

UU ELDER BERRIES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE U.U. RETIRED MINISTERS ASSOCIATION

Vol IV #2

Albert Q. Perry, Editor

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Eastport, Maine 04631

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1987-1989

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SOUTH-EAST CONFERENCE, February 6-8, 1989

For the second successive year the UURMA membership from the southeast will hold a midwinter conference at the newly acquired "UU IN THE PINES," Brooksville, Florida. The dates are February 6-8, 1989, and the Rev. John Morgan will be in general charge.

The complete program is not yet available, but John has secured an outstanding resource person who will be present throughout the conference. He is Dr. Robert Plummer, now retired from the faculty of Education at the University of Michigan. He is the author of several books on creativity and growth. In retirement he has pursued specialized work in geriatrics and still teaches a class on that subject. He will be available for both class sessions and informal individual discussions of problems requiring more privacy.

Bob's wife, Joyce, will be with him at the conference. She is a retired librarian, and John has suggested that she "might" be willing to help any whose personal libraries are in a state of chaos.

John and Bill Hammond are working on a session of desktop computer publishing. Joyce is involved in this and will serve as a resource person; an effort is being made to get a Tampa company to bring a computer for a demonstration of how this works.

Plans call for someone on the program to discuss retirement financing. David Pohl is being asked to bring the latest news from 25 Beacon Street, and an effort is being made to get something from the new Hymnbook Commission. (John sent along a book that he recently published, and we will try to review this and discuss the project in a future issue.)

For further information and a Registration Form, write to:

Rev. John H. Morgan
402 SE 42nd Terr., Apt. 08
Cape Coral, Florida 33904

The UURMA is recognized by the Unitarian Universalist As'sn as an independent "Denominational Group," and it has been accepted as a full-fledged chapter of the UUMA.

THE UURMA 1988 FALL CONFERENCE, October 11, 12, 13

by Hope Reaman

It all started with rides from different parts of New England and beyond, through the countryside on a "beautiful" day. Nature had on her most colorful dress; the sky was blue and bright with sunshine above and there was a nip in the air. As the poet so aptly said it, we rode through "October's bright blue weather." Thus about fifty retired Unitarian Universalist ministers, spouses, or survivors gathered at the Campion Renewal Center in Weston, Massachusetts, for their Fourth Annual Fall Conference.

The first hours were times of reunion with previous friends and the making of new ones as we registered and were given room assignments.

The building where we met is BIG--four stories high, wings built to last forever, all held together by an impressive rotunda that reaches from ground to sky. The corridors from here to there are long and wide (good for us with "Joe Namath" knees that need exercise in order to keep flexible). Everything is well kept and faultlessly clean. We were given the use of floors two, three, and four in the center wing where there were conference rooms and bedrooms for all.

The Tuesday evening sessions was facetiously referred to by the Program Chairman as "Minister's Bragging Evening." It was a most interesting meeting, as each minister was called upon to tell his most moving or exciting experience in the ministry. Most of the narrators confessed that they had a difficult time choosing which moment of exaltation to tell about, which was sure evidence of the joys and satisfactions of life in the ministry. Along with this each man was asked to tell of his most embarrassing moment. These tales caused uproarious laughter--in retrospect, of course.

The first session Wednesday morning was one about "Caring." It was a forum led by the distaff side of the conference, a Moderator (who did an excellent job of keeping the conferees speaking one at a time), accompanied by two widows and one wife as panelists.

We heard a courageous but sad story of great need and near-abandonment. Three important facts came out of this session: (1) the need for seminars on "preparation for retirement" such as the Denomination once provided, (2) a network of communication whereby we could know where there were cases of need, and (3) a way to keep in touch with all retirees and their spouses and survivors for the purpose of moral support. We are glad to report that this type of activity is already in operation in some areas and more will come.

After a brief coffee break, David Hubner from the U.U.A. Department of Ministry spoke to us of activity at 25 Beacon Street. He told us what help we may expect from headquarters, why it was necessary to change insurance plans, and what they were working on for the future. He graciously answered many questions from the floor.

Following lunch we had free time. (Ah! Sweet rest and recreation.) At 4 we reconvened when our guest speaker was the minister of the Weston Unitarian Universalist Church. He told us of the interesting history of that church from its small beginnings as a spin-off of the Watertown Church to its present full-bloom status. This growth has been accomplished in spite of the dismissal of several early ministers for infractions of the rigid rules of that day.

This was followed by a talk by a member of the Campion Center Staff on the history of that institution from its start as a seminary for the Jesuit Order to its present place of diverse activity. Now it is used for educational programs for conference groups, a health center, a retreat area, and a home for retired Jesuits.

That evening we traveled a short distance to Weston where our worship service was held in the Chapel of the U.U. Church. This beautiful place is almost a mini-duplicate of the larger Gothic sanctuary of the church. Here the tone was set by an inspiring organ prelude played by one of our own, who should be named the official "New England Conference Music Provider." We responded with a reading on "Man of Wisdom," were led in a significant guided prayer, and listened to a thought-provoking sermon. Congregational singing at the opening and the singing of "My Country Is the World" to close, were enthusiastic musical moments.

On Wednesday morning there was a lively symposium on "How to Retire." The business meeting to close the Conference started with an announcement by the chairman of the South-East Conference to be held in February north of Tampa, Florida; a recommendation of a book entitled Retirement by the Bradleys; and the Treasurer's Report. Our treasury will break even this year because of some outside help which we may not get again. "We need more members with more contributions," says our Treasurer.

The meeting closed with a fascinating report on an extensive research project done by our President and his daughter, based on the answers to a questionnaire sent to all our retirees. Mr. Hadley has statistics that show the status of our retired ministerial population, where they are, what they think and feel about their lot. We hope this report can get to all eventually, and we are sure it will be of use to our membership.

As we reviewed this Fourth Conference, we were reminded of a jingle we learned in grade school: "Good, better, best, Never let it rest, 'Til the good is better and the better best." Each conference seems better than the last, which is partly due to the fact that it is good for us to get together to share our history and our present activities. Friendships have grown deeper and more significant. There were social hours before dinner and an impromptu gathering before bedtime Tuesday evening, when good fellowship and conversation flowed freely. And we ended as we began--driving home in "October's bright blue weather."

RETIREMENT HOBBIES

The final morning of the New England Conference was filled with personal accounts of what people did in retirement. At its conclusion, your editor asked all who had participated to send a descriptive paragraph which might be used in a feature article in our autumn issue. One person responded. Peg Johnston wrote:

"For seven years my husband, Don, had led a workshop during Family Week at Ferry Beach, Saco, Maine. After his death I missed the contacts and decided to take two of my grandchildren--aged 12 and 13--to meet other teenagers there and be exposed to UUism. For five years this gave us joy and information, and gave me a purpose.

"Some years ago there was a UU group in Hanover, N.H., which had been disbanded. In 1985 Deane Starr, Executive Director of the N.H.-Vt. District, aided by me and other UUs started a congregation in Hanover. Although we do not yet have a meeting place of our own, we do have 35-40 people attending two monthly services and a Church School led by dedicated teachers. It is a rewarding effort with speakers from the denomination and from the area.

"With a lifetime involvement in UUism, part of me would be missing if I were not able to support its dreams and purposes."

"SNOW BIRDS"

Retired ministers who would like to avoid the northern winters and spend some time in Sunny Florida could be of great help to some of our UU Fellowships that cannot pay the minimum salary for a settled or, even interim, minister. However, a retired minister with some income could have an enjoyable, as well as comfortable, winter while helping such a situation develop toward a full-time or half-time ministry.

If interested, write or call John & Mary DeWolf-Hurt, District Executives, 4 Cherry Drive Court, Ocala, Florida 32672; or call (904) 624-2060.

Ten Commandments for Visiting at a Nursing Home

... Found in a Maine nursing home and given to your editor by Deborah Greeley
(Maybe we are now more likely to be visited than to be visiting others, but the advice is good for any who are still ministering to shut-ins.--A.Q.P.)

Thou shalt visit regularly thy parents and friends.
You shall remember that your visit is as vital as medicine.

Thou shalt not visit the frail when in a hurry.
You must be calm, and not visit when emotionally upset yourself.

Thou shalt communicate wisely with the resident.
You shall not treat the resident as a burden. Let him air his thoughts and feelings.

Thou shalt respect the tears of the frail, remembering that there is a sacredness to tears which speaks more eloquently than a thousand tongues.
You shall remember it takes wisdom and humility to understand the tears of a parent.

You shall encourage the self-esteem of the resident by liking him as he is, by treating the ill as an interesting person.
You shall not patronize or talk down to the resident.

Thou shalt respect the staff who care for the aged.
The staff makes a nursing home and endows it with character.

Thou shalt remember that the resident is part of the nursing home family.
And respect the needs of other residents.

Thou shalt keep thy sense of humor.
Remember that patience is a virtue, and a bit of humor can go a long way in the aid of enlivening a resident's life.

Thou shalt remember thy loved one as an extension of thyself.
A son or daughter who respects and honors their frail parent is more likely to be respected in his or her old age.

Thou shalt remember that the passage of time is restless, coming to all of us inescapably.
Therefore be mindful to be of good cheer in your visit to the convalescent. Also, keep yourself in good health and cheer in mind.

--Author Unknown

CORRECTION

When reporting on the action of the Nominating Committee in the previous issue, the Editor did not bother to look up the bylaws as we passed them three and more years ago at our first convocation. Unfortunately, what he remembered was the way of amending the bylaws, not the process of voting for officers. The actual description in the bylaws is as follows:

"The officers and a Nominating Committee consisting of a chair and two other members shall be elected biennially in the month of May in the odd numbered years. They shall assume office on July 1 following their election and shall serve for two years. . . All members shall be eligible to vote by mail ballots in an election conducted by the Nominating Committee. During the month of February preceding the election the Nominating Committee shall poll the membership for suggestions of nominees. From those suggestions the committee shall make its nominations and conduct an election by mail during the month of May and shall certify to the Secretary the results of the election."

It did not work quite this way two years ago in that the February ElderBerries did not get out until late in the month, and no nominations were received. A ballot was in an issue that went out in May but almost no one bothered to vote. We hope things will go better this time and that there will be more participation. At least the invitation to send in nominations is out well before February 1989.

Send nominations to: Robert T. Dick; 01 Walnut Way; Springfield, VT 05156-9142.

SURVEY REPORT PREFACE

(We assume that most know that this past year the UURMA undertook an unprecedented survey of members' attitudes and activities in retirement that we might know better what our organization or the UUA could do to improve services and to meet needs. We do not yet have the final report and expect to use most of our February issue to contain the meat of the matter. Incidentally, this study became possible because the daughter of our President was in the business, and the reason that it is described as "unprecedented" is that the costs would normally be very great and far beyond the means of most organizations of retired persons. (We are deeply indebted to Harold for having a daughter who, with her husband, started the Kennan Research and Consulting, Inc., which did this without charge.)

Background and Objectives

The Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers Association has expressed interest in getting to know their members better. The survey of members that is now reported on here is an attempt to gather information about members' current life circumstances and experiences as well as feelings about retirement in order to better acquaint this organization with the individuals who belong to it. Hopefully, these findings will help to pinpoint needs, interests, and strengths of the group as a whole as well as of particular segments.

Methodology

A survey questionnaire was composed with the help of UURMA leadership and others interested in this study. The survey was mailed to all retired UUA ministers on the current mailing list with a letter requesting participation. A total of 220 were mailed out and the response was remarkably high--150 responses (70%) were returned and are reflected in the findings of this study. This is considered a very good projectable sample.

The questionnaires were coded and tabulated by Kennan Research and Consulting, Inc. The results reported here are intended to provide an overview of findings. Specific relationships in the data can be pursued further by considering the complete set of tables appended to the end of the report.

An Introduction to the Sample and the Findings

The 150 retired ministers who responded to this survey represent a wide range of interesting individuals who provided candid and extensive responses. Briefly, and by way of introduction, the respondents are:

- Individuals ranging from under 65 to over 80 years of age with the majority age 71 and over (63%);
- Individuals who live primarily in the northeast (43%) and west of the Mississippi (24%), with the balance residing east of the Mississippi in the central United States and the South (33%);
- Individuals who most often own their own homes or apartments (80%) and who indicated that they are highly to moderately satisfied with the cultural and organizational resources in their communities (89%);
- Individuals whose current involvement with UUism ranges from frequent (32% attended locally once a week or more) to infrequently (35% attend yearly or never), with the other third reporting attendance about once a month; and, finally;
- Individuals who express the opinion that UUA's support of their transition to retirement was low (43%), moderate (33%), and high (19%).

In writing the overview of findings that is the body of this report we have "skimmed the surface," avoiding editorial comment or interpretations. The reasons being, first, that detailed analysis of subgroups is difficult if not unfair when the number of people in subgroups is small (e.g., those respondents living in the West who express a particular opinion); and second, that the significance or meaning of the findings should be interpreted by those who know the context or the reality of respondents' lives. In short, you are better equipped to understand the significance of findings from incomes earned to feelings about the UUA at present. We take our job to be one of describing what the numbers say and referring you to tables with more specific breakdowns when appropriate.

WATCH FOR THE FEBRUARY ELDERBERRIES FOR THE SPECIFICS!!!

From: "Notes from a Desert Journal"

by George C. Whitney

(Each month or so I get several pages of computer printouts from George Whitney, who lives in retirement in Las Cruces, New Mexico. In his mailings, which I assume go to many other than your editor, he has quotations, comments on our times, poetry, and all manner of other things. I have run a poem or two of his in previous issues; but I would like to give a bit better sample of this comparatively unique retirement exercise. A.Q.P.)

Vol I, #11, November 1988
QUOTE FOR THE MONTH

"I don't kow what you're talking about," said Tweedledum. "But it isn't so nohow."
"Contrariwise," continued Tweedledee, "but if it was so it might be, and if it were it would be, but as it isn't it ain't. That's logic."

Lewis Carroll, *Through the Looking Glass*

NOVEMBER MORNING

We have seen the leaves tumble in the north
and the bare limbs there.
But one solitary leaf fell at my feet today.
Do not look to the north this morning nor to the west
for you will see no threat of snow
in this crisp and brilliant air,
Nor to the east where the sun's first rays are low.
Look to the garden wall still damp in the morning light.
The desert does not take kindly to the rain.
Its harsh soil yearns for sun
and desert's autumn only half begun.
We have seen the aspens yellow in the north
and we have seen our still-leaved branches
Beaten by November rain
And we have been wet and dried and wet again
But our hearts have felt no pain,
Only the desert's surprising green
Green as a child's hope hanging high
Under today's November cloudless sky.

ON BEING 78

This is the month wherein my birthday falls. In some years it falls on Thanksgiving Day, which in former times gladdened a young boy's heart. But this year it is on a less festive occasion--Sunday, Nov. 27. In a way that is also appropriate for I was born on a Sunday, back there in 1910 when the world was more optimistic about its future than it seems to be today.

So I approach my 78th year! How can one be so lucky? Or unlucky? It depends on the point of view. The aging process is as inevitable as the passage of the sun around the earth and as unpredictable as the weather . . .

(There was much, much more in this discussion of aging, but we will conclude it, as the author did, with a poem he recalls having written long, long before.)

Storm, tempest, wrack and pain and trembling of the heart
and silence in the light extinguished:
Spirit forever scattered--thought, being, touch and sight
and then
The hard, clear brilliance of the galaxies,
infinite depths of clear, cold space that
Circle in their mystery
And I, a part of this and it a part of me?
A wondrous thought and hope significant, that in my
Life and in the hearts that touched my heart
I found my peace and affirmation, and the courage
to be one with all that is to be.

NEWS AND NOTES

At the most recent New England Conference of the UURMA there was a clear call for publishing notices of the deaths of any of our members lest, as a result of being spread out all across the country and from Europe to Australia, some fail to hear about the passing of old friends and to express sympathy to surviving family members.

This request will be honored, but any editor will need help. Our membership is made up of people who started out in two separate movements fifty years ago, and it will take some time before many of us are acquainted with everyone in our now combined organization. **KEEP THE EDITOR INFORMED AND, WHEN POSSIBLE, SEND A TWO- OR THREE-LINE OBITUARY!**

Mrs. Frances R. Veazie died the 9th of October in Portland, ME, at the age of 87. Her husband, Rev. William Dawes Veazie, was State Superintendent of the Universalist Church of Maine, and died in 1964.

Mrs. Jeannette Miller, wife of Dr. Fred Miller, died on Oct. 19th in Brattleboro, Vt. While Fred was a leader in local church and District affairs, Jeannette was a Licensed Practical Nurse at the Brattleboro Memorial Hospital.

Dr. Joseph Barth died the 20th of October. Since his retirement, he has become noted for the development of new varieties of Day Lilies, many of which he annually made available to area charities and causes to sell at a Day Lily Festival. The Sheepscot Valley Conservation Ass'n had been selected as a recipient this year, and the Northeast UU ministers have sent contributions to that organization as an expression of their respect for Joe and his work.

Dr. Arthur Graham died recently in Norfolk, VA. He had been ordained fifty years earlier.

Others in our fellowship who have recently died, but about whom we have little information are: Russell W. Lockwood of Tulsa, OK; Wilber P. Parker of Savannah, GA; E. J. Untuh of Wichita, KS; and John W. Wells of Reston, VA.

For a happier note, we would mention the twofold celebration of John and Anna Brigham. Their children and grandchildren arranged an observance in November of their Golden Wedding Anniversary and also of the 50th Anniversary of John's Ordination.

Bill Gardner recently received a check and a letter from Eula M. Kelley, the widow of Rev. Will A. Kelley, which we would like to print in its entirety:

Dear Rev. Gardner:

I am 97 years old last March. I can hear very little with my high power hearing aid; one eye is ready for an operation; but I'm happy and still on the go.

Live alone summers and my sister is here in the winter. Can't hear a word the minister says, or the words of the hymn, but I enjoy going (to church) just the same.

I attend the Senior Citizens Club, Garden Club, and two different Button Clubs, but don't get to the Eastern Star, D.A.R., Daughters of the Civil War, E. A. Starrelt, Historical Society, or Retired Teachers meetings to which I still belong.

I am sending a little check, but in the past 3 weeks I've had my house painted and paid the taxes on my house; so my checkbook looks rather slim.

Can't write very well as I have pinched nerves in my wrist, as well as arthritis and poor circulation in them so you will have to guess at most of this.

Guess I've outlived most or all of the ministers that I knew and enjoyed seeing at Conventions.

Sincerely,

Eula M. Kelley, Warren, Maine

Eula Kelley is the widow of the Rev. Will Kelley who served several of our churches in Maine. He retired in the early '50s and died in 1963. Eula Kelley might be our oldest member.

(If any reading this should happen to be younger or in better health or have fewer organizations to support than Mrs. Kelley, we hope that they will be equally supportive of the UURMA--The Editor)

"JOURNEYS from BREAKFAST"--A Review

Elsewhere in this issue is a mention of "desktop publishing" and a suggestion that this will be explored at the South-East Conference in February. As a sample of what this can make possible, John Morgan sent along a copy of a book of his poems entitled *JOURNEYS from BREAKFAST*.

He describes this as on "Travels in space and in psychological and physical time." I guess that this is accurate, but personally I would suggest that it is a book of very subtle poetry with a delightful touch of humor which entertains even when one is not quite sure what a particular poem means. Be that as it may, let me append a few samples:

Ogler

Astronomy is presently
six million times
better than my eye;

oddly, though,
without my poor original
its lens is blind

Links

The humming bird
is the flower in flight;
thus mobile,
does it remember the earth,
the cling?

Spooning Down

We fasten our seatbelts
and begin descent
into mountainous delectations,
a delicious plunge into
an appalachia of ice cream,
globular vanilla massifs;

slowly vanilla darkens to chocolate,
the airstrip glooms:
fudge-smear'd bottom of the glass.