

UU ELDER BERRIES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE U.U. RETIRED MINISTERS ASSOCIATION

Volume II #3
Albert Q. Perry, Editor

P.O. Box 89

Spring, 1987
Plymouth, Maine 04969

"IT'S A WISE OLD OWL WHO DOESN'T GIVE A HOOT"
Quoted with permission from the author - Lil Phillips

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1985-87

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One of the very pleasant programs at the Eastham Convocation last fall was an evening of light poetry read by the author, Lil Phillips - a member of our Brewster Church. We intended to include a taste of this in our account of that gathering, but space was limited. However, her poem on retirement is suitable for this newsletter at any time. Among a great many other things, this poem reads:

There's considerable variance
among septugenarians.
Many think it would be keen
to revert to being sweet sixteen
but I was miserable then
and I'd hate to do it all again.

Life was hardly worth a row of beans
when I was in my wretched teens,
in school, I always went to pieces
when I had to write a thesis.
Thirty and forty were the pits
and fifty almost gave me fits.

I recollect my past and then
I'm glad to be three score and ten.
I haven't got much sex appeal
but at seventy that's no big deal
and it no longer seems to matter
that every day I'm getting fatter.

Now and then I start to smolder
at the thought of growing older
and at times I think I'd like to be
twenty-one or two or three.
But I hope no one calls my bluff.
Once around is quite enough.

TREASURER'S REPORT

September 16, 1987 to May 6, 1987

INCOME

Veatch Com. via UUA Grants Panel	\$5000.00
Council on Church Staff Finances	4000.00
U.U.M.A. Contributions	200.00
Contributions from Members	3785.00
Memorial Contributions given to honor John Christensen	792.00
Interest on Savings	335.74
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	\$14,112.74

EXPENDITURES

Board Meetings Expense	\$2343.05
Newsletter	856.92
Telephone, Postage, Etc.	788.83
Area Conferences	4909.17
Misc.	225.62
	<hr/>
	\$9123.59

We are still solvent but can not hope to subsidize any new and needed efforts without greater income. The decision made when we organized was the contributions would be voluntary, but for this to work, those who can, must.

The Board has ambitious plans to keep in touch with retired ministers, spouses and surviving spouses in various areas in the country, so that no one may feel forgotten or lack assistance in time of need, but even if this position in different Districts be assumed voluntarily, it would entail considerable costs for travel and telephone expense. Your check is your vote for more or less service to those who have served faithfully and well.

THANKS! THANKS!! THANKS!!!

In our previous issue we listed a considerable number of the names of Surviving Spouses for whom the UUA had no mailing address, and who were not receiving mailings or other services from the UUA or the UURMA. A number of people took our appeal for help seriously, notifying us and the UUA of changes of address, and of two who had recently died. We pause to express our affectionate sorrow at the passing of

Mrs. Marjorie Wolfe
Mrs. Irene Backus

We still request help in securing addresses of others of those whom we listed in our previous issue. Send information to the Dept. of the Ministry, UUA, 25 Beacon Street, Boston, MA. 02108, and if one has time, a notification to us that this has been done would be appreciated.

NOTICE

UURMA MEMBERS AT THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Watch the main bulletin boards early-on for announcements of the time and place for membership get-togethers.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

Our By-Laws call for an election of officers every two years, with an invitation to the membership to suggest names being sent out in February and a distribution of ballots in May. Because of an unfortunate delay in mailing our Winter ElderBerries, the time schedule was not kept, and it is possible that ballots will not be received in time to return them in May. (Incidentally, if we had more money and could afford to pay postage, we would not be quite as dependent upon the convenience of the Dept. of the Ministry.) Anyway, get your ballot back as promptly as possible.

REPORT OF THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE

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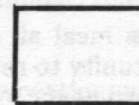
Nominating Committee: John W. Brigham, Quincy, Ill.
Joyce Huff, Fitchburg, Mass.
Robert T. Dick, Springfield, Vt.

Submitted by
John W. Brigham
Joyce Huff
Earle T. McKinney, Chairman

ELECTION BALLOT

To vote for the slate as presented, mark an X
in the box to the right:

Mail this ballot by June 15, 1987 to:
The Rev. Earle T. McKinney
P.O. Box 130
Gray, Maine 04039



SOUTH EAST AREA U.U.R.M. CONFERENCE

[Editor's Note: To make sure of having some story on this gathering that I could not cover, I asked two people for reports, hoping thereby to be sure of one; but I got both and could not choose between them. Therefore, despite some duplication, I am running both. Take your pick!]

By Betty Lawson

From January 26th to the 28th, 1987, twenty-one retired UU ministers and their wives found refreshment in a peaceful country setting on the banks of the Alafia River, only an hour's drive from hectic downtown Tampa. Eight came from Florida and the rest from as far away as Maine, Massachusetts, New York, Louisiana, North Carolina and Illinois. There was time for restoring walks along the winding river with ancient trees bending over with Spanish moss and for getting re-acquainted in the cool evening around a blazing fire.

Upon arrival, all were greeted by Don and Betty Lawson and presented with a packet and tree-ripened Mineola Tangeloes grown by a UU farmer. Comfortable rooms were assigned in Cedar Lodge where delicious meals were served and where all the meetings took place. Dr. J. Harold Hadley, President of the UU Retired Ministers Association, gave a beautiful and thoughtful presentation before our first dinner together which set the tone for what was to follow. Dr. William Schulz, President of the Unitarian Universalist Association, was the after dinner speaker on "Spirituality and UUism". His presentation was dynamic and thought-provoking, emphasizing the positive growth of the UUA. All wished that he could have been with us longer.

Tuesday morning dawned bright and sunny, another lovely day in Paradise! Dr. Rose S. Frank, a UU psychologist, age 65, spent the better part of a day conducting a workshop on "Some Retirement Challenges". There was much discussion and involved participation as we focused on enhancing a positive self-image, how to help our marriages survive retirement, and intimacy and sexuality in the later years. She encouraged us to slough off the constraints of tradition and to be innovative in our approach to love.

Tuesday evening we were joined by the Florida UU Ministers Association for the evening's entertainment. Rev. John DeWolf Hurt, minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church in Jacksonville, Florida, presented "Down the Road Backward", a monologue of humorous reminiscences. John has a delightful sense of humor which, coupled with his Alabama accent, had us laughing so hard that some of us were crying. Dr. John and Anna Louise Brigham ended the evening with a game hour.

We awoke to another perfect day in Florida on Wednesday. During breakfast, cards were signed and sent to those retired ministers and spouses who had let us know that they were unable to attend due to ill health. A.T. and Doris Brown, managers, and the Cedarkirk staff were recognized for their many efforts in helping to make our stay so enjoyable. A basketful of money was presented to them.

The Rev. Raymond Nasemann, Chairman of the Council on Church Staff Finances, addressed the group on "Seeking and Finding Security". This was followed by a meeting of the UU Retired Ministers Association, with President J. Harold Hadley presiding.

After another delicious meal all departed to go their various ways. We loved the beautiful atmosphere of Cedarkirk and the opportunity to renew acquaintances with some we had not seen for nearly fifty years, and to meet other fine folk we had never met before. It was a warm and friendly group of retirees, most of whom are as busy, or busier, than they ever were in parish ministry.

SOUTH EAST AREA U.U.R.M. CONFERENCE

By Dr. J. Harold Hadley

The first South East Area UURMA Convocation was held concurrently with the Annual Florida UUMA Mid-Winter Institute on January 26-28, 1987 at the Presbyterian Cedarkirk Conference Center, Lithia, Florida.

From the beginning Registration procedure to the concluding lunch and farewell, the smooth program detailing of the organizing team of Rev. Donald and Betty Lawson was everywhere in evidence. The mood of the gathering was enhanced by Betty's artistic sea shell nametags, the complete individual packets introducing both conference details and surrounding Florida sight-seeing high points, walks to the nearby river, together with beautiful gift items available for purchase, hand-embroidered, painted and crafted.

One of several joint UURMA and FUUMA sessions was the convocation address by UUA President Dr. William F. Schulz, speaking on the theme "Spirituality and UUism", emphasizing the need for experiencing the gracious in spirituality and the blessings of imperfection and compassion.

Two popular workshop sessions with the general topic, "Issues of Aging" were led by Dr. Rose B. Frank, psychologist who repeatedly encouraged a firm trust in individual intuition, when intuition is understood as "the sudden perception of unforeseen relationships". Hang on to your own experience, she urged, and above all "don't let anyone lay anything on you about retirement if it doesn't fit your own experience", and "do not become trapped in the schedules of the past." Dr. Frank's "Brag Session" technique proved to be a unique way of building self-confidence and necessary perspective for the elder person.

The UUA Medical Insurance Update by Rev. Raymond Nasemann of Syracuse, N.Y., Chairman of the UUA Council on Church Staff Finances, was a timely and enlightening presentation on the status of the Retired Minister's Medical Insurance dilemma following the transfer of the UUMA Medical Insurance program to the UUA. A lively discussion ensued on the various alternative solutions.

Two delightfully relaxing sessions included local UU Minister-Comedian John DeWolf Hurt, presenting his humorous reminiscences of his development from Youth to UU Minister in the deep South, entitled "Growing Up Backward". The second was an evening game hour led by Louise and John Brigham who shared a family game entitled "A Mississippi Fishing Expedition", a grab-bag guessing game shared enthusiastically by everyone present.

The Brighams had worked on the various items to be fished and traded for some time, and John delighted in the whimsey of the name of the game: "PHTHISHING XCURSHING" which engendered a good many laughs and good comraderie, as everyone took their chances.

A brief business session on the final morning before lunch and farewell, resulted in a unanimous vote to appoint Carl Westman of Lakeland, Florida, as chairman of a new committee to plan another South East Area Conference for next year. Also; a resolution was introduced and passed unanimously for presentation to the UURMA BOARD suggesting they seriously consider a by-law change "to establish a dues schedule adequate to cover the annual fiscal responsibility" of the UURMA as contrasted with the present bylaw "annual voluntary contribution" arrangement which is proving inadequate for our present needs.

In summary, the realistic albeit up-beat emphasis reiterated throughout the convocation was to the effect that while losses, especially in the retirement years, are inevitable and may lead to despair, "we can change gears" leading toward new identities, we CAN reprocess our losses and find opportunity. In savoring that process of "being and becoming" one will find new meaning - more accurately speaking "meaning will find you!" Believe in yourself! Share your unique self! Be in control!

"Still Sounds the Buoy From the Sea"

"Windows of the Wind"

By John W. Brigham

[Your Editor first became acquainted with Dr. Brigham sometime before 1920 when our parents took us to Ferry Beach where we played around in the Tent Circle and in the 'Grove' with the other children who were there. We became re-acquainted when I entered Tufts Theological School in the 30's and found my childhood friend in an advanced class. After his graduation there occurred a long break as our ministries took us to different parts of the country; and one of the joys of the first UURMA Convocation was the opportunity to renew such friendships. Probably I am not entirely neutral as I review two books by John Brigham, but I am all that you've got. - A.Q.P.]

The two books, "Still Sounds Buoy From the Sea" and "Windows of the Wind", are a kind of distillation of his life's creative work. They contain a wide variety of sermons, meditations, poetry and what John entitles 'musings'. The first sermon is one that he delivered in 1952, that I find most outstanding. Believing in the axiom: "All work and no plagarism makes Jack a dull preacher", I shall probably borrow the introductory stanza by Lowell which is almost perfect for this kind of exploration:

I believe in the poets: it is they
Who utter wisdom from the central deep,
And, listening to the inner flow of things,
Speak to the age out of eternity.

One of his own poems which must have special meaning for us older ones, deals with relationships which are "Generations Apart". Of these, John writes:

A question that knows no answer
Is that of heart and mind's intent
Facing the test of converging roads
That meet and march together
For only a little way.
How shall we know the ends are not the same?
That one runs out in shortened time
While the other runs a generation more.

I little understand nor care,
It is enough to have a share
Of seeing through young eyes
A wonder that is always fair
A wonder that is always there.

I particularly appreciated the Meditations in both volumes. Liberals do not always do well in this aspect of worship, but John's thoughts are as simple and related to the needs of the folk in his congregations as are the prayers of the more orthodox. A portion of one says:

I watch as you come up the winding walk and enter this room. I
listen as your voice joins with other voices and the sound rises
until that moment when it slowly subsides in the silence of this hour...

We know of our belonging in a community of life, a community of far
beginnings and unfathomed endings and we are grateful to be aware. So
let us be joyous with one another, - let us be sensitive to the life
that is within each one.

Continued on next page...

I am not sure whether John's 'Musings' were intended for distribution in a variety of church mailings or were just preserved in some kind of journal. In either case they are worth reading. On November 17, 1974, he reflects:

The great river flows along the curve of earth. The geese fly high above, perennial travelers of the season. We set our feet upon the earth, invoking an ancient but remembered covenant that to us is given dominion over all things of the earth and sky and sea...

We must accept the responsibility of that ancient covenant with its pointed urgency, for truly all life and living things depend on decisions we will make; we being the human family, the many peoples who are the nations of the world.

It might be noted that these books were made possible by a number of former parishoners who encouraged John to put these materials together in book form and underwrote the expense of the venture. They must have done so generously, as the volumes are very well done with numerous photographs and some interesting art work along with the text. Hopefully, other laity may be encouraged by this to do similarly, as the books are a source of inspiration to their readers and of satisfaction to any minister who probably feels that his best efforts quickly evaporate.

"PART-TIME MINISTRIES"

Word has been received from the Ministerial Settlement Office that there are opportunities for retired ministers to serve some of our smaller UU churches which can not hope to pay 'scale', but would be prepared to settle for a less than usual time and energy commitment. Some opportunities are available at the minimum recommended level which is now \$13,000 for a half-time ministry.

Two churches which would be interested in such a person might be Vineyard Haven in Massachusetts and Lakeland in Florida. The salaries are low but would make a reasonable supplement to one's retirement income. If interested in these or similar opportunities, write to Charles A. Gaines, Director, Ministerial Settlement Office, at 25 Beacon Street, Boston, Mass., and you will be put on the mailing list for Vacant Churches.

Another opportunity for some older men or women would be that of the Interim Ministry Program in which one serves a church for a specified period of time while it is seeking a new leader. Training for this specialized work is available.

DISTRICT ORGANIZATION INITIATED

Recognition that not all retired ministers and/or spouses can attend periodic convocations, the UURMA has begun to try to develop services on a more limited area basis. One of the first regional committees to explore possibilities of this kind is composed of Helen Dick, Peg Johnston and Jeanne Bletzer. They secured the assistance of Jack and Oressa Harmon of the Northeast District who have sent a mailing to all known retired folk to ask about feelings and wishes. The nature of what may develop is still very uncertain, but its importance must be recognized.

This spring, while avoiding 'mud season' by living in the parsonage of a tiny Unitarian Church, your editor became acquainted with the preacher for an equally small Congregational Church and found that he was employed by his denomination to visit all retired ministers in the area each year. I was envious!

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"To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven..."

Still, I expect that many of us older ones are occasionally unhappy about our times, the age in which we have lived or the stage of our lives. Personally, I am often envious of the kids I watch playing along the edge of our pond. I can not avoid thinking of all the things which they will probably see and do which were never available to me.

Quite possibly they will travel to other planets, even systems around other suns, and see forms of life beyond my imagining. I wonder if they will taste strange and exotic fruits or raise flowers never seen in my lifetime by earthly people... If not this, I can certainly envy the younger generation for their opportunities to travel and experiment and experience and learn. I went to college in the depths of the Depression, and if we could pay a minimal tuition and somehow eat, we thought that we were among the fortunate ones. Now, many of our colleges arrange for a year of study in Europe for all under-graduates; while many middle-class families are able to provide all sorts of vacation opportunities... More important is my hope and expectation that the next generation will see an end to war and racial prejudice and all sorts of stupid economic problems that we ought to have dealt with long ago. It should certainly be a good time to live after such things have finally been resolved.

However, I have other feelings as I watch my neighbor's kids in swimming. I suspect that not one of them will ever see an old-fashioned, horse-drawn, fire engine racing down the street... What can match the excitement and drama of a pair of black stallions galloping as fast as they could go, their iron shoes striking sparks on the cobblestones, the engine belching forth smoke and dropping red coals in its wake! In my boyhood, on any day when there had not been a fire, there would be an exercise run around a block or two at six o'clock, and we always ate an early supper and lined the streets to watch... I have also feared that few of our youngsters will ever have the thrill of being fishing on a pond or ocean bay and suddenly have a fish hawk drop out of the sky and into the water beside one, and then come up heavily with a fine fish in its talons. There are only a few Osprey that survive the effects of DDT, and most of these are carefully guarded from human influence and sight... I also doubt that many will have the probably naive, but satisfying, feeling that they played a part in the political process and made a real contribution toward getting someone elected. Campaigns are now so much a matter of money and television and poling and professional direction that there is little place for an ordinary person.

But let us have neither envy nor pity. Every time has its good and less desirable aspects. Every age and stage of life has its opportunities for fulfillment. The important thing is to avoid vain regrets and trying to live in memories or dreams, and to accept the present and make the most of it. That is what we are given, and it is enough if we will use it so.

A.Q.P.