day, sell a few days later.

Almost 10% of US citizens are unemployed and their employment insurance is running out. There is no clear indication as to where these 10% will find a job, leading one noted economist to predict the same bread lines that our parents saw in the 1930's. But others are more optimistic. However, it pays to be prudent in such an economy. Stick with investing in GICs as I outlined in my May article. Better to earn 1% than to lose 10% or more.

Nevertheless there are people like me who want to be in charge of our own investments and try and make a somewhat better return. Thanks to the Internet and on-line-banking we can now do a better job than almost all investment advisers. First of all, you have three major advantages over an adviser: time, a keen interest in your own welfare and no hefty fees reducing returns. You also have access to the same research and other information. And what is more, you can do your

own investing through a self-directed low cost brokerage account, even when you want to stick mostly to your trusted GICs. Having access to the whole of the Canadian GIC market, your returns can improve by ½% to 2%. But you now can also dip your toes in the stock or bond market. Buying a GIC is very simple, buying a bond or stock (one or more shares in a company or units in a fund) is equally simple, if you know which one to buy.

This is where a little education and research come in. Back in 1998 I asked the Royal Bank about this service and they were most helpful in explaining it and setting me up. The Royal Bank's investing services have earned high marks but most banks offer similar services. Go to [www.rbcroyalbank.com](http://www.rbcroyalbank.com) to get an idea. Today the bank offers its on-line-banking customers a Practice Account to learn on. They give you \$100,000 worth of play money and you can now operate a self-directed brokerage account and learn how to buy and cash in or sell, GICs, Bonds, Mutual Funds and Exchange Traded Funds (ETFs), including funds that trade on foreign exchanges; all that without risking a dime. When you get serious about this, inquire about trading commissions, annual fees, and the like.

Next to GICs, I use ETFs a lot. Teach yourself about ETFs by going to [www.tmxmoney.com](http://www.tmxmoney.com) and click on *Sectors and ETFs* to learn about this type of fund. Started as simple passive market-sector funds they now include many other types (at higher fees). Ignore those and stick to the Passive Sector Funds till such time you have some experience. So besides investing in GIC's, with ETF's you may try to put some money in the Canadian Energy Sector or the Financial Sector or whatever sector you think will do well in the foreseeable future.

If you are not banking on-line, consider it, it is just as safe and it allows Corine and I instant access to our accounts and investments when we open the computer in the morning, transfer funds to the accounts of our children and grandchildren, pay our bills and so on. More about Mutual Funds ETFs and Bonds next time. 🐾

### Book Review

Looking for a quick, fun read? Consider “Busted Flush” by Canadian Brad Smith. Set in present day Gettysburg, Smith creates eccentric and diverse characters while weaving history, intrigue, romance and humour into a delightful tale that has you smiling as you head to a quirky climax. “Give-re a go”!

GW

# BCRPVPA Bulletin Board

## Sunshine Needed?

Lucy Bain writes - As this year's sunshine "committee", I would be very grateful for any information about any of our members who could use a little "sunshine" on those rainy days. I think we all want to belong to an association that cares and I would be happy to take action on your behalf to show that we do. If you know of a member who is combating illness, family loss, or any such storm in their life that could use a little calm, please pass this on to me. My phone number is 604-270-9663 and e-mail is [rcbain@telus.net](mailto:rcbain@telus.net) Thank you.

## Dates to Note

### 2010/11 Meeting Dates

Tues. Oct. 26<sup>th</sup> BCPVPA Office

Social 9:45 meeting 10:15

Guest speaker: Kim Mailey, The Mailey Rogers Group (Scotia McLeod)

### Focus on Strategies for Today's Market, Multi-managed Funds

Wed. Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> Surrey Guilford Golf Course

Tues. Mar. 8 BCPVPA office

Wed. May 11 BCPVPA Office AGM

### 2010/11 Newsletter Dates

Contributors to our newsletter please note the following dates

Submission deadlines	Mail out
Nov 12	Dec 3
March 1	March 15
May 14	June 4

We look forward to your articles, pictures, comments, letters and ideas. **We need you!**

## Membership Hits 500!

A special welcome to 11 newly retired colleagues who have joined our group bringing our membership to 503.

## BCPVPA is asking for Volunteers

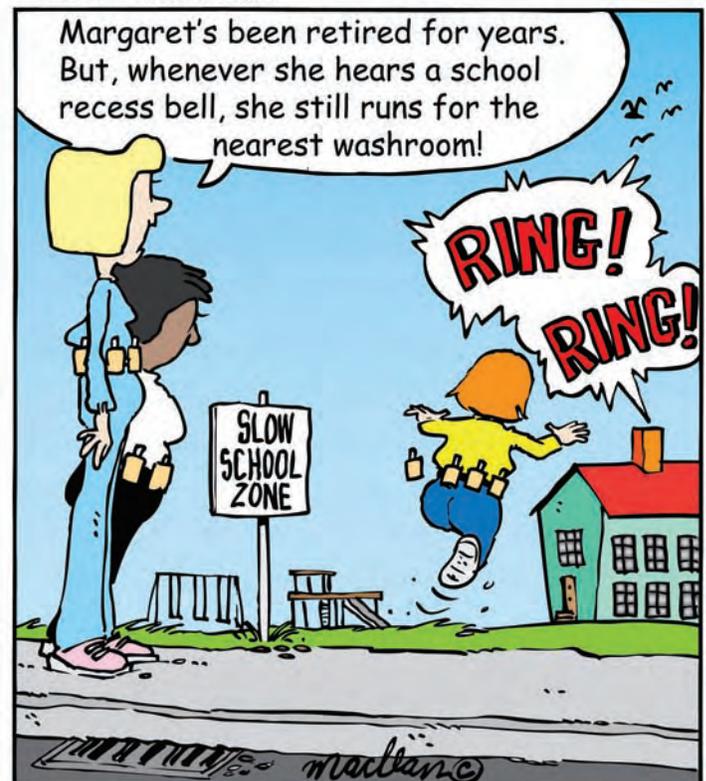
The Connecting Leaders Conference sponsored by the BCPVPA is being held at the Sheraton Vancouver Airport Hotel on Oct 20-23. They have asked for some volunteer assistance. Tasks may include: setting up rooms for presenters, preparing delegate bags, assisting with registration and directing people into the sessions.

During the conference, volunteers receive breakfast on Oct. 22nd and 23<sup>rd</sup> and lunch on the 22nd. There is no formal evening dinner or lunch on the 23rd as the conference ends at noon. For more information Contact Kim, [kim@bcvpva.bc.ca](mailto:kim@bcvpva.bc.ca) or call 604-689-3399/1-800-663-0432. Consider volunteering for all or part of the conference. Sounds like fun!

## Travel Deals on the E Bulletin!

Do we have your current email address? Have you received the latest E Bulletin from President Rick? In the latest E Bulletin you will discover how BCRPVPA members can access an up to twenty percent discount on land costs on four Collette Vacation tours. For more information contact Graham Leask at [gsl1@uniserve.com](mailto:gsl1@uniserve.com). If you haven't received the latest E Bulletin, get on the email list by contacting Millie at [millie@bcvpva.bc.ca](mailto:millie@bcvpva.bc.ca).

## JUST KIDDING



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We welcome your feedback, suggestions and ideas.