Gro Brundtland
Elected Director-General
First Woman Elected Head of UN Specialized Agency

WHO received its first woman Director-General as the Organization celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The fifty-first session of the World Health Assembly elected Gro Harlem Brundtland on 13 May; she will begin her five-year term on 21 July 1998.

Dr Brundtland is the first elected woman head of a United Nations specialized agency and has wide experience in fields that will serve the Organization well. As a physician, she has worked at the urban and national public health level. As a national politician, she has served her country as Minister of the Environment and three terms - for a total of ten years - as Prime Minister.

As an international politician, Dr Brundtland, beginning in 1983, served as Chairperson of the World Commission on Environment and Development - the Commission coined the concept "sustainable development" and urged the convening of the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Following this and other accomplishments at the global level, the Secretary-General of the United Nations offered Dr Brundtland a top-notch position with the United Nations. She declined and chose to seek election as head of the one organization where her training and experience would allow her to do the most good. WHO is the beneficiary.

In her maiden address to the World Health Assembly, Dr Brundtland insisted that "The challenges go to all of us. WHO can and must change. It must become more effective, more accountable, more transparent and more receptive to a changing world." We will "see changes which will be faster and more dramatic from an economic,
Dr Brundtland Listening to Current and Former Staff

Ambassador Jonas Gahr Støre, head of Dr Brundtland's transition team secretariat, spoke to WHO staff on 21 May 1998 outlining the new Director-General's consultations before her assumption of office on 21 July. During the first "listening" phase, she will have meetings with all principal players in the WHO community, including government missions in Geneva, Member State capitals, outside groups, and programme directors and managers. Included equally in her rounds of discussions are staff associations at headquarters and in the regions, focus groups involving general service and professional staff, and former staff.

Welcoming this opportunity, former staff members are invited by your Association to make substantive comments to Dr Brundtland's transition team through the AFM office or directly at the team's e-mail address <trans.team@iprolink.ch>.

The full transition team is: Ambassador Støre, Åse Elin Bjerke, Rufaro Chatora, Ann Kern, and Kamini Mendis.

Based on WHO Staff Association Spotlight, No 28, 22 May 1998

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social and health perspective.” The change from communicable to noncommunicable diseases “cannot be seen as competing tasks... We need to fight both. The burden of disease is the burden of unfulfilled human development.”

Under Dr Brundtland, WHO will: • help monitor, roll back and, where possible, eradicate communicable diseases; • help fight and reduce the burden of noncommunicable diseases; • help countries build sustainable health systems that reach equity targets and render quality services to all, with particular emphasis on the condition of women and mothers; • speak out for health, and back its case with solid "wild"u" and thereby be a better advocate for health to a broader audience of decision-makers.

To illustrate her commitment, Dr Brundtland focused on two clearly defined and targeted "projects": • Malaria - "The call is there. We have enough knowledge, skills and tools to launch a new concerted effort. Africa is responding. Africa should be spearheading the project." • Tobacco - "A major cause of premature death which is dramatically increasing, killing four million people this year," and, if unchecked, "ten million people in the year 2030." "The major focus of the epidemic is now shifting to the developing countries... I am a doctor. I believe in science and evidence. Let me state here today - Tobacco is a killer."

Dr Brundtland ended her speech by describing her concept of the world that will guide her as Director-General: "I envisage a world where solidarity binds the fortunate with those less favoured. Where our collective efforts will help roll back all the diseases of the poor. Where our collective efforts assure universal access to a compassionate and competent health care."

Finally, as a person and a woman, Dr Brundtland was born 20 April 1939 in Oslo, Norway, was awarded a MD degree by the University of Oslo and a MPH degree by Harvard University, is married, the mother of four, and the grandmother of eight.

The Health Corner - To Shoot or Not to Shoot?

"We just had a small family dispute," said Albert on arrival at our weekly 9:15 a.m. coffee. "Berthe said she read in the Consumer's Magazine that vaccination against influenza is of no use. The title of the article is categorical about it - there's no question mark - it's just a bland statement: 'Vaccination is useless'. The problem is: I'm all for it, she's against. What do you think?"

So, what do I think? Or, more important, what do I do? I do take the vaccine every late autumn, and there is no doubt that you, dear Reader, should do the same. Influenza is a specific acute viral respiratory disease with the well-known symptoms of fever, running nose, cough, headache, malaise, and inflammation of the respiratory mucous membranes. It is caused by a so-called myxovirus, a particle first isolated in 1933, and since then well-studied. There are several types of this virus, called Types A, B, and C, and a number of variations within these types. Many cases occur every year, but there are major epidemics at about three-year intervals, and sometimes worldwide pandemics. It may
lead to complications such as bronchiitis and pneumonia caused by additional bacterial and viral infections.

The problem with the influenza virus is that its immunological properties are changing all the time — this is called "antigenic drift." The result is that vaccination is efficacious only if done with the same virus that causes the disease in that particular season because the vaccine consists of the inactivated virus or its components. However, if done with the right vaccine, it definitely is protective. Epidemiologists have found that the virus "travels" around the world; thus, for example, the strain of the virus that prevails in China is most likely to reach Europe or any other continent within a few months — hence the vaccine applied, say, in Geneva or Montevideo should contain the Beijin strain of the virus, in order to forestall the disease. In practice, vaccines contain at least three different strains of the virus, those that can be expected during that particular winter in a given country, and — most importantly — vaccination usually does protect against contracting influenza.

What influenza vaccination does not prevent, are other illnesses of a similar kind, such as common colds caused by different viruses; and there are at least a hundred such viruses that can cause upper respiratory infections. When I looked up the article in the consumer's magazine that set off the family dispute Albert referred to, I found that the argument against influenza vaccination was that it is useless in many "colds." But these are separate infections that are usually less disturbing and, as a rule, less severe than "true" influenza. As a matter of fact, especially in the elderly and other high-risk persons, influenza can turn out to be quite a serious disease.

Let me add the following little story: A few days after the discussion prompted by the consumer's magazine, I met in the staircase my neighbour, a well-known demographer with the United Nations. "Don't come close," he said, "I have a severe influenza, which has made me terribly sick. Just got out of bed." — "Where did you contract it?" I asked. — "Ten days ago, at the World Population Conference in Beijing." — "Didn't you take the shot before going on duty travel?" — "My doctor said there is no point in taking it, 'viruses over there are different.'" I must say, this made me feel very wise: I was immunized against it!

The conclusion: Yes! take the shot. Viruses travel nowadays by business-class.

— Dr Thomas Strasser, Geneva, Switzerland

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**Social Justice Prescribed by Director-General Emeritus — Halfdan Mahler at Brock Chisholm Memorial Lecture**

"In the one world we all share, an adequate level of health is the basic requirement for all human development." WHO's former Director-General gave a vintage Mahler pep talk to several hundred enthusiastic friends and colleagues at a full house in the Palais des Nations marking the Brock Chisholm Memorial Lecture series and honouring the Organization's first executive head.

During the address presented in the very hall — Salle VII — where WHO held many of its meetings fifty years ago, Dr Mahler reiterated many of the inspiring themes he promoted during his period of leadership. He opined that "visionaries have always been the true realists in history" and what the Organization adopted as a goal in 1979 — Health for All — may have been criticized by some but is now undeniable. "An adequate level of health is the basic requirement for all human development," he insisted.

"Health is politics and politics is health on a large scale," noted Dr Mahler. "WHO and its partners in the United Nations family need to cooperate — not just coordinate — in the fight for social justice," he stated. Brock Chisholm noted early on that WHO is "an organization of women
and men in a hurry.” Dr Mahler added that they, with full energy and commitment, “need to both soar and be down to earth.”

At the conclusion of Dr Mahler’s address, the audience leapt to its feet in rousing applause, pleased with both the forceful delivery and the familiar message.

The address was sponsored by the Medical Society of WHO and the Brock Chisholm Memorial Trust. During the programme, a bust of Dr Chisholm, commissioned by Dr Robert Müller, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and a good friend of the Organization, was unveiled. Sculpted by the well-known artist Domenico Marzooie of New York, the bust will be an appropriate symbol of the 50th Anniversary of WHO in the Organization’s hall of fame. Mrs Müller, and Mrs Marcolino G. (Sita) Candau, widow of the second Director-General, joined in the celebration.

In his introduction to Dr Mahler’s address, Medical Society president William (Bill) Gunn described Brock Chisholm’s influence in the early days of the Organization and during the meetings of the Technical Preparatory Committee.

The WHO Constitution was written in nineteen days, often with phrasing by Dr Chisholm. The famous definition of health is seared in the minds of all who continue to serve. The name of the new body should imply more than actions among nations – “universal” or “world” would include all peoples. The goal of “health”, rather than a professional means to achieve it, should also be there. Thus, the “World Health Organization” was born. [For a thumbnail sketch of Brock Chisholm and WHO’s work on his watch, see “WHO at Fifty, 1. Highlights of the early years until 1960,” in World Health Forum, 19 (1), 1998, pp. 21-37.]

Dr Gunn observed that human development with social justice was a thread connecting the thinking of Brock Chisholm, Halfdan Mahler, and WHO’s new Director-General, Gro Harlem Brundtland. He was certain that the Organization will continue to be the guide for human aspirations and sustainable development through equitable health.

WHO’s Original Legal Maven Recalls WHO’s Birth

Frank Cutteridge, WHO’s first legal officer and surviving member of the Technical Preparatory Committee for the first International Health Conference, New York, 1946, recalled his first day at the office. (He was giving an appreciation of Brock Chisholm at the Memorial Lecture reported elsewhere in Q.N.) With low-keyed humor, Frank spoke of the early expectations for WHO international civil servants: In addition to their technical expertise, they should be well-grounded in world history, semantics (languages), religion, sociology, social psychology, psychopathology, and international law. In addition, they should be schooled in pedagogy and teaching, and political science.

Because of the newness of the Organization and the lack of precedence for WHO staff behaviour, Frank felt obliged to appear at his first day of work in the WHO offices at the Palais des Nations in a pinstripe suit and “Anthony Eden” hat! After the first day, however, he “dressed down,” and over the years the other expectations have also been reduced for most staff.

Frank noted that while there was early agreement on the central health mission of the Organization, there was not early acceptance of related issues, human rights, for instance. WHO has widened its horizon – as have other organizations – in recognizing the interrelatedness of development issues. Still, with much yet to be accomplished, there is now a growing impatience with deliberate growth and development, instant solutions have become more popular – even in the realm of human potency! But, WHO’s resources remain limited – WHO’s current regular budget for the world is less than that of the Cantonal Hospital for Geneva.

One of Our Own Makes It to the Very Top – Former WHO Staff Member is Secretary-General

Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General since November 1996, honed his political and diplomatic skills as an administrative trainee in WHO’s budget and personnel units during the early 1960s. Mr Annan is still remembered by staff who knew and worked with him during his early years “in the family.”
He was "very open and receptive, with highly developed interpersonal skills" said one of his acquaintances still on staff, "Anybody who needed help or wanted to talk could always count upon Kofi. We all remember him as a 'smoothie' - in the best sense of the term, a person who will go far. But we really had no idea how far!"

Mr Annan is continuing his personal courtesies by sending warm 'thank-yous' to those in the Organization who congratulated him upon his election.

The Edge of Art –
Contemporary Exhibition Graces WHO Campus

As part of a new openness at the end of its first half century, WHO has welcomed to its grounds in Geneva an array of art, each piece of which is monumental in size, import, execution and display. Forty-one artists from 29 countries participated in the project “The Edge of Awareness” under the auspices of Art for The World, a group seeking to relate artists with the goals of international organizations.

Perhaps the most striking feature of the exhibition is the use of WHO’s beautiful landscape as the backdrop. Because the mostly large-scale objects are situated on the lawns south of the main building, allowing viewers to wander through spaces normally neglected, the grandeur of WHO’s setting and architecture is seen in a new perspective. This is one of the functions of art, to encourage seeing the familiar in a different light.

Reaction to every work will vary with each viewer: some will be pleased, some will be puzzled, some may be hurt. Viewers accustomed to visiting the great modern art museums of world will not be startled. All should be happy that WHO has the courage to open its space to fresh and stimulating images and to embrace new partners in the quest to reach a larger public.

Unlike some opportunities QN announces for the Geneva region, readers living in several other parts of the world will also have the chance to view “The Edge of Awareness” and judge the content for themselves. The peripatetic exhibition is at WHO 10 May-12 July 1998; the United Nations headquarters, New York, and the PS1 Contemporary Art Center, Long Island, New York, 13 September - 15 October 1998; SESC de Pompéia, Sao Paulo, Brazil, 7 December 1998-30 January 1999; and New Delhi, March-April 1999.

-Jery Kilker

Professor Chaudhury Awarded Title by India

Ranjit Roy Chaudhury was awarded India’s national title of Padma Shri on 26 January 1998 for his services to medical education and research. Professor Chaudhury was on the WHO Human Reproduction country team in Bangladesh from 1970 to 1972 and at headquarters during 1976 and 1977. He later served in the Eastern Mediterranean regional and completed his service in 1991 as the Organization’s representative in Myanmar (Burma).

More recently, Professor Chaudhury has been Emeritus Scientist at the Indian National Institute of Immunology, New Delhi; Adviser to the State Minister of Health, New Delhi; and UNESCO Professor for the Rational Use of Drugs, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, Thailand. He is also currently a member of WHO’s Toxicology Panel.

Former WPRO DPM Honoured by University

John Hans Hirshman, who left WHO in 1979 as Director of Programme Management and Health Services in the Western Pacific, was honoured recently by the University of New South Wales in his native land. The University, noting his long and outstanding contribution to international health through a lifetime of service in medicine, public health, and undergraduate and postgraduate teaching, conferred upon him its highest accolade, the degree of Doctor of Medicine honoris causa.

"Retirement – when every day is on the weekend.”

Based on SEARO News, 3 March 1998
WHO Follies, or, Laughter is the Best Medicine - 14 Years On

A remarkable demonstration of staff morale occurred in November 1984 when the WHO Staff Association organized its spectacular Gala. Because there was some official concern that this levity should not be expressed by the staff of such a serious organization as WHO, the festivities were held at the nearby Hotel Intercontinental. Then Staff President, Ron Anderson, encouraged us to "leave our problems elsewhere and join in a spirit of reinforcing and developing closer bonds and social relationships." It was an exuberant occasion efficiently arranged by Armando Pares and other members of the Committee. Ron opined at the time that the gala, with continued support of the staff, "could become an annual event."

The highlight of the affair was the "WHO Follies," olio acts composed and performed by talented members of the staff under the direction of John Wickett and Dorothy Hoffmann with music by Rosemary Besana.

As a contribution to WHO's "Memory Lane," QN reprises one of the songs performed at the Gala:

**"HFA’s No Picnic"**

(To the tune of the "Teddy Bears' Picnic")

If you go down to the WHO today
You wouldn’t believe your eyes;
If you go down to the WHO today
You’re in for a big surprise:

For every ill that ever there was
Will soon be gone for certain, because
We’re on the way to HFA
Two Thousand.

If you go down to the WHO today
You’ll find we are Regionalized.
And do you know it’s quite a show
Competing with six other guys!

For Health for All is all very nice,
But what we need is a much bigger slice
of the EEC’s economy
To help you.

If you go out in the world today
It’s not such a big surprise
For you to see each GNP
Taking a big nose-dive.

What the hell, that’s all very well,
Life goes on – our secret we’ll tell:
Happy we’d be if you and me could be
Healthy!

Healthy times for all of us –
We’re looking to the world to get priorities planned for us,
Down to essentials every one
From your aspirins to your surgery.

WHO just wants the best for you.
We work so hard, you see, to put you in command.
The Year 2000 may come too soon before you understand,
And we’ll be tired little teddy bears.

(The first two verses are repeated.)

The performers of this delightful romp were Peace Akwei, Jill Andrews, Angela Blattler, Sue Block, Judy Dahl-Hansen, Mariel David, Shauna Dickson, Kathleen Hargreaves, Di Hart, Dorothy Hoffmann, Don Johnson, Pan Jude, Jerry Kilker, Veronica Nelson, Brigida Opulencia, Peter Ozorio, Marisol Salmon-Yori, Hannah Shabathai, Aruna Wallen, John Wicket, and Marion Wilson. Where are they now? [Further ditties from the 1984 “WHO Follies” will be printed upon request! QN.]
Former WHO Nurses Converge on Geneva

About fifty public health nurses who had served WHO in various field projects held their annual meeting at WHO headquarters in May on the occasion of the Organization’s 50th anniversary. In previous years, the group, each person paying all her own expenses, met in other parts of the world. Prominent among them was Dr Amelia Mangay-Maglacas, former Director of the nursing programme.

Regretfully, QN notes that while the one unit arranged for a room in which to meet, no welcome, reception, programme, briefing, or any sort of recognition was provided by any office or person at Headquarters.

We know that public health nurses have long had an anomalous position at WHO, and that no other professional or occupational group is represented as such by an administrative unit at headquarters — the administrative structure is by function or programme, not by job category. Nursing, at the same time, is one of the oldest traditional contributions to public health practice, and public health nurses, perhaps because of their particular situation, have a strong group identity. It is a shame that no one at headquarters, especially during this time of celebration of WHO’s half century of service, thought to embrace our sisters.

It is ironic, maybe even symbolic, that QN learned that the public health nurses were meeting by themselves at the very same time as the physician-enriched Medical Society of WHO was celebrating the memory of our first Director-General by listening to an address on “Social Justice – The Underpinning for Leadership in Local and Global Health” given by our Director-General Emeritus.

— Jery Kilker

No Rose-Coloured Glasses in the Painted Desert

(Bob Tonn writes from New Mexico:)

“It hardly seems possible that I have been retired for almost eleven years. In fact, physically and mentally I feel much the same as I did in 1987. The only problem is that it seems the rest of the world just wants me to go away! Here in the United States we old folks are bombarded with propaganda on burial plots, Social Security death benefits, and the need to update one’s will. In other words, encouraging us to die soon. I have become afraid to check the mail box or to accept telephone calls!

“Recently, after some mental health therapy, I became brave enough to renew my membership in the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) for ten years. How is that for gambling against the odds? Now I want to throw caution to the winds and pay my dues to AFSM for a few more years.

“Of course, I may not be totally cured. Recently the PAHO retired staff newsletter carried articles on ‘healthy aging’ and ‘healthy dying.’ Is the campaign to drive me to the grave beginning again? If I am still to be overwhelmed by letters and telephone calls concerning nursing home insurance, funeral insurance or religious groups wanting to save my soul, I may be driven to seek further mental health assistance!

“In any event, if I should ‘pass over’ before I again become delinquent in my dues, use nice black ink for obituary and mention aging isn’t bad, it’s just all those damned people that want you the hell out of here now. Dying is profitable to so many.

“I hope that around Geneva the powers that be are more gentle in urging one out of this existence. Best wishes to all!”

Robert (Bob) Tonn,
Las Cruces, New Mexico,
10 February 1998
Principle in “Bank Offers Help” – Alberto Besa Comments

(Alberto Besa writes)

“I refer to ‘Bank Offers Help’ in QN No. 29, Spring 1997:

“It is true that a mutually satisfactory settlement has finally been reached [in the case of the Missing Money]. However, I do not believe that the Swiss Bank Corporation has emerged without blame in this unfortunate occurrence.

“From the beginning, I said that the bank fraud was no doing of mine; I believe it was more the bank’s responsibility [by accepting the unauthentic-ticated request for funds transfer]. I suggested that a graphologist be hired to study the forged signature and to verify that it did not match my actual signature. The bank, however, replied that it was under no obligation to do so under Swiss law and that a simple verification of the signature was sufficient to honour the request for a transfer of funds.

“In further fact, the bank did not completely follow the instructions in the forged letter to close the original account – which had been opened only one month before – but, instead, transferred only the bulk of the balance to the bank in Bangkok where the real culprit had an account in a name the same as mine.

“In addition, the Swiss bank did not take the precaution of confirming with me the request for the transfer of the large amount of money, a practice of banks in other countries such as the Philippines and the United States.

“There is also a matter of proportion: The funds involved in the fraud were a large sum to me (CHF 154,000) but only a tiny drop in the huge amounts handled by the bank.

“Quite frankly, I did agree to a settlement but only with great reluctance as it represented less than 50 per cent of the original amount involved. Also, I did not have sufficient resources to travel to Geneva and pursue the case in the Swiss courts. The expenses would be too great for me – travel, accommodation, daily living, and lawyers’ fees. Also, I did not believe I had the support of the concerned agencies.

“I am writing this letter to help others avoid a similar ‘Fraud’. The selection of a reliable and reputable bank should be kept in mind when dealing with accounts, especially large retirement savings.

“My case was published in major newspapers in the Philippines before the settlement was reached between the bank and me. It would have been easier for me to settle my grievance if the Swiss bank had had a branch in the Philippines.

“Yours sincerely,

– Alberto A. Besa,
(Formerly SE/ESEAD/WPRD)”
Quezon City, Philippines, 3 November 1997

[This letter has been edited for style with the permission of its author: QN]

Settled Facts

(David Payne writes from South Wales:)

“Today I received, out of the blue, a letter from a retired staff member prompted by my article “Homeward Bound” published in QN, No. 27, Autumn 1996. The correspondent was contemplating relocating to a domicile where United Nations pensions were tax-free. This raised in my mind awful visions of other staff members who may have been similarly inspired by the article.

“This, of course, was far from my intention as I fully accord with the advice which we receive from time to time from the officials of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund as to the cautioning against making retirement decisions solely on the basis of tax avoidance.

“I would like to emphasize once again the best advice for those thinking about where to live upon receiving UNJSPF benefits is knowing a
great deal about any country where you choose
to live, be it a tax haven or otherwise. Apart from
cultural, climatic and language differences, there
are considerable economic, social costs and
medical services which any person or family
needs to take into account. And a commitment
made in relatively early retirement age may
prove to be far from easily changed in older age
or infirmity.”

- David Payne,
Vale of Glamorgan,
South Wales, UK

"Age is a matter of mind; if you don’t mind,
it doesn’t matter.”

Armoured Tram Story Pursued

The story of the Geneva armoured tram that
breached the Swiss-French border, retold in the
QN Nos. 30-31, was followed-up by several
French Resistance members living in the Ge-
neva area after we asked for verification of this
remarkable tale. Well, it appears that this beau-
tiful story was not factual. According to two in-
quiries, one – initiated by John Farmer and J.
Humblot – with former responsible leaders of
the Resistance networks in Annemasse, France,
and another one – undertaken by Adrien Pétrier,
a retired colleague – with the local Geneva trans-
port companies. After a review of archives and
newspapers of the time, it was revealed that the
streetcar line did not exist in 1944, and there is
no trace or record that the events recounted re-
ally took place. Sorry! [Did anybody check the
Gare des Eaux-Vives–Annemasse railroad line?]

-Yves Beigbeder

Get HIP –
Health Insurance and Pensions

Many of us may continue to have questions about
our pensions that can be answered by WHO. The
new source of information is our friend from
Staff Health Insurance, Ann Van Hulle-Colbert
who will be responsible for the reconstituted
Health Insurance and Pension office, HIP. We
now enjoy “one-stop-shopping” – for informa-
tion about both health insurance and pensions,
contact Mrs Van Hulle-Colbert, Head, Health
Insurance and Pension, WHO, Geneva, new
office number 2008, (TP +41 22 791 23 39;
FX +41 22 791 41 84; e-mail
<vanhullecolbert@who.ch>).

Geneva Self-Help Group

The Self-Help Group is an informal gathering
of members in the Geneva area meeting on the
first Friday of each month for fellowship and
information exchange.

We meet at the first-floor restaurant of the Ho-
etel Suisse at Place Cornavin, having chosen this
place because it is quiet and easy to reach by
public transport, as well as having easy parking
under the railway station. We meet at 11:00 a.m.
for coffee and those who wish stay on for lunch,
which usually begins around 12:00 noon.

The aim of the Group is simply to stay in touch
with former colleagues – or get to know them
for the first time! The guiding principles are that
we as individuals can support each other by re-
taining or making friendships so that we can re-
duce the risk that, one day, when we have a prob-
lem we will have no one to turn to.

These are the “ Helpers” who have agreed to be
on call in case you need help (remember that
French numbers – outside the parentheses – may
be reached from Geneva and Vaud using Swiss
area code 059):

General: Margaret-Joy Baker (in
Peillonex/ Haute Savoie), telephone +(33) (0)4
50 36 88 63; Yves Beigbeder (Thonon les Bains/
HS), +(33) (0)4 50 71 92 72 and facsimile +(33)
(0)4 50 71 26 00; Rosemary Bell (Sergy Haut/
Ain), telephone and facsimile +(33) (0)4 50 42
26 78; Ann Elter (Confignon/ Geneva), +(41 22)
757 28 53; Judith Munzinger (Jussy/ Geneva),
telephone and facsimile +(41 22) 759 13 02;
Barbara Pumfrey (Versoix/ Geneva), +(41 22)
755 45 65; Daniel Reelfs (Coppe /Vaud), +(41
22) 776 12 10; and Joan Robertson (central
Geneva), +(41 22) 732 39 24.

Quarterly News of the Association of Former WHO Staff
Chief PEN Joins Our Ranks

Renate Wiedmer, formerly Chief of Pensions and (non-health) Insurance, in March joined those whom she has long helped in planning their post-WHO careers. We welcome her and wish her well. (See also related article on health insurance and pensions.)

The Association’s Financial Health – It’s Good

AFSM Treasurer, Joseph K. Chang-Wailing, reports that at the end of 1996 – the most recent period for which audited accounts are available – the total annual income for the Association was CHF 26,857.25. This consisted of CHF 18,751.55 in members’ contributions; an additional 6,760.00 in members’ donations; 631.00 income from money market investments; and 714.70 interest from bank deposits.

The expenses for the same period were CHF 17,720.00, made up of: secretarial work, 11,025.00; Quarterly News layout, 4,045.00; annual reception (expense over donations) 1,836.00; bank charges, 432.65; and miscellaneous expenses, 381.35. There was a net gain for 1996 of CHF 9,137.25. Joe noted that all totals – both income and expenses – were higher for 1996 than for the previous year.

Quarterly News Seeks New Editor

Looking for the opportunity to express yourself? Do you want the chance to exercise your (perhaps latent) talent in writing? Would you like to be among the first to learn about the changes taking place in the new WHO? Do you want an excuse to keep in close contact with your former colleagues in the Organization? Then, volunteer as the Editor of the AFSM Quarterly News.

After many years as the QN’s first and only editor, the estimable Peter Ozorio has decided to stop and follow other muses in his post-WHO career. Peter has set high standards for newsworthiness, concision, and keeping the interests of the readership foremost in the pages of QN.

Peter’s tenure will be difficult to follow but he left some of his wisdom when he helped the elected AFSM Executive Group create the Terms of Reference for publishing of the Association’s newsletter. Those of us who have worked closely with Peter admire his tenacity in developing the traditions and usefulness of our basic form of dialogue.

The new Editor will determine the content of the QN – in cooperation with the Editorial Board (re-established to help with the preparation of each issue) and the Executive Group – presenting the material in an accurate and responsible manner. The Editor will be responsible for the
creative aspects – news-gathering (from throughout the worldwide Organization and related developments), contacts with potential contributors, editing text so that it is concise, bright and readable and fits space requirements – and the technical aspects – arranging for translation, text-processing, layout and printing – of newsletter production. In short, the Editor needs to have an “edge”, a nose for news and the capacity to bring it into print.

For practical reasons, the new Editor should also live within the greater Geneva area so that close and easy contact can be kept with WHO headquarters.

If this opportunity tempts you, please contact the President, AFSM Executive Group, at any of the addresses in the masthead.

“Anyone who keeps the ability to see beauty never grows old.” Franz Kafka

Keeping in Touch –
Our Members and Ways to Make Contact

One of the valuable benefits to dues-paying members is to have our names included in the annual AFSM List of Members. To make this list as useful as possible, and to allow each of us to contact directly any of our colleagues, we want to include postal addresses and telephone numbers, facsimile numbers, and e-mail addresses. If you have these electronic addresses, and if the directory for 1998 does not include them, friends who would like to reach you easily and urgently will not be able to do so. We strongly encourage you to supply all of your addresses to the AFSM office by any of the means listed in QN’s masthead.

QN is planning to include in an upcoming issue a discussion of e-mail and the World Wide Web as services available within and about WHO and how these new forms of communication can help former staff members.

Corrections and A Proposal

QN erred in its last issue (Summer-Autumn, 1997, No 30-31) when it reported the offer of free WHO publications to former staff. The minimum period of service with the Organization is five years, rather than six months! Sorry, DSA.

QN also under-emphasized, in the same issue, the matter of courtesy in offering to join a voluntary organization when you ask it for assistance. In the note about “Tax Questions,” we told of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS) publication on “Taxation of United Nations Pensions” and asked that those requesting copies also obtain application forms if they do not already belong to that organization. We hear that the number of requests for the publication was large, with many coming from non-AFICS members, but the request for application forms was not. (Copies of the AFICS-prepared Taxation document are now available in the AFSM office.)

We have learned from this and other experiences that the income tax concerns of serving and former staff members are many and varied. There is therefore a need for compiling and analysing individual experiences along with the requirements of the national and local tax authorities for the purpose of issuing a comprehensive handbook (as authoritative as that provided by the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund for pensions vis-à-vis one national administration), training volunteer tax counsellors, maintaining a tax information data base, and eventually campaigning for an international standard.

Please let QN know if you have any ideas about this.

– QN Editorial Board

“The worst thing about retirement is to have to drink coffee on your own time.”
AFSM Office Hours

To enable Association members to speak directly with, or visit, a member of the AFSM Executive Group, the Association's regular office hours are:

Monday through Friday, 0800 to 1100 hours
Wednesday, 1400 to 1500 hours
For appointments with a specific Officer, contact the Secretary, Monday or Friday 0900 to 1200 hours
Telephone: +41 22 791 31 03, or +41 22 791 31 92
Facsimile: +41 22 781 07 46
Room E-118, WHO Headquarters

A Friend and Colleague Remembers
(Bill Barton writes from the United Kingdom:)

"I was saddened to read of the death of so many friends and colleagues, listed in the recent Quarterly News (No. 30-31, Summer-Autumn 1997), but which also brought back so many happy memories.

- Dr A. C. K. Antrobus of AMRO, a student of mine at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, before I joined WHO.

- Dr N. K. Jungalwalla, Director of Strengthening of Health Services in 1969, when he chose me to be a consultant to Indonesia, which led to further consultancies with the unit SHS before I joined WHO in 1972. He later became Director of Health Services in SEARO, where he did such a great job.

- Arthur Manger, so often misunderstood, but who had a wonderful career as a jet pilot in the United States Navy before joining WHO in 1967 as Chief of Administrative Management and Data Processing, long before the days of Programme Systems Analysis and the Information Systems Programme. He designed and ran the initial training programmes on Management in 1968 and 1969 with a distinguished faculty, which included, among others, Jay Bainbridge, Nils Dahlqvist, Dave Spirit, Steve Sapire, Alistair Taylor (in Administrative Management before he became Chief of Personnel), Peter Schluter and Klaus Suptut.

- The AFSM Officer usually available during the morning posted hours is: Dr Rajindar Pal, Chairman; and sometimes Mr Joe Chang-Walling, Vice-Chairman and Treasurer; Mr Roberto Masironi, Vice-Chairman; Mr Gerard Perrin, Assistant Treasurer; and Mr T. K. Sundaresan.

- Mr Roger Fontana (co-opted member) is present Wednesday afternoons. The other AFSM Officers are: Dr Yves Beigbeder, Ms Rosemary Bell, Mr Gerard Dazin, Dr Stan Flache, Mr Jery Kilker, Mr Vitorino Pinto. Mrs Marianne King is the Secretary.

- "Age does not depend upon years, but upon temperament and health. Some persons are born old, and some never grow so. Tryon Edwards

- Fergus McCullough, whom I met in the field in East Africa.

- Gerald Shute, who was the Parasitologist in the WHO Malaria Eradication Team and Training Programme in Zanzibar in 1957 under the late Dr W. J. Stoker, when I was the liaison officer to the programme.

- Dr Paul Brès—who could ever forget his dedication and bravery when he organised and led the team from Virology and others to the field when Ebola fever first struck in 1976. As we know, the epidemic was identified and isolated; he must surely be owed a great debt by the peoples of Central and East Africa.

- John Burton, with whom I was so proud to share a friendship, was our third Ombudsman, succeeding James Denny and Jimmy Wright, and like them fought for the rights of staff in the mid- and late-1970s. I wonder how many colleagues know of his exciting life in the days before he joined WHO? He fought in the Spanish Civil War (on whose side you must guess) and during the 1939-45 War, served in Italy before being taken as a POW. It was there that he met Isabella, his charming wife who survives him. My wife and I will ever be grateful to them and their family, for their open kindness to us on our first Christmas in WHO in 1972, when they invited us with our family to join them at
their chalet in Champaère. It was a friendship which has lasted over these past 26 years.

"John, again like Jimmy before him, gave great support to Dr Mahler’s idea of providing on-going staff training, which in time led to the establishment of Staff Development and Training of which I was proud to become the first manager, following in the footsteps of James Deeny, who, in 1962, had set up the original programme of Senior Staff Training.

Max Holstein

Max Holstein, former medical entomologist at WHO, passed away on 21 May 1997. Doctor of Science, WHO published his thesis on “Biology of gambiae anopheles, research in AOF” in its series of monographs. Brilliant researcher of ORSTOM, he placed his competence and scientific knowledge at the service of the Programme to eradicate malaria. He worked for WHO from 1957-1971, first in Africa and then at the Regional Office for Europe. He was also a faithful and cultivated friend who will not be forgotten by all those who knew him. Our thoughts are with his wife, Denise, and his children.

— Yves Beigbeder, Ezio Rivola, and Alain Vessereau

Sam Harrison

Samuel Harrison, who died on 2 February 1998, was a soft-spoken, mild-mannered Irishman. I first met him in 1957 when we both joined WHO as editors in the Technical Publications unit. Sam quickly became not just a colleague but also a close friend.

Sam attended Armagh Royal School in Northern Ireland, Trinity College, Dublin, gaining a degree with gold medal in Modern Literature, and then a PhD in English. He had a keen appreciation of good writing and the niceties of grammar and style which served him well as an editor. Not versed in medicine, he quickly familiarized himself with the terminology and the health problems with which WHO was concerned.

In his spare time, Sam read widely, published a novel and a volume of poetry. He also took a keen interest in music, the theatre and the cinema. His knowledge of films and modern musicals was legendary. When he left WHO he came to live in Sussex where he, his wife Helga, and I were able to continue a friendship that, at his death, had lasted for more than 40 years.

— Aubrey M. Woolman, East Sussex, United Kingdom

André Valot

André Valot grew up in Paris and might well have become a liberal journalist like his father but for the Nazi occupation during World War II. He fled into hiding in the Pyrenees mountains and worked as a forester making charcoal before joining The Resistance where, because of the arduous conditions, he contracted tuberculosis and spent several years in a sanitarium.

He joined WHO in 1949 as head of conference services and showed his mettle in 1955 when he made arrangements for the 8th World Health Assembly in Mexico. Shortly afterward, he was given responsibility for the planning and construction of WHO’s headquarters building—organizing the architectural competition, estimating space needs, and working with the architect and engineers in the design and construction. His attention to detail is visible in the beauty and quality of the main building. When WHO moved in, André organized the necessary building and management services until then provided by the United Nations. When André retired in 1972, he was dealing with a staff of 250 persons.

In his relations with staff throughout the Organization, he was noted for his modesty and honesty and was appreciated by all, especially the Director-General, Dr M. G. Candau. I personally had a very high regard for his abilities and performance and was greatly saddened by his death.

— John I. Armstrong, Former Director, Administration, Management, and Personnel, Oakton, Virginia, USA

“We must not forget our former colleagues whose work laid the foundation of all that was, and is good, and which brought international respect for the work of WHO, and whose example inspired us personally in our individual service to the Organization.

“May we continue to be inspired and may they rest in peace.”

— William (Bill) Barton, Exmouth Devon, UK, 25 March 1998

“Retire – not from something, but to something.”

— Sam Harrison

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Howard Charles Goodman
(Dave Spirt writes from Falls Church, Virginia, USA)

"The news of Howard Goodman’s death on 6 February 1998 was a shocker.

"I had lunch with Howard and his wife, Jane, and another friend just over a year ago at their favorite Haute Savoie inn. I didn’t expect them to be at their country home in Fontaine Vive/Groisy, however, we lucked out – they were still there packing memories following the sale of the Savoyard farmhouse they had so lovingly restored. It was the last time that I saw Howard.

"Howard was in excellent health but we learned that he collapsed with a brain haemorrhage while deep-sea fishing with his two brothers and his son. Deep-sea fishing was just one of the sports he loved; he still swam daily and skied regularly in spite of having an artificial knee – he had a ski holiday planned for February in Taos, New Mexico.

"I had met Howard through Art Manger when I first arrived in Geneva many years ago. Howard was the first chief of Immunology at the time and later was the founder and first director of the Special Programme of Research and Training in Tropical Diseases. He then became director of Research, Promotion and Development. Howard came to WHO from the US National Institutes of Health. He had earlier studied at the Pasteur Institute in Paris.

"During our friendship, my wife, Jean, and I spent many a Sunday helping him rebuild his farmhouse. But, it was more pleasure than work.

It was great! Either a seven-cheese feast or a nine-cheese feast, and with wonderful local wines to wash it down.

"Following his retirement from WHO, Howard joined D. A. Henderson as Professor of Tropical Medicine at the Johns Hopkins University School of Hygiene and Public Health, in Baltimore, Maryland. He stayed there for a number of years and then turned to private consultancy, including occasional trips back to Geneva. (He was seen recently in his dapper clothes vigorously shaking hands and bounding from table to table in WHO’s cafeteria conversing with many friends and former colleagues.)

"Following his final retirement, Howard, and Jane, spent six months in France and the rest of the year at their condominium in the Florida Keys. When I last saw Howard and Jane, however, they were planning to spend some time with a young relative who had just begun a law career in Southern California.

"I will miss him as I had a great affection for him. He was a mensch, a superb mensch.

"Howard leaves behind his wife of 55 years, Jane Robbins; three children, Trudy, Jonathan, and Julie; one granddaughter, Hilary Adel; two brothers, Lewis and James; and a lot of friends throughout the Organization who will always remember him for his joie de vivre."

– Dave Spirt,
Falls Church, Virginia, USA
(with additional facts from Lynda Pasini, HRB, and the International Herald Tribune)

Quotations are taken or modified from Retirement, Glendale Heights, Illinois, ©1997. If you have an appropriate quotation you want others to enjoy, please send in any language (with an English or French translation) to QN at any of the addresses in the masthead. All submissions will be considered for publication.

"Retirement is the beginning of a new career. We find ourselves doing what we really wanted to do – but could not for most of our lives.”