

U U ELDER BERRIES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE U.U. RETIRED MINISTERS ASSOCIATION

Volume II #2
Albert Q. Perry, Editor

P.O. Box 89

Winter 1987
Plymouth, Maine 04969

EXECUTIVE BOARD 1985-87

PRESIDENT

Rev. J. Harold Hadley
35 Pomeroy Court
Amherst, Mass. 01002
Tel. 413/253-3143

VICE PRESIDENT

Rev. Robert H. Holmes
P.O. Box 83
Harrison, Maine 04040
Tel. 207/583-6102

SECRETARY

Rev. Walter D. Kring
P.O. Box 216
Brookfield, Mass. 01506
Tel. 617/867-3986

TREASURER

Rev. William E. Gardner
77 Sailfish Drive
East Falmouth, Mass. 02536
Tel. 617/540-3862

NEWSLETTER EDITOR

Rev. Albert Q. Perry
P.O. Box 89
Plymouth, Maine 04969
Tel. 207/257-2804

BOARD MEMBERS

Carolyn C. Howlett
R.R. 1, Box 13
Center Lovell, Maine 04016
Tel. 207/925-6694

Margaret H. Johnston
"The Hills"
West Newbury, Vermont 05085
Tel. 802/429-2412

Rev. Horace F. Westwood
169 North Walnut Street
Fairhaven, Mass. 02719
Tel. 617/992-9201

AN "ELDERBERRY" IN NICARAGUA

by Robert T. Dick, Minister Emeritus, Elkhart, IN.

At age 69, on the brink of the Biblical "three score and ten", I was the oldest of a 20 member "Witness For Peace" team to visit Nicaragua in January/February, 1986. The Fellowship of Reconciliation was the other sponsoring organization. It was my desire to participate in a personal, first-hand visit; to equip myself to speak with authority with and to others, including Congress-persons; and to be part of an ecumenical group with religious concerns. These were some of the motivating factors for my participation.

Nicaragua is about the size of Alabama (though it is the largest country in Central America). It has a population of about 3 million - 90% of whom are Roman Catholic, 10% are Evangelical or of another Protestant sect; 70% are mestizo, 17% are white, 9% are black and 4% are Indian. The US Marines have invaded this small country many times. They trained the National Guard who assassinated Augusto Cesar Sandino in 1934. The 45 year reign of the Somoza family ended with a bloody revolution preceding July 19, 1979 when Somoza fled to Miami, FL and the Sandinistas took power.

The counter-revolutionaries (Contras), labeled "Freedom Fighters" by our present administration, are terrorists - United States mercenaries. Their leaders, for the most part, are former members of Anastasio Somoza's National Guard. As this is written, new revelations are coming with each newscast about a source of their funds. They ambush and blow up trucks and vehicles carrying workers and children - they make midnight attacks on dwellings - they kill agricultural specialists, healthcare givers and school teachers. About a week before our arrival in the village where our team was graciously hosted, the Contras made an attack, killing a young agricultural worker, a grandmother, and seriously wounding a man in the same house. Fear prevailed in the village to the point where the men would not accompany us to the nearby fields where we picked coffee which was way past its prime (to be used for local consumption).

Continued on next page

Nicaragua is a seriously divided nation. The Catholic Church is divided as well. It will continue to be divided as long as aid is given to the Contras. Members of the Government and many people have a real fear, a justified fear, that the big bear to the North is going to attack them directly. Here is a quote from "Nicaragua: A Look at Reality" (9th Printing, January, 1986) "...some members of Congress have been questioning whether funds are being channelled in some concealed way, possibly through El Salvador, Honduras or Israel. What remains unknown is the possibility of direct US intervention. Administration officials downplay the idea, but 'never say never'. Only time and the willingness of the US people to resist present US policy in Central America will tell whether or not this region will grow into another Vietnam." (Quixote Center, P.O. Box 5206, Hyattsville, MD., 20782.)

As members of the UUA we can be especially grateful for the active involvement in this region of the Service Committee since 1970. It has sponsored 12 delegations of Congresspersons, opinion leaders on fact-finding missions. Their findings have been published, their voices have been heard, and we applaud the efforts and concern of the UUSC.

(For further information, write: Witness for Peace Washington Office, Box 29497, Washington, D.C. 20017-2518).

U.U.R.M.A. FINANCES

The fiscal year of the UURMA began July 1, 1986, and as soon as possible thereafter a financial appeal letter was sent out to some 365 families and individuals whom this organization is intended to serve. By January 9th, there had been seventy responses and contributions amounting to \$1,918.25.

Self-evidently, we cannot hope to do all the things we have envisioned to serve our retired ministers and surviving spouses without a reasonable income, but we do not want to set any specific amount for dues lest many with very limited incomes be kept from participating. Appeals to the national organization suggest possible support for new projects, but probably not for continuing programs. We have, however, received a generous contribution from the U.U.M.A. for which we are most grateful.

We have all been involved in all sorts of financial campaigns to support the local churches and other institutions we have served, and we ought to be unusually intelligent in responding to an appeal from an organization trying to serve us. If there are desired things it is not doing, we should say so. If it is doing things we recognize as needed, we should be able to determine a 'fair share' and to contribute it. We have expected the laity to do this for years, but now it is our turn.

NOTE - Persons over 65, but not 'Retired' may belong to the UURMA and receive all its services by writing to the President and applying.

"FACING THE PROBLEMS OF AGING"

A Report on a Workshop at the Eastham Convocation

by Maurice Cobb

In this workshop, John Nichols, a retired Unitarian Universalist Social Worker, introduced about fifteen people into a discussion of aging with a written statement. He stressed the importance of 'education' about aging. Each person is unique, he noted, and must face the problems of aging in the light of his or her own experience and condition. Although he recognized that professional counselling may be needed in some cases, he encouraged all to feel that they could manage on their own.

Specifically, he stressed the importance of retaining active time with family and friends, continuing the pursuit of interests fitting to one's personality and ability, becoming involved with activities through which each person can be of help and service to others.

His genial nature and open style of communication invited discussion. Comments came forth in torrents reflecting the concerns of the group which ranged from personal recreation practices to the neglect of the aged by a society that is indifferent and a medical profession that is too busy to care. In between were reports of how various participants were active in part-time work, or who "minister" to others in a wide variety of settings, including rest homes. It was cautioned that those retirees who have no interests, or activities, as in the case of **some** who move to Florida, are likely to die within six months to a year.

Concern was expressed during the discussion that among the most serious problems of the aging is neglect of patients in institutions. Attention was called to the fact that drugs are often used to make patients quiescent. Even though some states have laws against this, investigations of abuses are too often lacking. Another concern was that sky-rocketing costs of care are a source of nightmares to the aging who commonly have inadequate funds; and that our nation is way behind other Western Countries in subsidizing health facilities.

The matter of 'medical check-ups' was discussed. Some never darken a doctor's door. Others have regular check-ups. The only conclusion was that ultimately each person must follow the program that seems most fitting to him or her.

The most innovative ideas centered around being in charge of one's destiny at various stages of illness and suffering. It was asked: "should one secret a supply of lethal drugs to take when pain is unbearable? would one be sufficiently in command of one's facilities to make a responsible judgment in a critical stage of illness? does the Hemlock Society offer an answer to the problems of aging? when should a person cease to be a burden on others?"

No conclusions were drawn; yet, each member was challenged personally as to how he or she would actually act to resolve the inevitable problems of aging and death.

SURVIVING AS A SPOUSE

[Editor's Note: Of all the things we are trying to do as an organization, that which seems most needed and most appreciated is our continuing effort to promote an awareness of the special situation of Surviving Spouses of ministers. Each convocation seeks to provide an opportunity for the expression of feelings and competent guidance in dealing with them. At Eastham, such a workshop was led by Elizabeth Silliman and Bessie Borgford.]

Bessie Borgford lives in two rooms in a very good retirement home in Portland to which she moved when her doctor told her that she should live on one floor. She weaves, plays golf and pitches horseshoes. Travel is a favorite resource.

Continued on next page

In her testimony, she emphasized the importance of keeping skills during the years of marriage that one might earn a living or supplement retirement income when left alone. She also pointed out the importance of maintaining a circle of friends which would assist greatly in the process of surviving. She called attention to the fact that the UUA is prepared to help Surviving Spouses in a variety of ways, including help for children's higher education.

Elizabeth Silliman lives in a third floor apartment overlooking Casco Bay in Portland. She and her husband, Vincent, observed many people who pulled into themselves following the death of a partner and had often said to one another: "Whichever one of us is left has got to LIVE." So, according to her testimony, for a year or two after the death of Vincent, Elizabeth made a point of regularly reminding herself: "I've got to live."

Another lifesaver was starting to work as a volunteer at a Portland hospital. She enjoys working with people and noted that everyone needs to be needed, no matter how old they may be.

In an open discussion, one participant of the workshop noted that she could never have survived without her children and grandchildren. Another said that she desperately needed a minister, someone to talk to, after her husband died. A goal of this organization might well be to provide such opportunities to ministers' Surviving Spouses who commonly have no minister to whom they can turn. In any case, it was agreed that someone to talk to is one of the most universal and biggest needs after a partner has died.

OH! WHAT A LOVELY TIME WAS THE RETREAT OF THE UURMA ON CAPE COD!

(With apologies to the author of the Book of Ecclesiastes).

by Hope I. Reamon

It was...

A time for renewing past friendships,
 and a time for making new friends,
 A time for the missing of those not present,
 and a sad time learning of the loss of those we had known,
 A time for healthy nostalgia,
 and a time for thought of the future,
 A time for serious discussion,
 and a time for jolly good humor,
 A time for learning, a time for sharing,
 and a time of inspiration from courageous survivors,
 A time to appreciate the beauty we dwelt in,
 and a time to enjoy the food set before us,
 A time to say "thank you" for thoughtful preparation,
 a time to appreciate the "committee's" orchestration,
 A time to worship with music and prayer
 with words from our leaders that caused contemplation.
 A time to be reminded of our continuing worth, that we have not fallen from the U.U.A. berth.
 The warmth and the caring that permeated those days
 will carry over the year

UNTIL NEXT TIME!!

HEALTH AND HOSPITAL INSURANCE CHANGES

At the Eastham convocation Silvio Nardoni, Church Staff Finances Director, surprised everyone by suggesting that there was no way for reducing the cost to participants over 65 and urging that they transfer to some alternative plan before the denominational program becomes inoperative. He noted that efforts had been made to get a different underwriter, but that all studied the experience of Mass. Mutual and came up with the same or greater charges.

His recommendation was for the AARP plan M-6 which covers both hospital and doctors charges and costs \$25.95 a month per person. (\$51.80 for a couple). This does **not** cover perscription drugs, as did Mass. Mutual, but most would be able to cover this amount by the difference in charges.

Care should be taken in respect to the fact that it will not cover conditions for which a patient has been treated in the previous six months until after it has been in effect for three months. In the case of your editor, this has necessitated that he and his wife both enroll, but that she keep her Mass. Mutual policy in effect until April 1st. At that time, AARP will assume responsibility for doctor's charges and possible hospitalization, even though her condition has been treated over a period of time.

At the present time, the UUA, through the office of Church Staff Finances, has been subsidizing many, if not most, participants over 65 in the Mass. Mutual program. We believe that in cases where both policies must be carried for the three months before AARP becomes operative that additional subsidies may be requested for the transitional period. The matter of perscription costs is also open to negotiation. For further information, write to Silvio Nardoni at the UUA.

Further and fuller information about the AARP plans is available from AARP at 1-800-523-5800 (1-800-492-2024 for Pennsylvania residents), or by writing to AARP Group Health Insurance Program, P.O. Box 7000, Allentown, PA. 18175-0719. You must be a member of AARP to enroll, but membership is only \$5 per year for a family and well worth it for the other benefits of belonging to the organization.

REQUEST FOR NOMINATIONS

In accordance with Article V of the Bylaws of the Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers Association, the Nominating Committee hereby solicits suggestions for nominations for the following positions, all for two year terms beginning July 1, 1987:

President
Secretary
Newsletter Editor

Vice President
Treasurer
3 Board Members

3 Nominating Committee Members

Please forward all suggestions before April 1st to the Chair of the Nominating Committee, the Rev. Earle T. McKinney, P.O. Box 130, Gray, Maine 04039.

The committee will make its nominations and conduct an election by mail during the month of May.

The incumbents, all of whom can be re-elected, are listed on the front of ElderBerries.

Joyce Huff
John Brigham
Earle McKinney

HELP! HELP! HELP!

Although it requires a lot of juggling, the U.U.A. keeps pretty good track of the addresses of retired ministers. However, this is not as easy in regard to surviving spouses. In past years these were sometimes dropped from the mailing list along with the name of the deceased husband, and others probably did not have sufficient interest in denominational mailings to bother to send in new addresses after moving.

We list below a number of names for which the U.U.A. has no address, with the result that they do not get our Newsletter and may not know that they are assumed to be members of our organization. Some may be deceased, but we would pay our respects. Some may have re-married, and not to a minister, but they still qualify as Surviving Spouses. Some may have been divorced, but the UURMA is prepared to accept as members both the person who lived and worked with a minister for many years as well as the one married to him or her at the time of death.

If you know how to reach any of the following, please send a correct address to BOTH the Dept. of the Ministry, U.U.A., 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA. 02108 and to ELDER BERRIES, P.O. Box 89, Plymouth, Maine 04969. (We want to know how successful such an effort as this may be.)

Mrs. Mildred Arms

Mrs. Bernadine Buehrer

Mrs. Marjorie Clark

Mrs. Helen Csiki

Mrs. Josephine Flint

Mrs. Inge Fowlie

Mrs. John Gill

Mrs. Constance Holloway

Mrs. Clara Jaynes

Mrs. Shirley Kennedy

Mrs. Shirley Kosmo

Mrs. Elizabeth Lewis

Mrs. Caroline MacKinnon

Mrs. Arline McKinstry

Mrs. Grace Mooney

Mrs. Leolyn Morgan

Mrs. Florence Muder

Mrs. Loretta Neale

Mrs. Clara Potter

Mrs. James Reeb

Mrs. Frances Robbins

Mrs. Beatrice Roberts

Mrs. Rita Rohrbaugh

Mrs. Perry E. Roll

Mrs. Rowena Ruggles

Mrs. Barbara Spence

Mrs. Ray True

Mrs. Alice Whitney

Mrs. Marjorie Wolfe

(We apologize in advance for any errors or omissions. The Editor received three somewhat different lists and used the last one he was given in the hope that it was most accurate and most recently corrected. A.Q.P.).

RETIREMENT OPPORTUNITIES - POLITICAL

In a previous issue, your Editor noted that when serving a congregation, ministers and spouses commonly avoid involvement in partisan politics, lest those of opposing parties be offended, and usually seek to influence social change by religious or ethical appeals. With retirement, however, all such restraints may, if one is so inclined, be set aside; and every party welcomes volunteers who know how to make 'house calls', financial appeals and, on occasion, interesting and convincing speeches. These, of course, are all a part of a minister's stock in trade.

As soon as we decided that it would be best to retire, Irene and I immediately became active in the Town Caucus of the Democratic Party, accepted election as delegates to the State Convention and undertook a successful effort to raise funds for the Town Committee. When finally and fully retired, and living in another town, we continued our involvement and soon represented that town at the Democratic State Convention and became members of the County Committee. As such, although probably too old to run for any office, we can influence the choice of nominees and the nature of platforms, as well as becoming on sufficiently friendly terms with legislators as to permit successful lobbying for specific programs.

We asked for accounts of similar involvement from our membership and received some exciting stories.

Don Lawson is currently on the Board of the Collier County Council on Aging, having served as president. He is on the Case Review Committee which finds placements for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents...Politically, he is just retiring from serving six years as the senator from Collier County to the Florida Silver-Haired Legislature. He has been helpful in getting many bills passed that are helpful to senior citizens. He is a member of the Executive Committee of the Collier County Democratic Party and is a poll worker. He is also active in all sorts of other community and social activities.

Ramona Barth, who now lives in coastal Maine, has really used the imagination and commitment which we think of as distinctive aspects of liberalism. In the recent election, she recruited and supported an outstanding candidate for the State Senate (who lost we regret to say) and organized a Committee of Concerned Citizens to support him. Her most unique effort was to organize a day-long "Marathon of Ideas and Opinions" in Wiscasset on Labor Day, with all candidates from both parties invited to speak and greet from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.....She writes letters to the editor and speaks at the Midcoast UU Fellowship and anything else which might advance her liberal goals.

IN GRATEFUL MEMORY...

John and Edith Christensen were Charter Members of the UURMA - coming up from North Carolina to attend the Petersham meeting and were planning to come up again for the Eastham gathering. John died on October 11th in an automobile accident at the Red Hill Universalist Church. His family specified the UURMA as a recommended recipient of Memorial Donations, and to date we have received \$742.00 in his memory. We are humbly grateful to both his family and to those who have so expressed their respect and affection.

This is the first time that we have received this kind of support, but it is a possible suggestion to the families of other of our membership when the inevitable happens.

R O A D , S E N D

It was a great thrill, but something of a surprise, to see a two page spread in national magazines in December hailing Lewis Latimer as one of the founders and developers of AT&T. I still have a copy of the biographical pamphlet published by G.E. some years ago and distributed through the schools which credited him with many, perhaps most, of the inventions associated with Thomas Edison which resulted in the electrification of the modern age. Mr. Latimer, a Charter Member of our Flushing, N.Y. church, was a great man, and it is understandable that major corporations, particularly at a time when sensitive to charges of racism, would want to be associated with him. Mr. Latimer was a Negro, or, as we would say today, a Black.

It was not always so. His grandson told me that in the late 20's G.E. was a little embarrassed that most of the other associates of Edison had become heads of the rapidly growing utility companies, and millionaires as a result, but recognizing that none then would want a Negro as a President or Director, they gave him a pension of \$2,500 a year in his old age.

Mr. Latimer had a daughter whom I was told by her late husband was both very beautiful and an amazingly talented musician. Recognizing that she would hardly be welcomed in any of the better schools in this country, he sent her to Europe to get a proper musical education. She came back a magnificent pianist and organist, and was eventually hired by the Metropolitan Opera Co. to play for rehearsals. She might be a genius, but she was Black, but few then would be willing to watch a Negro through their opera glasses.

There was only one place where she was seen playing during her short life, and that was at the Unitarian Church in Flushing. Actually, there is still considerable distance between the platform of that church and the front pew, space enough for a grand piano and an organ console, carefully placed that the person playing would be visible to all in the congregation. The church not only respected genius, but was a little proud of not being racist at a time when most were.

Sometimes I fear that in our old age we get a little cynical about our movement and own work. We are aware of how forgotten and forgettable are the 2500 or so sermons we preached, and how many alcoholics we failed to help, and how little we affected society, and how often someone says: "I never heard of Unitarian Universalism. Has it been around for some time?" Sometimes we have made mistakes, and compromised about important things, and wasted time on unimportant administrative matters, but it is good that there was and is a church free enough to include and be proud of the Latimers a half a century before most others even wanted to see them.

A.Q.P.