

# UU ELDER BERRIES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE U.U. RETIRED MINISTERS ASSOCIATION

Vol. V #3

Albert Q. Perry, Editor

P.O. Box 66

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Eastport, Maine 04631

## THE RETIREMENT RAG

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1989-91

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*Words by Jeanne & Russell Bletzer*

*Music by Robert R. Walsch*

I told the congregation that this year would be my last,  
The day is soon approaching when my future is my past.  
To replace me is impossible, my talent is so vast!  
I'm doing the retirement rag!

**Chorus:**

Retirement! Retirement!  
Though hardly avant garde, we are held in high regard.  
We've done a lot of living and service is our bag.  
We're doing the retirement rag!

Goodbye to all those deadlines, to sermons yet to write,  
To the calls I put off making, and the meetings ev'ry night.  
Farewell to endless potlucks, intended to delight.  
I'm doing the retirement rag!

**(Chorus)**

The telephone keeps ringing, but it never is for me.  
I find Sunday mornings strangely void and all too trouble free.  
Reading labels in the supermart is fun you will agree.  
I'm doing the retirement rag!

**(Chorus)**

I'll write that book inside me, a best-seller that's for sure.  
I have time for all my reading, for research clean and pure.  
I travel the whole world over with no schedule to endure.  
I'm doing the retirement rag!

**(Chorus)**

I've put the blues behind me now; each day brings something new.  
The gift of time is mine to spend on things I want to do.  
The 'shoulds' and 'oughts' have given way, and nothing is taboo!  
I'm doing the retirement rag!

**(Chorus)**

(This was written with apologies to and permission from Robert R. Walsch, who authored the words and music to "The Relevance Rag" for the 1970 General Assembly. He is currently minister of the First Parish Church, Duxbury, MA.)

This was sung as a part of the "Red Vest" ceremony at the N.E. Conference at Hudson, N.H.

# "THE ORDER OF THE RED VEST"

(In Tribute to the Late Frank Gentile)

*(At the Fall Conference of the UURMA at Hudson, N.H. the following service was offered to induct all into the status to which their age entitled them. It may be that something similar may be offered at other conferences, but in the absence of attending such, one need only read the liturgy below in order to assume the honors to which his or her age entitles him or her.)*

RRB: The Order of the Red Vest, to which you are about to be inducted, was, to the best of our knowledge and belief, founded by our late colleague, Frank Gentile. This investiture is intended to be a respectful - but not solemn - tribute to Frank, who brought his native humor and wisdom to this celebration of aging and maturity.

BOB: The New York Times Magazine, Nov. 26, 1972, carried an essay by James A. Michener, titled "The Red Kimono". Here are some of his words on the subject:

"The Japanese follow an attractive custom whereby a man, when he reaches the age of 60, is free to wear his kimono lined with red, and the more flaming the red, the better.

"Up to this time he has been expected to wear a kimono of black or charcoal gray, to work diligently for the corporation and to keep his mouth shut. But once he reaches 60 he becomes an immediate elder statesman with the right to express himself on anything...

RRB: "Much of the solidity of Japanese society stems from the contributions of these elder states men, genro, for any society requires a subtle combination of youthful vigor, middle-year experimentation and genro sagacity. A society which lacks any one of these components is in real trouble.

"In American life, a man attains his freedom rather later than in Japan ...it comes at the age of formal retirement, 65.

BOB: "Customarily the first year of this freedom is spent in making new life plans ...I feel that I am entitled to wear a bright red vest in lieu of a kimono, which does not become me. I have purchased such a vest and when wearing it I intend to say precisely what I feel."

RRB: On May 25, 1980, Frank Gentile preached on "Some Implications of Donning the Red Vest". In this sermon he quoted from Carolos Castaneda, from Henry David Thoreau, from American Indian poetry, and, of course, from James Michener's essay on the Red Kimono. He wove the ideas of his chosen authors into his own vision of the life of the genro, the wise elder who may speak his mind freely, to say not only what he has learned about life, but what he feels in his heart.

BOB: Frank Gentile wrote:

"Donning the Red Vest implies for me the need to give up that hedonist consumer retirement image the media projects of carefree pleasure, comfort-filled days of travel, adventure and life in paradise.

"Yes, that image tempts me, though another one pulls at me more strongly. I see myself becoming an elder statesman, a "genro". There seems to be, for me, more satisfaction in that image. I sense ahead a life of learning. I sense adventure, joy and sorrow, achievement and frustration.

"Having chosen the latter image by putting on the red vest, I have said to the world, you will have to take me as an elder. I am not going to seek approval by taking on your latest fads merely to show how young I really am...

RRB: "I am going to stay where I can hear the thunder and power of new ideas at work. I will stay where I can witness triumphs of human kind over natural enemies, as well as those it has created for itself...I shall enjoy that increasing freedom made available to elders...

"If we create values in lives for ourselves, it will be sought by others...In our society at this time, we must create for ourselves the honorable order of the Red Vest in which men and women may find suitable support for their efforts toward goals of self respect and resources of wisdom for life abundant ...

BOB: "Sometimes, faced with a crisis brought on by our own failings, we experience a choice - life or death - and choose to regain life by changing our behavior. Older age allows us more time to do our soul's work.

"If you put on the Red Vest, wear it proudly. Let it be a visual symbol of what you strive for. Let it be a physical reminder, comfort and support for your self-image as an elder stateswoman or statesman.

RBR: And now, we men and women Elders are privileged to welcome you into the Honorable Order of the Red Vest. Having met all qualifications for membership, you are hereby fully vested with all rights, privileges and perquisites this honorable order bestows.

May the freedom you have earned by achieving elder status, and the dignity and wisdom that now grace your life, be with you always!

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*(This service was assembled and adapted by Russell Bletzer, and was led by him and 'Bob' Dick. Following the distribution of Certificates, we all sang "The Retirement Rag" by Jeanne Bletzer which is printed on the first page of this issue.)*

## **EXCITING OPPORTUNITY!! TO HELP AND ENJOY!!**

Our Fellowship in San Juan, PR sends us the following invitation:

"Hear ye, hear ye. Whosoever is interested in flexing thy sermonizing muscles during a vacation to beautiful Puerto Rico, listen up. Thou payest thy transportation; we will provide hospitality Latin style (none better). Seriously, the fellowship is small and in dire need of attracting new members. We would like to have as many visiting ministers as possible, - with brief background and photo, to attempt to get publicity and to use in our own bulletin which could then be sent to prospective members."

**CONTACT: UU SAN JUAN  
GPO Box 3724  
San Juan, PR 00936-3724  
Tel. 809-767-5550**



# BUDGET 1989-1990

## INCOME

Contributions from members	\$4,500
UUMA Grant	200
Interest Income	<u>400</u>
Anticipated Income	\$5,100

## EXPENSES

Executive Board	\$1,500
Newsletter (ELDER-BERRIES)	1,200
Telephone, Postage, Supplies	1,000
Contact Program*	500*
Conferences	1,500
Council on Church Staff finances	200
Miscellaneous	<u>500</u>
Authorized Expenditures	\$6,400

*\*The Contact Persons Program, by means of which we hope to keep in touch and available to isolated and/or handicapped members has received a grant of \$5000 which makes possible a great many things. Decisions by the Executive Board in respect to this will be included in our next issue.*

\*\*\*\*\*

As we enter our fifth year as a recognized and well established denominational organization we express our appreciation to all who have helped bring us to our present status, and particularly to the increasing number of our members who have given their financial support. This record is very encouraging. Since our organization meeting in October, 1985, 122 ministers and 79 surviving spouses have participated as follows:

**1985-86 55 members contributed \$1,477**  
**1986-87 83 members contributed \$2,343**  
**1987-88 114 members contributed \$3,312**  
**1988-89 143 members contributed \$4,062**

As we rejoice in our progress, and what this makes possible in terms of services, we may well recognize the need for continuing and increased support. To share in the effort to maintain our program, make checks payable to the UURMA and mail to our Treasurer:

**Rev. William E. Gardner**  
**77 Sailfish Drive**  
**East Falmouth, MA 02536**

Perhaps it should be noted that the statements and records of the UURMA, and kept by our Treasurer, were audited by Richard M. Prince at the close of the fiscal year. He reported: "No discrepancies were noted during my review and in my opinion the reports are an accurate presentation of the financial condition of the Association as of June 30, 1989.."

He thanked 'Bill', our Treasurer, for his help and cooperation in the audit, and we would also express our thanks for his ability and loyalty in serving the UURMA.

*We think that one of the functions of this newsletter is to encourage our membership to continue writing though in retirement, and to print as much as possible of the unusual things some of our membership write.....*

## THRENODY

Farley W. Wheelwright

Thoughts that surged on listening to Symphony 5 in D (The Reformation) by Felix Mendelssohn, 10/6/89. To the memory of WBW who died 8/11/58.

### I

His hungry eyes feasted on the face  
Of his newly-dead Pappa.  
He turned away, unfed.  
It never did occur to him to cry  
And when he thought of that, he wondered why.  
Not shed a tear for him who passed away?  
Too late, Pappa, too late, he whispered with a sigh.  
Time was he cried for him and wished him dead.  
Now here he lay. "You died for me betime," he said.

### II

"Where were you when, caterpillar I,  
Was needing you to give me wings to fly?"  
Oh, how that child had wanted you to share  
those days he was a scout.  
But you were not about  
To act the father, never once to say,  
"My son, my son how proud I am of you,  
You are the apple of my eye, my son and heir."  
Where were you when the lad  
Was shipped to a boarding school to find a surrogate dad?  
Don't answer. The son knew well enough.  
If he'd known where to look  
He'd find you wandering in some alien corn  
Leaving your family that first death to mourn.  
Thus thought the son whose warehouse memories  
With offal and bile were filled.  
This man he loved, this man he loved to hate  
Lay silent, still with no defense to make.

### III

What cowardly adieux, the young man thought.  
How dare the living take advantage  
Of a corpse who cannot talk.  
If only he replied, what might he say?  
Would he regret neglect this youth he spawned  
Then left to swim through life, but angry to this day?  
What knew he son of father's motives clear,  
What knew he but that separation might have cost him dear?

Perhaps 'twas not the son he left, but hearth and home  
 So miserable were, he had to go. And then it was  
 A sudden thought occurred:  
 If father to the son had never father been,  
 'Twas only fair to own  
 The son to father never was a son.  
 So filled the son was his pre-occupation,  
 He never did a thing to heal a bad relation.  
 Thus thinking, the new-orphaned son  
 Owed to the father something--  
 Something hitherto unseen -- his gene.

#### IV

Those hungry eyes gazed once again upon that peaceful face  
 And inexpectationally felt fed.  
 "Father, forgive a wayward son," he said.  
 "I, too, forgive for all thou hadst not done.  
 The greatest gift you could have given to me you gave.  
 You taught me, now a father too, how better to behave.  
 Like you, a wayward parent I have been. Hard as it was,  
 The lesson now I hope I've learned:  
 A fathers' sins to visit not upon his child."  
 At this a sudden strange thing to the son did chance,  
 And how it came about he did not know.  
 As if by some instinctive primal urge,  
 Or if he had his anger all to purge,  
 The young man, 'proached the casket, leaned therein  
 And on the waxen face bestowed a kiss.  
 It was the first time ever had he kissed his dad.  
 Men don't kiss men, in life his father would reproach.  
 In death, however, 'twas the son who's boss,  
 And through that one redemptive act  
 Was able to retrieve the man he'd lost.  
 Was able, too, to grieve the dad he'd always loved  
 And say a fit good-bye without a fear  
 Of one last scolding deep from within that bier.  
 From that day forward when e'er he told the story  
 The son would swear  
 That on the dead man's face there also was a tear.

## MAXIMS FOR THOSE DEPRESSED,

Particularly by growing older.

Mary Cleary, Lyons, Ohio

### BE OF GOOD FAITH

The resources of the universe are still there and available. There are caring people, there is beauty, there is inner strength, there is love. And while life and mind last, there is always the ability to do something, however small, for others.

### BE OF GOOD CHEER

Lift the spirits of others and they will lift yours. Tales of trouble and woe may appropriately be kept for professionals and for the ears of a few close persons who understand.

### BE AWARE OF THE HERE AND NOW

Watch the grass moving in the breeze, feel the cool wind, listen to the voices of children, smell the smoke of the bonfire. Live in this moment, now, without regretting the past or being anxious for the future.



## THE UURMA AT GENERAL ASSEMBLY Harold Hadley

This year at the 29th Annual General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association in Milwaukee, Wisconsin the UURMA is sponsoring two program activities as follows:

1. A Practicum entitled "Living Liberal Churches Under the Southern Cross" will be led by UURMA members Max and Carolyn Gabler (retired) of the First Unitarian Society, Madison, Wisconsin. Recently, on retiring, Max and Carolyn were engaged in an Interim Ministry at the Unitarian Church in Adelaide, Australia and in Auckland, New Zealand. They will describe and show films of the Liberal Religious movement. (Unitarian) "down under".

2. A Luncheon Reception, similar to the one held last year at New Haven, will take place immediately following the Sunday Morning "Service of the Living Tradition" ceremonies. Those 1989-90 ministers "Completing Full-Time Ministries" will be recognized and welcomed into UURMA membership at the Luncheon occasion.

The procedure for purchase of Luncheon tickets, as well as, the exact time and place of meeting for both activities will be announced at a later date when the official report of the G.A. Planning Committee is released.

## CAN YOU HELP US??

From time to time we lose touch with some of our potential members, particularly spouses, who, after being widowed or divorced may go to live with other family members, or may re-marry, or simply move and fail to keep 25 Beacon Street informed. We are anxious to maintain ties with all who served our churches in earlier years; and it would help us fulfill our responsibilities, and keep the U.U.A. up-to-date, if we could secure addresses for the following:

Mildred Arms	Josephine Flint	Shirley Kennedy	Leolyn Morgan	Rita Rohrbaugh
Alice Bosworth	Inge Fowlie	Shirley Kosmo	Florence Muder	Mrs. Perry E. Roll
Violet Chapman	Elizabeth Fuller	Elizabeth P. Lewis	Loretta Neale	Barbara Spence
Marjorie Clark	Mrs. John Gill	Lois Lewis	Clara Potter	Alice Stark
Helen Csiki	Constance Holloway	Mary Lyon	Mrs. James Reeb	Mrs. Ray S. True
Harrietta Domas	Clara Jaynes	Aline McKinstry	Frances Robbins	Alice Whitney
		Grace Mooney		

As a usual thing, we urge that Address Changes be sent directly to the Dept. of the Ministry, 25 Beacon St., Boston, MA, but since these are all Surviving Spouses, and kept on a separate list by someone other than the Secretary of the Dept. of the Ministry, addresses for any of those above may be sent to me (A.Q. Perry, P.O. Box 66, Eastport, ME 04631) and I will see that they reach the proper person.

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP!!**

## MORE MAXIMS....

Mary Cleary, Lyons, Ohio

### ACCEPT YOURSELF AS YOU ARE

So you have faults and bad habits, so what else is new! Don't we all? Unless they are suicidal ones, let them alone. Appreciate your good points and be supportive of the good person you are; stop trying to be a saint or a genius (Unless, of course, that's what you are).

### ACCEPT OTHER PEOPLE AS THEY ARE

They aren't perfect, but neither are any of the rest of us. You can't change them, so appreciate and enjoy the good in them and let the rest go. Appreciation and praise are so good for everyone, including the giver.

## NEWS AND NOTES

We received a nice, and exciting letter from Regina Cary Lapoint, with whom I remember playing in the Grove at Ferry Beach when I was about five. Later, she married one of my best friends and most respected colleagues. She was the daughter of two Universalist ministers, a sister to one UU minister, the wife and widow to a fourth in our movement, and mother to a fifth outstanding liberal minister.

This past summer she went back to Japan where she grew up to participate in the Anniversary celebration of a school she attended there. Among other things, she had an audience with the Emperor to whom she explained that she would always feel affection for his country in that both of her parents were buried there..She now lives in Spokane, Washington.

We also received a note from Elmer Colcord who could well be the minister with the longest period of fellowship in our movement in that he was ordained in 1918, and has been in good standing for 72 years...He liked the suggestion that we have a page of 'Helpful Hints', and submitted the following:

"With blazing logs in the open fireplace, a comfortable chair and a glass of hot ginger ale in one's hand what more could one want of a winter evening than an absorbing book to read?

"Of such there are many, but I venture to suggest two of which I have had recent pleasure,

1. The New Jersome Biblical Commentary, Prentice Hall, 1990. This is a ponderous book of some 1400 pages that will inform, challenge and amuse you until you fall asleep in your chair. It is, indeed, as the foreword says, 'a mine of exegesis,' written by Roman Catholic scholars exclusively in an attempt, it is also said, to prove that Catholics can do scholarly work. References are frequently made to Protestant and Jewish interpretations, often with applause, if muted.

Those of us in the Liberal Ministry who had exegetical studies with such scholars as Hinckley Mitchell (Tufts) and Orello Cone (St. Lawrence) will find a sort of 'Refresher Course' in this modern book and at times will applaud to see interpretations common to us fifty years ago -- and then anathema -- now freely accepted.

2. Tom Fuller's 'Worthies of England,' in three rather large volumes. This work is rather hard to find, but U. Mass., at Amherst, has it and will send it out on library loan.

This is a reprint by the AMS Press of the 1840 London Edition. It is well written and at times very amusing. 'Retired Sermonizers' will wish they had come across this rare and well done (!) book earlier for Fuller has a positive genius in finding a Biblical text or a squib from Virgil or Tully to fit the personage or situation that he is describing."

(THANKS, Dr. Colcord!)

We would be happy to hear from any others on any subject related to our profession.

*We hope that nothing has happened to the system of notification in the case of the deaths of any of our associates, but we have received no such notices since our last issue. We hope this means that we have not lost any of our friends, but if we have, we apologize for failing to express regrets.*