

# Elderberries

*The Newsletter of the*

*Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers & Partners Association*

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2000-2001

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Material for publication should be sent to Ed Lane (address at the left of this page).

Address changes should be sent to Larry Hamby, 487 Cedar Walk, St. Simons Island, GA 31522.

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Your new Executive Board has been elected and is listed on the left side of this page with telephone numbers, snail mail addresses, and (when available) e-mail addresses.

## From Your President . . . . Things Change

**I**t has been several years since I've had to deliver up a column for the newsletter. They used to come every week and sometimes I enjoyed it. Retirement is good because I am forced to live in a different way. I have to live out of my own center and do only what I want to do.

I did not think I could give up being at the warm, glowing center of a church, guest of honor at the coffee hour after I'd delivered my latest version of the truth. It has been easier than I thought and I have come to like it. I realized I'd been living on "alert" for nearly forty years. I might have pressed on to yet another interim, maybe a small church settlement, or started another new congregation. Wisely I stopped. I still find it hard to write "retired" on forms or say the words when asked what I do.

I find that my wife and I enjoy each other's company and sharing the same house and bed without a church in the midst of it. Ministry, for me, was a tough, emotionally and physically demanding business. It was perhaps different for you. I do think of those still hard at work in churches ministering to the needs of some of the grandest people on the planet.

Alexander "Scotty" Meek and Dorothy Meek are heading down to Auckland, New Zealand where he'll be serving the church. UURMAPA will miss them. Because Scotty is leaving I ~~came to be offered the chance to be president. I don't expect I can fill his shoes but we all know that everybody has a successor.~~

So I am glad to take up the leadership of UURMAPA with the great debate about the name behind us. (RUUMPS was considered). UURMAPA has as its mission "to enhance the well-being of retired Unitarian Universalist ministers, ministers of religious education, their life partners and surviving life partners, and to provide such programs and activities as may be feasible for their benefit." This is a tall order but your board takes it seriously. We work with the UUMA, the Department of Ministry, and other groups to this end.

I want to urge members to participate in one of the Regional Conferences. The programs are thoughtful and interesting, the places of meeting extremely nice, and you will get a chance to be with your colleagues and their partners. My wife Sandra and I felt like it was the first time we attended a UU affair where we could be a couple—equal. It felt like we belonged. It is good to be with people like yourself who have served the churches of our association. As you know from years of church leadership those who participate get more out of organization. So be a part of UURMAPA.

Our next Executive Board meeting will be October 2-4 at the Midwest Conference. It will be my first meeting. Please let the members of the board or me know about people who may be in need or issues that you think should be addressed.

*Ed Harris*

## From the Editor

**B**ecoming the editor of *Elderberries* is a coming full cycle for me. I began my ministry in 1955 as managing editor of *Church Management* (now *The Clergy Journal*), a ministers' journal of church architecture and business administration.

I expected to spend my life in a ministry of journalism and had no expectation of becoming a parish minister. However, when it became known that I was to become senior editor of *Church Management*, all hell broke loose because I was a Unitarian and it became clear that many Protestant clergy would cancel their subscriptions if that happened. So I wound up in parish ministry by default and spent forty happy years there.

A love affair with the printed word has continued throughout my ministry as chair of the editorial board of *The Christian Register* (later with merger *The Register-Leader*, and now *The World*), and also a member of the board of Beacon Press for ten years—chair for the last two.

So I anticipate with some relish a return to journalism in my retirement and hope we will provide good communications among the members of UURMAPA and that we will have fun in the process. In the words of T.S. Eliot in *Little Gidding*:

What we call the beginning is often the end  
And to make an end is to make a beginning.  
The end is where we start from. ...  
We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time.

This is your newsletter. It will contain vital information about activities, concerns, and needs of our retired ministries. It is also a place to share our joys and sorrows, the excitements and frustrations of being a retired minister or partner. Tell me what you are doing that is fun and rewarding. Also tell me of the things in your life that are tough. As space permits I'd like to share your stories with your colleagues. Letters to the editor are welcome. Tell me what you like and dislike about *Elderberries*—what you'd like to see that isn't there and what is there that you think is a waste of space. The front page lists my snail mail and e-mail addresses as well as my phone number. Let me hear from you.

Finally, a word of appreciation to my predecessor, Larry Hamby who has been your editor for the past four years and assistant to Bucky McKeeman for two years before that. He has promised to continue an occasional "Old Geezer" column for your pleasure and enlightenment.

*Ed Lane*

# Regional Conferences . . . . . You are welcome at any or all of them!

## ***Mid-Continent - October 3-4***

A very special event this year! Our Mid-Continent Conference will be held in conjunction with the Nobel Conference on the campus of Gustavus Adolphus College in St. Peter, Minnesota on October 3-4. The topic of this highly-regarded Conference is: "Globalization: Economic Prospects and Challenges." Lectures, discussions, and musical events are led by Nobel recipients.

Arrangements for our group have been made at the Best Western Motel in North Mankato for housing, eating, and holding meetings. It's about twelve miles south of St. Peter on Route 169.

The cost is only \$20 registration plus \$6.00 each for two box luncheons. Rooms at the Best Western for two nights are \$120 for either one or two persons. If you fly into Minneapolis on October 2 and rent a car you should leave the airport by 4:00 PM to arrive at the Best Western (about 70 miles south of Minneapolis) in time for happy hour and dinner.

**A Problem:** The deadline for motel reservations is August 1, And this issue of *Elderberries* will be mailed on August 4. If you want to attend phone John or Dru Cummings immediately (612) 922-2477 and they may be able to get you in.

## ***Pan South - April 5-8, 2001***

"Celebrate Appalachian Spring" is the theme of the Pan South UURMAPA conference in Ashville, North Carolina from April 5-8, 2001. Monroe Gilmour, a leading civil rights lawyer in Ashville is a featured speaker. The program is still being put together—watch for additional details in future issues of *Elderberries*. Great motel rate at Best Western is \$49 per couple per night. For more information contact Ann & Bob MacPherson, P.O. Box 9573, Ashville, NC 28815-0573—(828) 298-5085.

## ***Northeast - October 3-5***

The Northeast Conference will be held October 3-4-5, 2000, at the LaSalette Center, Attleboro, Massachusetts and offer a rich potpourri in its program. UUA candidates for President and Financial Advisor will be present to discuss their candidacies. Nick Cardell will speak about his ordeal with the School of the Americas. Alan Deale will present his *Odyssey*. Roger Duncan, an author, aducator, and sailor will speak.

Northeast members will soon receive details.and registration information. Others can contact registrar Iska Cole at Forty Oaks, 36 Clifford Road, Edgecomb, ME 04556; [iskadave@clinic.net](mailto:iskadave@clinic.net); (207) 882-5034.

# In Memoriam

*Note that sometimes word of a member's death does not always reach the UUA or UURMAPA very quickly and therefore some deaths are reported long after the fact. When there is a surviving partner we give addresses whenever possible. We urge members to let us know any time you learn of another member's death.*

—The Editor

*The Reverend D. Roen Repp* died November 3, 1999 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia  
Surviving Partner: Jane Schuler-Repp, UNFPA/CST, P.O. Box 8714, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia,  
jsreep@telecom.net.et

*Ilse Bragg* died December 30, 1999 Deceased Partner: Raymond Bragg

*Francis Chatterton*—we and the UUA have learned of her death but have no other information.

*The Reverend Dr. Floyd H. Ross* died July 1, 1998  
Surviving Partner: Kashihi Ross, 52044 Parkfield Lane, La Verne, CA 91750

*Leila Thompson* died May 22, 2000 Deceased Partner: The Reverend Donald A. Thompson

*Corinne S. Kreves* died May 24, 2000  
Surviving Partner: The Reverend Eugene W. Kreves, 450 Old Highway 25, Thumbling Shoals,  
AR 72581-9367

*Isabel C. Argow* died May 25, 2000. Deceased Partner: The Reverend Waldemar W. Argow

*William E. Gardner* died June 18, 2000  
Surviving Partner: Priscilla Wright Gardner, 77 Sailfish Drive, East Falmouth, MA 02536

*Byrd W. Helligas* died July 3, 2000  
Surviving Partner: Phyllis Helligas, 1044 16th Street, Arcata, CA 95521-5514

I share with you the agony of your grief,  
The anguish of your heart finds echo in my own.  
I know I cannot enter all you feel  
Nor bear with you the burden of your pain;  
I can but offer what my love does give:  
The strength of caring,  
The warmth of those who seek to understand  
The silent storm-swept barrenness of so great a loss.  
This I do in quiet ways,  
That on your lonely path  
You may not walk alone

—Howard Thurman

# I Laughed All the Way Home From the Church

**W**e seem to have a dearth of material for this issue. I have collected and edited—and hope to publish some day—a collection of funny stories from our colleagues about things that have happened in our churches and ministries. These are not jokes; they are true stories—well, allowing for the ministerial penchant to embellish the truth with a little color. I'm using some of those stories as filler material in this issue.

If you have stories from your ministry that you would like to submit, send them on to me. They may find their way into *Elderberries* and, who knows, perhaps even into the book which is illustrated by retired *New Yorker* cartoonist, Tom Funk.

**I** was marrying a young couple in front of the fireplace in the Fireside Room of the Main Line Church in Devon, Pennsylvania. They had chosen to include the wine cup ceremony, "UUized" from the Jewish tradition and were most certainly going to smash the glass at the end. I gave them instructions to bring a glass they didn't mind breaking, a napkin, and a bottle of red wine. After the bride and groom had shared the wine I wrapped the glass in the napkin and put it on the floor for the groom to crush. The rather macho groom gave it a solid blow, but instead of the delightful smash and a triumphal embrace, the glass went skidding across the floor. I retrieved it, rewrapped it in the napkin, and put it down again. This time, his whole self image at stake, he really smacked it. It shot off again, whole and mocking, all the way to the wall. I scurried after it, firmly repressing a snicker and searching for a solution that would restore something of his masculine pride. He solved the problem by grabbing the dime store goblet and hurling it, Nolan Ryan speed, at the fireplace. It struck home and disintegrated sparkingly. There was an audible gasp as everyone breathed again and a round of applause ended the ceremony.

I don't know what lesson the groom learned. I learned not to encourage couples to buy a cheap wine glass.

—*W Bradford Greeley*

**D**uring Pennsylvania elections one year I scheduled a series of guest pulpit editorials by the local candidates for the State Legislature. Most spoke for about ten minutes and then answered questions from the congregation.

One of the candidates brought a sheaf of papers up to the pulpit from which to read or refer during his remarks. At the end of his remarks he apologized for the fact that another commitment made it impossible for him to remain for the rest of the service, scooped up his papers, and left. He was pulling out of the parking lot when I stepped into the pulpit to discover that along with his papers my sermon manuscript was on its way to his next speaking date!

—*Jeffrey Selth*

**T**he tradition of the deceased's ethnic background was that the wake was the main event, followed by no other service except the interment, over which I was asked to preside. When I arrived at the home the wake was going full blast, with alcohol flowing freely. The deceased had been in the military and the honor guard arrived at about the same time as I did. The canvas covered truck with the riflemen inside backed up to a window of the house and bottles of booze were passed out through the window. Some time elapsed, and by the time we left for the interment the honor guard was quite looped.

Everything at the graveside service went according to plan until the very end. The funeral director had released the mechanism on the lowering device and the casket was slowly descending into the grave as I was reading the closing words of the service.

Suddenly, from behind me, the honor guard began firing its volleys. Picture, if you will, the traditional crisp formation of the honor guard lined up in a row, rifles pointed skyward, firing in unison when the Sergeant barks his commands to "Fire!" Now picture just the opposite—which is what was happening. The guns were firing at random, both in frequency and direction.

I had not previously known that a blank cartridge has considerable force at close range, but learned this by direct experience when the impact from one of the shots caught me in the back and sent me sprawling across the slowly descending casket. I poked my head up from the grave into the midst of chaos. Family and friends of the deceased were protecting themselves as best they could, ducking behind tombstones and trees as the honor guard continued its erratic firing. Finally the shooting stopped—quite possibly they ran out of ammunition—and calm once again prevailed. In stunned silence, we regathered and walked, still silently, to our cars.

—*Anders Lunde*

(Anders related this incident at a ministers' retreat around 1960. I believe my recollection of the details is correct. Editor)

**O**ur co-minister and I were attending the board meeting of the church women's group. It was his turn to say something and he was, apparently, in a feisty mood. It was the day after the annual meeting and he was disturbed by the fact that those present were mostly the older members of the church. He brought the issue up to the women's group board as a complaint about the number of "gray heads" at the annual meeting. He wanted to know what could be done to correct this imbalance.

One of the "gray heads" present had a suggestion to offer. "I'll do something to help out," she said. "I'll stay home next year."

—*Robert S. Slater*

**L**ong used to being mistaken for the Unity movement or the Unification Church, I was still struck by the phone call I received asking, "Is this the Uranium Church?"

—*Peter Raible*

## A note from Iska:

Dear Friends:

It has been an exciting and interesting adventure to be the Treasurer of UURMAPA and as I relinquish the responsibility to Fred Campbell and transfer funds of over \$20,000.00 (careful investing paid off), the quirk in my heart is the loss of the many lovely notes I received from many of you. My very best wishes to you all.

*Iska*

P.S. Please send your contributions to Fred Campbell.the new Treasurer

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### Eye Halve a Spelling Chequer

Eye halve a spelling chequer.  
It came with my pea sea.  
It plainly marques four my revue  
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word  
And weight four it two say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write,  
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid  
It nose bee fore two long  
And eye can put the error rite,  
It's rarely ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it.  
I am shore your please two no  
It's letter perfect in it's weigh,  
My chequer tolled me sew.

—Sauce Unknown

Unitarian Universalist Retired  
Ministers and Partners Association  
c/o L. M. Hamby  
487 Cedar Walk  
St. Simons Island, GA 31522



Forwarding and Address Correction Requested