

UU ELDER BERRIES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE U.U. RETIRED MINISTERS ASSOCIATION

Vol IV #4

Albert Q. Perry, Editor

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Eastport, Maine 04631

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1989-91

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MINISTERS COMPLETING FULL-TIME MINISTRIES

Fifteen UU ministers were recognized and given Certificates of Honor at the June 25th General Assembly SERVICE OF THE LIVING TRADITION as having completed their full-time ministries. The names are as follows:

Charles O. Barber

Berna Carroll Derby

John A. Parmakis

Sidney L. Freeman

Charles A. Howe

Beth Ide

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Twenty-nine members and four guests attended the UURMA sponsored luncheon immediately following the Sunday morning Service of the Living Tradition. At this occasion the fifteen UU ministers just officially retiring were welcomed as full fledged members of the UURMA family of retired ministers, spouses and spouses of deceased UU ministers.

In addition to a delicious luncheon, a brief introduction and welcome of new members and guests, attention was called to two workshops on the G.A. program dealing with various aspects of retirement. Both workshops to be held the following day were being co-sponsored by the UUA Department of Social Responsibility. The UU Retired Ministers Association, the Council on Church Staff Finances and the UU Ministers Partners.

EXECUTIVE BOARD RETIREES

We wish to express our sincere gratitude to the three retiring members of the Executive Board who have served so faithfully during the first four hectic years since the UURMA was organized (1985-89). They are:

Robert H. Holmes

Carolyn C. Howlett

Walter D. Kring

Again many thanks!!

RESEARCH REPORT SURVEY

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST RETIRED MINISTERS 1988

(As most will remember, this year we have been including in most issues of our newsletter summaries of the survey of the needs and experience of retired U.U. ministers which was made by Kennan Research and Consulting, Inc.,-a firm owned by the daughter of our President and her husband. In this issue we would summarize sections III, IV & V.)

SECTION III - SATISFACTION WITH CURRENT LIFE-STYLE AND RESOURCES

The current life-style and resources of those UU retired ministers is, - for at least two-thirds, - satisfactory and includes both considerable physical activity and access to a range of resources. Only a few indicate that life is unsatisfactory. As we have seen in previously presented data there is a persistent +/- 20% who express a need for more physical activity, better transportation, and housing or access to retirement housing.

Similarly, decline in life-style was reported by about 20% in the predictable areas of income, fulfillment of work-related interest, travel, medical insurance and access to UUA resources. However, there were also a segment of 20% who reported better income, housing and travel since retirement. As a whole, these retired ministers tell us they are more or less satisfied and involved locally with reasonable sources of support and much more leisure (65%). The issue is how to target and to assist the 20+% who need the resources and involvement that are so evidently associated with satisfaction in life after retirement.

The following section begins to deal with more specific issues of personal experience and feelings about retirement that provide a more in-depth look at this major life transition.

SECTION IV - CONSIDERING RETIREMENT

Comparisons Now to Before
General Feelings about, and
Transitions to Retirement

Most of these 150 retired UU ministers are in agreement about the overall benefits of retirement--freedom from daily work pressure/stress and consequent freedom to enjoy/expand their lives. Negative or qualified feelings about retirement are more varied, ranging from less contact with people and less professional recognition to financial and health concerns.

The things that ministers miss most are consistent with their expressions of retirement negatives. They miss parishioners and friends most, and to a somewhat lesser extent, some aspects of the work itself including a sense of being needed and a full salary.

While involvement in different activities varies, the overall picture is of an active group, with 20% working at least as much as before retirement and others involved in personal study, recreational activities, volunteer work, etc. In all, about two-thirds seem to be as or more active than before retirement.

Assessments of specific changes since retirement suggest that housing and leisure are "O.K." for all but a small minority, while other factors are "O.K." for about two-thirds of the sample.

In general there is a reoccurring pattern of about 20-30% of retired UU ministers indicating low ratings or dis-satisfaction with many of the factors specified.

We do not know if these are the same individuals, but whether or not they are, the trend is for at least two-thirds of the overall sample to express some degree of satisfaction with most aspects of their lives. It also seems that, as one might guess, general involvement and access to adequate resources (cultural, financial and social) are the important things associated with other positive ratings.

General feelings about retirement are more often positive than not, with reasons that relate back to different kinds of active involvement. In fact, actual patterns of preference and behavior with regards to activity indicate that about two-thirds work in some way and to some degree after retirement.

Interestingly, with regard to personal identification, many continue to think of themselves as ministers to some degree, although usually less so than before retirement (an issue worth pursuing in future research with individual interviews.) Many (almost a third) find marriage even more satisfying since retirement, and report involvement in a wide range of activities that tend to reflect personal development and relationships.

Many have experienced some change in their religious outlook since retirement, which many describe as a more personal exploration. Most (about 70%) seem to have found a way to relate to death as a "normal part of the life process", and most are 'very' to 'somewhat' peaceful with the idea of dying as they grow older.

OVERALL, - the things that stand out to an outsider reviewing results are the extent of retired UU ministers' involvement in work and personal development during what is labeled as retirement, and the degree of personal spiritual development and experience.

SECTION V - INVOLVEMENT WITH THE UUA - NOW AND IN THE TRANSITION TO RETIREMENT

It is encouraging to see that the majority of ministers (89%) responding to the survey do have a U.U. Church or Fellowship near them. A few (9%) do not. The remainder (2%) are unsure.

Attendance or participation at their local UU Church or Fellowship during the past year is varied with about half attending about once a month or more. Only 8% of these retired ministers characterize their involvement as the same or more than before, while the majority or 56% are involved somewhat or much less.

The local UU ministers or visitation committees of respondents seldom visit them. 21% indicate that they get a visit several times a year, 58% report never being visited, while 19% did not respond to the question at all. A probably significant omission.)

Participation in other local UU and religious groups ranged from UUMA District Chapter (27%), Interdenominational Group (5%), UU District Program (14%), local church other than UU (3%), and no answer (65%). We note that involvement is most likely among those whose income is \$35,000 or more and who are most frequently involved with their local UU Church.

Given these indications that only some retired ministers remain actively involved with the UUA and/or a local UU Church, it is not surprising that less than 1/3 of the group would turn to either a UU MINISTER (23%) or the UUA (7%) if they were facing a crisis. The majority would turn to a friend (23%) of a family member (27%) and some would go to a psychiatrist or psychologist for help (13%).

When asked

if they would be interested in being more involved with either a local church of the denomination, most responded "No!" (42%), with others indicating "Yes!" (23%), "Maybe!" (27%) and no answer (7%).

On being asked how they would like to be involved in the UUA, they responded: as an Interim Minister (9%), in Preaching and Counseling (8%), as a member of a nearby Fellowship (7%), in skills other than those of the Church (7%), according to personal needs and interests (9%), writing and research (2%), and no answer or do not know (54%).

In short, there is apparently a need to shape the possibilities for involvement in 'UUism' at all levels (UUA, UURMA and local UU Churches), after retirement or to find ways to engage the resources of these individuals without requiring commitments associated with full-time involvement. That is to say, there is obviously not a great deal of imagination exhibited for how they might be involved.

When asked to consider the denominations commitment to retired UU professionals, responses suggest that experiences have varied. More than half (54%) have clearly felt some degree of commitment on the part of the UUA in their retirement, but the weight of that response is on the "somewhat commitment" level (39%), -suggesting that many have qualifications. Those rating the UUA as "neutral" (20%), and those rating it "unsupportive" (16%), with "no answer" (9%) conclude the commitment evaluation. Incidentally, those most likely to regard the UUA as committed to retired professionals are from the West, over 71 years of age, and generally satisfied with their own cultural and organizational resources.

When asked to reflect on who they considered it to be a shared responsibility (55%), but some see it as a legitimate responsibility of the UUA (5%). Those whose income is under \$15,000 and dissatisfied with their cultural resources are most likely to weight responsibility in the direction of the UUA.

A strong response to questions regarding how the UUA could improve the quality of life of its retired ministers points to two often mentioned possibilities: -1. affordable medical insurance (65%), and Pre-Retirement Workshops (35%). All other responses were under 6%.

When asked what they had actually done in preparation for their retirement, the majority (55%) indicated they had participated in personal planning, but relatively few had done specific things or sought professional help.

Looking back on their own experiences, respondents indicated they would have been likely to take advantage of the following resources, if they had been available:- a one-time pre-retirement planning workshop at 25 Beacon Street (20%), personal financial counseling (19%), a booklet of UUA retirement information (17%), organized 'networking' for UU ministers (7%), 'Peer' support (3%), Other (9%), and No Answer (27%).

Thus, while there is no clear majority about what kind of support is needed in planning for retirement, well over half of these retired ministers would like to have taken advantage of at least one of these options.

IN SUM, - despite access to UUA churches and groups, involvement during retirement varies, and about half indicate that they are less involved than before. Furthermore, many are not sure how they would want to be involved and if we were to "read between the lines" it appears that there is not a great deal of imagination for how they might re-shape their role or use their skills and wisdom in a new way.

Although at least half perceive the UUA as committed to some degree to its retired professionals, many feel that there are specific ways in which the denomination could be more supportive (i.e., affordable medical insurance and pre-retirement workshops). Given, the awkwardness some express either directly or indirectly about how to be involved in the life of the denomination after retirement, we might hypothesize that exploration of means to use and developing precedents for engaging the talents of retired UU ministers could be another aspect of mutual support during and after retirement.

Sections III, IV and V are the concluding parts of the UU RETIRED MINISTERS SURVEY (1988) condensed and adapted by Harold Hadley for serial publication in "ElderBerries". The Survey and its analysis was prepared and completed by Kennan Research and Consulting Inc., N.Y.C.

NORTHEAST FALL CONFERENCE

Oct. 10, 11 & 12

We trust that all now know that the third annual Northeast Conference of the UURMA will be held at the Oblate Retreat Center in Hudson, New Hampshire. (What would we do without our good Catholic friends who built so many places where we non-Catholics may hold conferences?)

The Bletzers have done a magnificent job of arranging, publicizing and promoting this gathering, and we are sure that all within driving distance will want to attend.

The cost for the two nights and six meals will be \$65.00 each, and we are as sure as we can be that this figure will hold firm. Admittedly, for many retired folk, \$130 is not easy to come by, and a subsidy from the Dept. of the Ministry is available. One should write to Rev. David Hubner, 25 Beacon St., Dept. of the Ministry, and the matter will be handled with complete confidentiality.

Details of the conference are becoming fuller all the time. Your Editor has been asked to preach the 'Occasional Sermon' at the Conference Chapel Service in the Nashua Unitarian Church. Following this, we will return to the Oblate Center and Wally Argow will provide a humorous half-hour or so of readings. He describes this as a 'cabaret', and we will provide the drinking crowd usually found at such a place and occasion.

Send Reservations and Check to:

Rev. & Mrs. Robert Dick
1 Walnut Way
Springfield, Vermont 05156

BOOK REVIEW

(Dorothy T. Spoer)

(We are always happy to receive suggestions about books that retired ministers or their spouses might find interesting, and we are grateful to 'Dotty' Spoer for the following.)

"PEACEMAKING AMONG PRIMATES" - Frans de Waal
Harvard University Press - 1989

Highly recommended for those who believe that we can achieve peace, and who have not accepted the outmoded notion that humans are essentially animals with genetic aggression that will not disappear. de Waal gives examples both of aggression and of the methods that the animals he observed use for pacification and reconciliation. He uses both our closest "relatives", the apes, and those from further back in history, the monkeys, ending with a little known group of apes, (he believes the closest to us) the Bonobos. His last chapter is about that primate we know best - humans.

Recalling the avidity with which some among us were 'turned on' by Robert Ardrey and his studies of aggression and territoriality I have hopes that even more of us will at least read and consider this presentation of an alternative interpretation of the evolution of ways of peace and reconciliation from the distant past to the hopeful future....A book which makes one long for a pulpit once again.

Word has been received as we go to press of a proposed UURMA Conference or gathering at Madison, Wisc. in late September, - presumably on Sept. 28-30. Carolyn and Max Gaebler are doing much of the advance planning and promotion, but they are assisted by a committee that includes John and Dru Cummings, Rachael Hoagland and Betty Cyrus.

The program is very exciting, - with a lot of activities no other areas have attempted. They plan a trip to Spring Green where they will tour Frank Lloyd Wright's "Taliesin", dinner at a private estate nearby and a private performance of "King Lear" by the superb Equity Company of the American Players Theatre.

Housing will be at the Ivy Inn, only a few blocks from the Unitarian Church, where there are special rates for Senior Citizens. (\$24.64 per person, per night, double occupancy.)

Needless to say, as at all of our conferences, people from outside the area would be welcome. For full information and a Registration Form, write Max Gaebler, 1212 Dartmouth Rd., Madison, Wisc. 53705.

They need final numbers by September 8th, so write immediately!!!!

(If there are errors in this notice, it should be noted that we have a strike of telephone personnel in New England, and when Harold Hadley called the Editor his words were almost inaudible.)

DESERT JOURNAL

Probably all of us have memories of places where we lived when younger, or young, and may, on occasion have an opportunity to visit them. George Whitney, who is now living in Las Cruces, New Mexico and keeps your editor on his mailing list, recently visited a home in Methuen, Ma. where he had lived from 1915 to 1934. His feelings on the occasion may well be duplicated by most retired folk. He wrote:

"The idle fields where childhood reigned
Have vanished beneath an asphalt heel
And miles we walked have shortened
From onslaughts of the speeding wheel.
But ancient ghosts still live from room
To room within that tiny house where love
and laughter were and are. No hint of gloom
Within that place where still so much of me remains
Within those hallowed halls, now touched
By hearts as loving, and the joys and pains
Of yesterday are sanctified by present grace
Within that house of memory - a holy place.
Cherish the dreamers, cherish the dream,
Cherish the grail's bright childhood gleam,
Cherish the hearts that beat no more
But stalwart still on death's bright distant shore.

(In one respect, George is fortunate. When your editor went to show his wife where he lived as a child, he found his home was a parking lot.)

KEY HISTORICAL EVENTS 1983-1989

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST RETIRED MINISTERS ASSOCIATION

- June 1983 - Eight UU retired ministers at a Vancouver, B.C. UUMA Professional Day workshop propose organizing a continental UU Retired Ministers Association.
- Oct. 1983 - A mail survey of all UU retired ministers approved the Vancouver workshop proposal to organize.
- May 1985 - After one cancelled G.A. workshop attempt (1984) a Steering Committee was appointed, at a meeting held at Senexit House, to call an organizing Conference of UU retired ministers and spouses.
- Oct. 1985 - A Continental Conference meeting at Petersham, Ma. voted the Unitarian Universalist Retired Ministers Association into being. (Adopted Bylaws and elected an Executive Board).
- Nov. 1985 - UUA Grants Panel \$5000 start-up grant was requested and received.
- Dec. 1985 - First of three per yr. Exec. Board Meetings held at 25 Beacon Street, Boston.
- Dec. 1985 - UURMA Executive Board appoints representative on Council of Church Staff Finances which sets aside \$2000 as start-up backing for each new Area Conference organized.
- Nov. 1986 - First of the Annual UURMA Fall Conferences held in the North East Area.
- Dec. 1986 - Full UUMA Chapter membership status extended to UURMA.
- Jan. 1987 - UUA Board of Trustees votes requested General Assembly registration fee reduction for UU retired ministers, spouses and spouses of deceased ministers.
- Feb. 1987 - First of Annual UURMA winter Conferences held in the South East Area.
- Feb. 1987 - First recognition of UURMA in the Annual UUA Directory as a legitimate "Denominational Group".
- Nov. 1987 - Experimental "Contact Counseling" program initiated by Executive Board in part of North East Area.
- June 1988 - First ever, denominational comprehensive survey of UU retired ministers, written and conducted with professional assistance, and sponsored by UURMA Executive Board. (Abbreviated survey summary printed serially in UU Elder Berries newsletter.)
- May 1989 - Program committees are appointed and planning continues for Area conferences in both the Far-West and Mid-West (places and dates to be announced), as well as, in the North East at Hudson, NH and the South East at Brooksville, FL-- all in pursuit of the general goal of "continuing the quality of life" for all.

"I THINK THE UURMA IS ONE OF THE BEST THINGS THAT HAS HAPPENED TO THE DENOMINATION IN YEARS."

Statement by Dr. Waldemar Argow, from a letter dated March 3, 1989 after attending - his second UURMA conference in two years.

NEWS AND NOTES

It is good to be kept informed by members and friends, and by 25 Beacon St., but some news is hard to accept. Your Editor served the Universalist Church in Essex, Mass. while in college, and this was not far from Lynn where our movement had a major church **which** had a Director of Religious Education and Professional Youth Advisor. The Essex Church also had an active youth fellowship, and as a result I met and learned to admire the great talents of Alice Harrison. With a great sense of personal loss, I note her passing on June 13th. Rhys Williams, Larry Peers and David Cole participated in a Memorial Service. I might also note that Alice Harrison assumed responsibility for publishing "THE ELDER CHURCHMAN" following the death of Max Kapp, and as such was one of my predecessors in seeking to keep in touch with Retired Ministers and their Spouses. I am honored to be included in that procession.

Rev. Roger Welke died on June 4th, and a Memorial Service was held June 8th at the U.U. Community Church in Irvine, California where he was the Part-Time Minister. He leaves a wife, Jean, who resides at 216 Louise Place, Orange, CA 92668.

Rev. Dan Huntington Fenn died June 27, and a Memorial Service was conducted by Carl Scovel, Corelyn Senn and Ken Sawyer at the Memorial Church in the Harvard Yard. (Recently, we were proud to carry a few lines by Dr. Fenn in this publication.)

Periodically, we note the desirability of ministers in retirement finally putting some of their thoughts in more permanent form than a weekly sermon. David Kibby, Minister Emeritus at Media, PA. has certainly done this in a very praise-worthy manner. We recently saw a list of sixteen booklets and eleven essays and sermons which he had published.

Earlier this spring we received a good letter from Ted Webb who is now retired and doing some Interim Preaching while trying to decide what to do with a house he owns in Sacramento. Curiously, those of us who lived our lives in Parsonages are apt to envy those who got Housing Allowances and bought their own property, - but it sometimes works two ways. Some retired ministers with a house find it difficult to pay taxes on the inflated value it now has and on which its taxes are figured.... Up here in Maine it can work differently. When your Editor retired and he and Irene put a mobile-home on land they owned in Plymouth, Me. soon the First Selectman came around and noted that since they had become full-time residents the town discovered that it had been over-taxing them. Curiously, as year-round residents, - even though they had invested a considerable amount of money in their property, - their taxes were lowered.

This summer Ruth O. Cope sent in a contribution to the UURMA, and she wrote:

"My husband, the late Dr. J. Raymond Cope, would like, I'm sure, for me to continue his usual contribution. There are not the resources to continue all of his generous contributions; so one must go by priorities - the ones I learned were important to him, - and some of my own. This is one of them."

We are most grateful for such loyalty and always hope to deserve it from the surviving members of our families.