Comment

"Too Old" — IF NOT AGEISM, THEN WHAT?

Has ageism raised its ugly head at WHO, a humanitarian organization pledged to the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights, which includes, naturally enough, the right to work? Sadly, it seems that at least in one Management Support Unit ageism exists. According to the Serpent Enchainé, the serving staff's publication of revelation.

"An MSU rejected a half-time contract of six months for a long-serving former colleague — even though he was vigorously supported by the technical unit, and was on extra-budgetary funds. Too old, he was bluntly told during this, the year when WHO's theme is Actiive Ageing Makes a Difference. Does the left hand of WHO know what the right hand is doing." (June 1999, No. 34)

Such an insensitive attitude flies in the face of positions of Member States that there's no place for age discrimination in WHO. Even worse, it is an affront against the D-G's guidelines for the employment of former staff. Cluster Note 99/3 from her office, dated 8 January 1999, allows for re-employment under three conditions:

1. That former staff "do not act in an executive capacity that commits the Organization." Our colleague, age 68, was wanted for editorial tasks that serving colleagues did not have the time for. 2. That "there is a break of at least four months between the date of retirement and the date of re-employment.” There was. 3. That "they are not re-employed to perform the functions of the post from which they have retired.” Prior to retirement, he was not a member of the technical unit which sought his services.

Had any of these conditions applied, the case of age discrimination could not have been sustained. None of them did, however; neither was the question of competency questioned by the MSU. All of which makes the statement of "too old" nothing but blatant ageism, and his rejection simply and purely a matter of age. (The position for which he was turned down remains unfilled as QN went to print.)

"As the value of older workers is rarely understood, their potential contribution is lost, \textquoteleft the Executive Director, General Mgmt, perhaps prophetically wrote six years ago at a time when she was responsible for a study of healthy aging for WHO. (See page 2) Her fears have, lamentably, just come to pass. Ignorance on the part of a senior official, who should have known better has, in effect, cast a blemish upon WHO, post-July 1998, while offending its former staff as a whole.

As an act of reconciliation, the Administration should make crystal clear that ageism, a new "ism," is as repugnant as the others — racism, sexism — and will not be tolerated in WHO. Not least because this is also the U.N. Year of Older Persons. As Serpent complained, the left hand (WHO) really needs to know what the right (the U.N.) is doing.

—Peter Ozorio, Editor
Revisiting the Tesco Study
(The following article about a study of older workers first appeared in QN 16, Winter 1993-94. The study was carried out by Ann Kern, who was at that time a member of WHO’s ageing programme and is excerpted in this issue because the findings have special significance today in the light of the page 1 story, « Too Old – If Not Ageism then What? » — Editor)

Bosses Speak Well of Older Workers

We all need a role in society but as the value of older workers is rarely understood, their potential contribution is lost. As part of a study into healthy aging for WHO, I examined the policies and experience of ten firms. The following is one example:

In 1988, TESCO, the second largest supermarket chain in the U.K., adopted a “Mature Entrant Programme” for staff recruitment and retention. The company employs more than 7,000 staff aged 55 plus in a wide range of jobs. It agreed that I interview eighty older workers and fifty supervisors.

Of the 50 managers interviewed: 40 said they were better with customers, 40 said they were more reliable, 39 said they were more responsible, 37 said they were less likely to be absent, 28 said that they were more efficient, and 27 that older workers were less likely to be off sick, compared with younger workers.

On issues of productivity, relations with other staff, accidents, ability to learn, and willingness to try something new, the majority of managers rated the older and younger workers equally.

Many commented that while the older workers may be slower than the younger ones, the greater reliability, responsibility and efficiency meant they were just as productive.

The overall impression from the study was that, on the one hand, the company had a positive impact on the health and well-being of its older workers; on the other hand the older workers contributed in a significant way to its successful operations and image.

—Ann Kern
(formerly Director IHE, now Executive Director, General Management)
(Excerpted from the Courrier, April 1993)

Stop Press

As QN 37 went to press, the following message, dated 6 September, was put on the internet by WHO.

Retroactivity: P-Grades

“A retroactive post adjustment will be paid to eligible P-graded former staff members upon application in writing to Human Resources Services / WHO, 20 Avenue Appia, CH-1211, Geneva 27, Switzerland.

If you worked in Geneva between 1 July 1994 and 30 June 1995, please send a short letter giving your name, staff number and termination date from WHO, if available, your current address, banking particulars (such as name and address of your bank, account number and bank code), and requesting payment of the retroactive post adjustment.

“The amount of payment per staff member varies depending on their grade and the period worked but is expected to total around 200 CHF for the full period. These payments are scheduled for February 2000. Claims must be made within one year of the date of the e-mail message.”

WHO and ICSC Scolded

Consideration 8

“WHO has the duty of checking the lawfulness of any decision by another body on which it bases its own decision. So too must it check the adequacy of action by that other body to correct any mistake it may have made, and make sure that such corrective action respects the rights of staff.”

Consideration 12

“The International Civil Service Commission made a mistake in reckoning the multiplier used to work out the post adjustment for Geneva from July 1994. It was for want, not of information, but of care on the part of the Commission or its secretariat that the mistake came about. For another thing, the (Commission’s) plea betrays an utter failure to grasp what the four-month rule means. ...it has no bearing whatever on the Commission’s correction of any mistake of its own making.”
Stuck for somewhere to take visitors on a fine sunny day? Even long-term Geneva residents might not know about the Fondation Gianadda in Martigny, little over an hour’s easy drive from Geneva by autoroute. This ancient Roman site, strategic for the St. Bernard Pass into Italy, has attracted all of Europe’s notables, from Julius Caesar and Napoleon to the likes of Lord Byron, Charles Dickens, Jules Verne, Richard Wagner and Mark Twain.

The Foundation, well signposted, is a fine testimony to fraternal love, since it was created by Léonard Gianadda as a memorial to his brother Pierre who died in an aircraft accident in July 1976. Seniors pay only 9 CHF instead of 12. On the entrance level are lots of Roman coins and artifacts, but the star of the show is a superb bull’s head in bronze, life-size.

Downstairs until 14 November there is a fine show of paintings by the French impressionist Pierre Bonnard (1867-1947). As is usual, the exhibition is well-supported by photos of the artist’s family and studio, and detailed accounts of his life. A classy shop offers artbooks, postcards and posters. This area is the scene of regular classical concerts in the evening. Don’t miss, at the far end of a newly opened extension, paintings by Cézanne, Toulouse-Lautrec, Van Gogh and Picasso, no doubt worth a king’s ransom.

Until June, you could have seen J.M.W. Turner’s watercolours from his alpine Grand Tour, while fullscale shows since the 1970s have included Rodin, Modigliani, Chagall, Degas, Schiele, Suzanne Valadon, Manet and Gauguin. Next year it will be the turn of Kandinsky and Van Gogh.

Follow the sloping ramp to a subterranean café; a little cinema showing a film about Bonnard: an Olde Englysshe Telephone Kiosk (in Swiss working order); and the famed Car Museum – 30 or so splendid bangers starting from the little primitives of the 1890s, and including big American jobs that could have been used for the St. Valentine’s Day massacre, plus a magnificent Rolls-Royce Silver Ghost.

In the beautiful park outside, admire the Henry Moore, Rodin and Miro fixtures and a number of blockish metal structures by César Baldaccini. Against an imposing background of mountain peaks, the park is tailor-made for a leisurely stroll, and un-Swiss signs invite you to walk on the grass or to picnic! Beyond the outdoor café, a sideshow called The Epoch of the Dams uses photos and models to describe the chiselling out of 100 km of galleries to create hydroelectric power-plants fathoms deep in the mountainsides. All told, the Gianadda makes an agreeable outing for all ages and tastes – and you will want to go back again.

—John Bland
(formerly Editor of the late lamented World Health)
"The secret of a long life is double careers: one to about age 60, then another for the next 30 years."

That excerpt from a U.N. release has led me to reflect on what have I been doing in my second career, which by that standard I am half-way through.

Up until retirement 16 years ago I had depended on a secretary to type and a wife to cook for me. So I enrolled quickly in the Adult Education Programme run at our local Community College to acquire such basic skills.

For two terms I took a course entitled ‘Gentleman’s Relish,’ intended to instruct retired males (65+ years) how to cook meals of soups, main dishes and many desserts. I found them life-saving on the mounting number of occasions my wife was absent, acting as a ‘RUG’ (really useful grandparent).

I also enrolled, with a group of young female would-be secretaries, in a course on touch-typing. As I had no intention of sitting for any efficiency tests, I could progress at my own pace, so gaining confidence. This course was followed up by one on word-processing and computers (PCW).

With typing prowess and equipped with a PCW I felt confident to undertake yet another project — on genealogy. I finally produced, after four years of research, trees of the four families of my wife and myself.

Between 1956-63, while serving in Zanzibar (now Tanzania) I took several hundred 35 mm slides. During my retirement I decided to produce a video from about 300 of them, which I presented to the museum in Muscat, Oman. I had learnt earlier that the museum had no records of the Zanzibar Theweni Dynasty Sultanate, which was established by the Sultanate of Oman in 1867. I wrote the script and gave the voice-over for a video which runs for 25 minutes, made with the help of a local video company handling the production.

I was then asked by the company to write three scripts for videos commissioned by charities for the blind and disabled children, providing also the voice-over for one.

Such activity introduced me directly to local charities for people with physical disabilities and handicaps, and over the last three years to the chairmanship of The Exmouth Disabled Fellowship which provides fellowship, mainly for the lonely and elderly members of our community.

This completed, I was then persuaded (and I mean persuaded) by the children to write my autobiography. It would recount my early years of childhood and growing up and the anecdotal stories of the four phases of my medical ‘first career’. I have written 80,000 words and enough is enough!

Our next project is to move house. That will provide a break and allow time to think out what to attempt to fill the remaining years of my “second career”.

—Bill Barton, MD
(formerly Programme Manager SDT)
Exmouth, England
Health Corner

SNORING

Albert was late and looked tired. "You know," he said after having gulped down his coffee, "Alberta snores quite a bit. So I got used to going to bed much later than she, and usually have a small cognac before going to sleep. I also take a sleeping pill or a tranquillizer, or both, in order not to be bothered by her snoring. Now, imagine, around two o’clock she woke me up and started shouting: "Don't snore, why do you snore? To say this to me, to me!"

Indeed, why does one snore? According to the medical textbooks, "obstructive respiration during sleep" (what a nice, scientifically sounding paraphrase of the unelegant term “snoring”) is the result of a weakened tonus of the palatal and pharyngeal muscles and of the root of the tongue during sleep. This decreased tonus involves the tonsils, the uvula, the pharyngeal mucosa. The tongue falls backward and starts producing unpleasant vibrations with the participation of the other soft elements of the region. Of course, the snoring subject is unaware of his own snoring since, by definition, the phenomenon occurs only during sleep. "So, your books tell you how snoring is produced; but my question is: why, what is the cause of it?" I was unable to answer Albert’s simple question.

Snoring is human. Animals don’t snore, except some fat bulldogs. All that medicine has taught me was that in some cases hypothyroidism may contribute to snoring. Severe obesity may be a contributing factor, too. Sometimes, especially in children, a hypertrophy of the tonsils may cause snoring, but this is unlikely to happen at our age — I mean, the age of Albert and Alberta, and that of the readers of these Quarterly News. Exceptionally, there may exist a hypertrophy of the uvula, the little appendix to the soft palate. Sometimes, and this may well apply to Albert, alcohol consumption, sleeping pills or tranquillizers may cause a loss of tonus of the soft parts of the throat and thus provoke snoring — of course, in the sleeping subject.

At any rate, from the medical point of view, the condition is not particularly important. There are some rare cases of severe airways obstruction, leading to transient apnea (standstill of breathing) — transient, because the subject wakes up. Nevertheless, according to a recent paper by D. Fairbanks in the Karger Gazette, No. 61, it is presumed that, in the United States, there are yearly some 2000 to 3000 cases of sudden unexpected deaths that occur during sleep, part of which might be due to such airways obstruction. This may seem important at first sight, but considering that snoring is so common — some 60 per cent of all adult men and 40 per cent of women do snore — it has probably no real significance, sudden death during sleep is rather due to cardiac arrest or severe arhythmias, than to snoring. By the way, it is not clear why men snore more often than women.

"So, what is your suggestion?" asked Albert. "If your snoring presents a real problem, I should say, avoiding alcohol before going to bed, and abstaining from sleeping pills could be a useful preventive measure. Otherwise, my prescription is, continuing peaceful coexistence." Replied Albert. "That's what we were doing for the past fifty years."

—Tom Strasser, M.D.
(formerly CVD)
Survey Shows Majority Favoured Annual Meeting

A majority of those responding to a survey, about 75 per cent, have agreed that it would be “useful for the AFSM to have its own Annual Meeting,” which is provided for under para. 3 of its rules, and that they “would be willing to attend.” Of the 61 answering, 45 said “yes,” 8 said “no,” while 8 indicated uncertainty.

The survey followed a letter from Nedd Willard, formerly INF, requesting that the Executive Group determine the response of members to an AFSM meeting held separately from the serving staff’s annual general meeting. He has since been asked by the Chairman to play a leading role in planning.

In addition to “ayes,” “nays” and “maybes,” many volunteered comments, a selection of which, in the language of choice, is excerpted below:

M. Abdussalam, Geneva: “I do not know if there is enough material to discuss in a separate annual meeting. There does not seem to be enough justification for it.”

Yves Beigbeder, Thonon-les-Bains: “It would be useful to have our own annual meeting so that (a) the Executive Group can report on past activities, and future plans; (b) there be an opportunity for open discussion, feedback and guidance from members.”

Fred Biegel, Prangins: “I fully underscore the importance of our own annual meeting. It is understood that AFSM still retains the right to attend the staff’s AGM.”

Paul Blanc, Lutry: “I think that AFSM could usefully have its own annual meeting.” (Written on 28 January, six months before his passing at age 95.)

Jean Bondet, Challex, France: “Je suis tout à fait d’accord que IAOMS tienne sa propre réunion générale et ne participe pas simplement à l’Assemblée Générale de l’Association du Personnel.”

Michel Feve, Echenevex: “Our association should acquire a representative status of its own vis-à-vis the U.N. system in view of our specific problems, which may not be of immediate interest to the Staff Association.”

Daniel Flahault, Geneva: “S’il s’agit de proposer aux membres…une sorte de forum ou seraient offerts, présentés, revus et débattus une fois par an des problèmes, des sujets, des engagements humanitaires, la question est toute autre, mérite réflexion, sondages et préparation.”

John Fraser, Versoix: “A good idea; it would allow us to discuss matters of direct interest. I went to the last AGM of the staff, but left after about half an hour because — understandably — nobody seemed to want to talk about anything but clusters.”

Jean Germain, Annemasse: “Je crois que ce projet devrait être retenu car les problèmes que nous avons à débattre comme retraités ne sont pas les mêmes que ceux de nos collègues actifs.”

Arie Groenendijk, Commugny: “We should have specific matters to discuss, and my impression is that there are not too many issues; guest speakers on matter affecting all or large numbers of members might be included. Any annual meeting should be combined with the annual reception at year’s end.”

Frank Gutteridge, Corsier: “Another possibility would be to provide for the eventuality of holding a general meeting in case of an emergency or extraordinary situation on the decision of the Executive Group or on the request of a number of members.”

Marie Louise Howard-Jones, Geneva: “For the newly retired, it might be useful to meet others and therefore to have an annual meeting.”

Adriano Imbruglia, Geneva: “The AFSM should hold its own annual meeting to discuss problems specific to us. This does not preclude — in fact I believe it essential — that there is always a representative of us attending the staff’s AGM.”

Nelly Jenny, Geneva: “I wonder if there would be enough former WHO staff ready to attend when I see how few attend the AAFI/AFICS meetings.”

Maurice Keiser, Thônex: “I do not think it is necessary for the AFSM to hold its own annual meeting — provided that its voice is heard and taken into account at the staff’s AGM.”

Anne Leyh, Geneva: “Il me serait difficile de prendre position. De première vue: une réunion annuelle ne me paraît pas vraiment nécessaire.”
David Muir, Genolier: “I think the proposal is a good one, giving former staff another focal point.”

Barbara Pumfrey, Versoix: “It seems a good idea to have our own annual meeting, and at the same time, fall in line with other similar associations.”

May Racine, Geneva: “Je me permets de saisir cette occasion pour vous faire savoir que j’apprécierais beaucoup une petite visite à domicile de l’un ou l’autre de l’OMS, et vous remercie par avance de faire part de mon souhait.”

Tom Strasser, Geneva: “Yes, I would attend such a meeting, provided a pertinent agenda is attached to the invitation.”

Health Insurance

A PRESCRIPTION MIS-FILLED

Ever check a prescription as it is written by your doctor with how it is filled by the pharmacist? Probably never. Neither did a colleague, who suffered the consequences, both mental and physical, of this human foible.

A prescription incorrectly filled by a pharmacy in Ferney-Voltaire, where he lives, forced this colleague’s readmission to Hôpital la Tour in Meyrin for 24-hour surveillance. He had been discharged following two weeks of hospitalization for heart surgery just 48 hours earlier.

According to him, the prescription had been written for 1 mg. of an anti-coagulant, but was filled for 4 mg. In a letter to the pharmacy his Swiss cardiologist said that the error had placed his life in danger, necessitating hospitalization urgently (“...mettant sa vie en danger, a nécessité une hospitalisation en urgence.”).

“The gravity of this mistake should be pointed out to your staff,” the letter went on to say, “in particular the differences in dosage that exist in Switzerland and France.” (...la gravité potentielle de cette méprise devrait être signalée à vos collaboratrices, en particulier en ce qui concerne les différences des dosage existant en Suisse et en France.)

Since then, the pharmacy has been asked to reimburse the almost 2,000 CHF in costs for the emergency treatment to the colleague, who though shaken survived the scare, and to WHO’s health insurance.

GETTING NOWHERE FAST

Health: A scheme to provide long-term care after retirement has attracted nothing but lip service — despite almost two years of discussion between representatives of former and serving staff on the one hand, and the U.N.’s administrative chiefs, the CCAQ, on the other. Even though most, if not all, U.N. agencies are theoretically in favour “only a few were in a position to commit themselves to it immediately”, AAFI/AFICS has dolefully reported, adding, in much the same tone: “While discussions will continue, it seems unlikely that there will be any decision” in the foreseeable future. Former staff are not expected to be covered by whatever is finally agreed upon.

Pensions:—No Relief for Russians: Despite being initialed almost three years ago, the agreement between Russia and the U.N. Pension Fund to settle claims of Russian pensioners still needs formal ratification by a seemingly foot-dragging government. Deprived of their full pensions by the former Soviet Union, these unfortunate colleagues await restitution of what is due to them — which Russia is sympathetic to — as former international civil servants. Their pensions now are equivalent in roubles to less than $20 monthly.

In May 1994 FICSA wrote President Boris Yeltsin asking for help in “restoring in the U.N. pension fund” all of the Russians who retired between 1981 and 1990.

As a result of internal regulations in force during that period, the letter said, this group of pensioners had no “other choices but to reluctantly request that their pensions be paid directly to the U.S.S.R. The U.N. pension fund has shown its willingness to restore their pension rights, if you cooperate with them to this end.”
BeeY BOYCOTT : PENSIONS

Rejecting “cheap compromises” that had been offered, and in a show of ire, representatives of former and serving staff, the Participants Group to the U.N. Pension Fund “delayed the beginning of a sitting by its absence.” A major issue, during the pension board’s 48th session in Vienna, was the Fund’s finances.

According to a bulletin by the ILO Staff Union (No. 1217): “To demonstrate their displeasure (at) the obstinate refusal of the U.N. General Assembly to recognize that the Fund’s money belongs, first and foremost, to the officials and beneficiaries for whom it exists,” the Participants Group carried out its first-ever boycott. Though of modest proportion, it was nonetheless unprecedented.

30 DAYS TO COMPLY

If ordered by a U.S. court to financially support spouse or children, a separated or divorced U.N. staff member must show proof of compliance within 30 days after being requested to do so. If that is not done, the U.N. administration “will commence deductions from the staff member’s” monthly income, the Secretary-General has decreed in a bulletin (SGB/1999/4 dated 20 May 1999).

Hitherto delinquent hubbies and dads took refuge and comfort behind the U.N.’s refusal to waive the immunity from legal process for staff members. Now, not only will the U.N. garnishee income but also will provide information to “persons or organizations outside the United Nations...even without the consent of the staff member.”

While WHO is not covered by the S-G’s bulletin, which, though long overdue, has been praised by equal rights groups, the U.N. example is usually followed in conditions of employment.

STILL CARING

A third former colleague, Ed Uhde, once director, BFI, has reduced to writing his concerns about recent changes in WHO in a penetrating and widely-circulated letter, expressing, particularly, his reservations over the reorganization into “clusters”. Of the tastefulness, or otherwise, of his views, the staff’s satirical newsletter Le Serpent Enchaîné, had this to say:

QUESTION OF TASTE : “Serpent licked his lips but couldn’t quite decide the taste of that ‘thought-provoking’ letter, with 11 pages enclosed, reflecting on changes in WHO. From former director, BFI, it was sent to U.N. missions on 7 May, but now, Serpent reckons, anyone who is anybody has seen it. Is the lingering aftertaste, Serp wonders, sweet or sour?” (June, No. 34).

Earlier, two former colleagues had written in like vein, one about the decrease in water supply and sanitation programmes (Vic Pinto), and the other about the demise of World Health magazine (John Bland).

HOLY HOLIDAYS

Two Muslim holy days are now official U.N. holidays: Eid Al-Adha, the Feast of the Sacrifice, commemorating Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice his son to God. Observed this year on 29 March, it takes place during the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. And Eid Al-Fitr, which marks the end of Ramadan, a month of fasting from December to January. A decision of the U.N. General Assembly on 31 March 1998 proclaimed the days U.N. holidays. WHO’s World Health Assembly has not followed suit as yet.

SEARO : THE THOUGHT THAT COUNTS

The Association of Former Staff, SEARO, has written to the U.N. Secretary-General and the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees “offering our voluntary services for relief and rehabilitation programmes of the United Nations” in the Balkans, its Executive Committee says in a report, dated 17 May. Newly-established, the association’s president is R.L. Rai (an activist in staff affairs during his serving days), and its vice-president is Jitendra Tuli (formerly information officer, New Delhi), who will also edit that region’s quarterly newsletter, the Aesculapian.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR : 14 OCTOBER

Circle in red on your calendar Thursday, 14 October 1999. Though a little earlier than previous years, that’s the date of the AFSM’s 13th annual reunion, at WHO from 17h00 to 19h30 (so, safe home before dark). Colleagues outside the Geneva area who may be visiting are encouraged to attend and would be more than welcome, according to the organizers.
In addition to being a meeting place for old-timers, an announcement says, the "occasion provides an opportunity for former staff to meet, or renew, friendships with serving colleagues and to strengthen bonds between them." As the QN went to press, some 160 had indicated they would come.

**OTHER NOTABLE DAYS**

Grandparents' Day, 11 September to recognize the growing number of grandparents in the country — at least in the United States, which gave the world its Mother's Day and then Father's Day.

Alzheimer Day, 21 September — so declared by WHO and the World Alzheimer Association to raise consciousness to the more than 15 million afflicted by this disease world-wide.

**QN BOOK/HOUSE-KEEPING**

— Costs: The 20 CHF that colleagues pay annually in membership fees help meet expenses of producing the QN. While printing and mailing services have been provided by the administration free, AFSM has always borne the cost of word processing, editorial assistance and layout, which amounts approximately to CHF 1,000 each issue. So, unpaid fees, forgotten for the year, by colleagues are sought — with gratitude and appreciation.

— French Version: The volunteerism of David Cohen, Jean-Pierre Dustin, Michel Fèvre, and Jean Leclercq brought forth this issue of the QN in French. In the past, the French version was made possible through WHO professional translators, with permission of the administration. That has changed, leading to a letter of appeal, on 13 July, by Chairman R.Pal for "volunteers to assume those responsibilities."

The gist of the letter: "We are seeking a team of volunteers to translate five to seven typed pages four times a year. This type of volunteerism ... may be the only way to ensure that the QN comes out regularly in French. The newsletter is our only link to colleagues, particularly those outside the Geneva area. The Executive Group is confident that (competent) colleagues will respond and that communications will continue to flow...." The four responded.

**ROOM 4141**

The AFSM office has been moved as part of the re-organization by the new administration, ongoing since July 1998. Gone is the splendid view of rolling lawns from its sous-sol location of almost 10 years; in its place a dual-unit office on the 4th floor, to the right of the lifts as you alight, overlooking the OMS bus stop. The one undisputed advantage of the shift is in the room number: No. 4141. Easy to remember.

Our serving colleagues of the Staff Association have also been uprooted to the same floor, losing some space in the process, but still are our neighbours.

**FRENCH-LIVING**

Of interest to colleagues of U.S. nationality living in France (and, why not, even to those in Geneva) is the "Guide for U.S. Citizens Residing in France," 85 pages long and just off the press, published by the Office of American Services, U.S. Embassy, Paris. Among contents: lists of English-speaking attorneys, dentists, doctors, schools; marriage formalities in France; private detectives; conversion tables (metric, clothing, cooking).

**LIFESTYLES**

**WHY SWEAT?**

Why sweat? Why go into a gym crowded with shiny machines that make your heart beat faster and strain muscles you hardly ever use? There is no sense repeating to colleagues that exercise is good for you: your heart needs it and so do a number of interior plumbing arrangements it is probably better not to know too much about.

A number of excellent instructors are available through WHO’s Fitness Centre. We chose Nick Lamble, professionally qualified in the UK (University of London, physical education and history; five years with WHO). We had found out earlier that he is a neighbour of ours in the country. He makes the ordeal as pleasant as it can be made; smiles, encourages and suggests changes that suit your condition.
My wife and I go to the centre, on the eighth floor, once a week — not as often as some but often enough for us to feel and appreciate the difference. We prefer evenings when the building is quiet. My wife uses the stationary bike. I don’t. I prefer the machine that exercises shoulder and arm muscles, and has a lot of hidden springs that make this easy, or as hard as you like, depending on the weights used.

We work out thighs and calves with leg stretches and then do chest presses on another machine before moving on to biceps and triceps drills. We try to do a series of 18 or so but some nights we ease off to 15 when the flesh is weak and lets us know it. Although a treadmill raises your pulse, 10 minutes of that is all I can endure before boredom sets in.

After an hour working out, you feel gifted with a new body, albeit a tired one. Then a hot bath at home, with perhaps some self-indulgent bath oil in it, brings on a relaxation that is like no other. We speak from three years’ experience.

It is uncommon for seniors to frequent the Fitness Centre (41 22 791 3440). I may or may not be the only one who does so. (I am certain we are the only husband and wife combo, though). So why not you? If you come along too, seniors may be even less a rarity than now.

—Ned Willard
(formerly INF and Editor U.N. Special)

His Hat Trick

Roberto Masironi, formerly responsible for WHO’s Tobacco & Health Programme, now wears these three hats: as President, European Medical Association on Smoking and Health, Geneva; as European Director, International Network Towards Smoke-free Hospitals, London; and as Secretary-General, World Federation of the U.N. Associations, Palais des Nations.

His enduring contribution to WHO was the establishment in 1988, of the now-annual World No-Tobacco Day, when some 40 individuals and institutions outside the field of health were honoured for “promoting the concept of tobacco-free societies.” Medals commemorating WHO’s 40th anniversary were made to actors, athletes, cartoonists, former presidents, legislators, a philanthropist, taxi drivers and members of the media.

Among them: Maurice de Bevere “Morris,” of Belgium, cartoonist, creator of Europe’s No. 1 cowboy — “Lucky Luke”; Larry Hagman of the United States, star of the TV series “Dallas”; Pat Cash of Australia, 1987 Wimbledon Tennis champion; Michaela Figin of Switzerland, Olympic ski medalist, 1984 and 1988; and Lynn Smith of the U.S., journalist, for organizing the world’s first “Don’t Smoke Day”, the precursor of the Great American Smokeout and WHO’s own No-Tobacco Day.

Father of The Bride

Congratulations to Pierre and Marie-Thérèse Delon, on the betrothal of their daughter, Cécile, to Martin Thaler, Bâle. Formerly with the communicable disease programme, Hq., the father of the bride to-be is Commandeur de la Légion d’Honneur. The marriage has been announced for 18 September 1999 at the Cathédrale d’Uzès, Vauvert, France.

(A special event, a family achievement? Share it with us and QN will share it with others — Editor)

Now, A GLOBAL CABINET FOR THE D-G

WHO’s Regional Directors, and others as well, will be required to log-in more travel following a decision by the D-G to establish a Global Cabinet that is likely to meet five to six times a year. “When she sees the need,” the internal newsletter To Our Health reports, “the Director-General will invite Executive Directors or other staff to discuss agenda items.”

New Bedfellows

Here are recent steps, unusually imaginative, in WHO’s anti-tobacco programme, its Tobacco-Free Initiative (in our days called “Tobacco or Health: Choose Health”):

A WHO partnership with three pharmaceutical companies, Glaxo Wellcome, Novartis Consumer Health plus Pharmac & Upjohn, all manufacturers of products to help kick the smoking habit. “Our com-
mitment is to fighting disease,” Sir Richard Sykes, chairman, Glaxo Wellcome, said in a press release (WHO/4) at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland last January. “Tobacco dependence is, in every sense of the word, a disease….”

A WHO appeal to tobacco growers, thus distin-
guishing them from tobacco multi-nationals, to support the world’s “first public health treaty: the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. “WHO is not against tobacco farmers,” Dr Derek Yach, head of its anti-
tobacco programme, reassured a delegation “but…is committed to addressing the tobacco epidemic.” (Press release WHO/15, 3 March 1999.)

GIFTS OF TURNER AND GATES

The foundations of Ted Turner, of CNN fame, and Bill and Melinda Gates, of Microsoft, have made these grants for health, according to reports by the U.N. Secretariat News and WHO:

- $1 million for combating mental retardation in children in five African countries through the provision of iodine supplements; and $2.3 million for vaccines and other disease-preventive measures for children in isolated parts of Ghana, Mali, Niger and Uganda from Turner’s U.N. Foundation. (Secretariat News, January-February 1999).
- $10 million, from the William H. Gates Foundation for programmes on sexual and reproductive health, payable over five years, “the first time that our programme has received a grant of this magnitude from a private foundation,” says its WHO director, Dr Paul Van Look, in a press announcement (WHO/34, 15 June 1999).

A WHO REP FOR THE BALKANS

Dr John Francis McKenna has been appointed as WHO Special representative for the Balkans Region, taking up duties in Skopje, on 14 June, to restore the public health systems in Macedonia, Albania, and the Yugoslav Republics of Kosovo and Serbia.

Formerly Chief Medical Officer in Northern Ireland from 1986 to 1994, he has previously worked with WHO in the Balkans during the war in Bosnia-Herzegovina, according to a WHO release. (Note 14, 7 June 1999).

In Memoriam

Lucien Bernard: On behalf of hundreds of WHO staff members who rubbed shoulders with you during your twenty WHO years, eight in SEARO and AFRO, and twelve in WHO headquarters, I only wish I could express our feelings of privilege and gratitude for the benefits we derived from your moral and intellectual courage and integrity.

To me personally when I, by historical accident, ended my WHO career in the “electric D-G chair” you gave me, without hesitation, your loyalty and constructive advice. You saw through my trepidation in facing up to the awesome challenges of providing leadership in WHO and gently, oh so gently encouraged me to see these challenges as windows of opportunity for productive changes. With deepest respect and thankfulness,

— Halfdan Mahler, M.D.
(D-G Emeritus)

(Yves Timmermans: Few knew him by his first name, Yves. Most people called him Tim or, among his close friends, Timbo, and sometimes he was called The Colonel. He died at the age of 76, having had, among other activities, 21 years of service in EURO.

But address him how you will, one thing is certain; he was, as people say in his hometown of Schaerbeek, Belgium, “nen brave per” — a fine guy, always ready to help others and wearing his heart on his sleeve. He was invariably smiling under his little moustache and behind his dark glasses, and dressed to the nines even when he was working in the field.

We got to know each other

Page 11
during a course on malaria in Antwerp where, I am ashamed to say, I teased him terribly and got a great kick out of seeing him get angry. Growing older and wiser, we became good friends. I admired how, at a bibulous feast, he could attract everybody's attention and how greedily his companions drank in every word. Tim the Great! Well, he's gone, passed away on 30 April 1999 in Brussels, and there's no Yves nor Tim nor the Colonel.

To Poussette, his faithful companion after 52 years of marriage, let me wish you much courage. Farewell Tim and rest in peace.

—Lucien Swillen
(formerly EURO)
Brisbane, Australia

“IK.” Sundaresan: I pay tribute to my esteemed friend, to his personality, honesty and generosity. He always had a smile on his face. Besides his outstanding professionalism he had also great interest in Indian scriptures and astrology. He served WHO for more than 30 years and, all his colleagues remember his warmth and caring nature. He retired as Chief of the health statistics and methodology unit.

He passed away on 27 April 1999, aged 67, after a short illness. The funeral ceremony followed three days later at the Funeral Centre Saint Georges, Geneva.

The Executive Group of the AFSM, of which he served as a member for many years, deeply regret the death of their colleague, who was responsible for computerisation of its membership listings. He is survived by his wife and two sons, Jairaman (Geneva) and Mani, (the United States). We sincerely wish his family courage and forbearance to bear this loss.

—Rajindar Pal
(Chairman, AFSM)

Paul Blanc: The doyen of former WHO colleagues, and indeed of international civil servants in Geneva, of Swiss and Canadian nationality; he who loved mountains, passed away on 17 July 1999 at Lutry, Switzerland, his birthplace, at age 95.

In December 1948, during the term of WHO's first D-G, Paul Blanc joined the fledgling organisation, as a scientist in the pharmacology unit, Division of Pharmacology and Toxicology. Just five years later, he was promoted to the post of chief, a position he held with distinction until his retirement—about a year after the publication of the second edition of the international Pharmacopeia—in June 1967. He had been given extensions of contract till then, because of his extensive knowledge of pharmaceutical regulations worldwide.

Prior to WHO, from 1930 he had been Managing and Scientific Director, Hoffmann-LaRoche, Montreal. Earlier he had worked for the company in Basle, Paris, London and Nutley, New Jersey.

In his working life, WHO described him as a staff member of "great ability, initiative, enthusiasm, and erudition." For his leisure, he applied these talents to the mountains. He was honoured recently for 50 years of membership by the Swiss Alpine Club, Geneva branch, of which he was president from 1973 to 1980. A founding member of the Alpine Club of Canada, he also served, in 1943, as an instructor in mountaineering for the Canadian Army.

He graduated from the University of Lausanne in bacteriology; and, as well, did post-graduate work in pharmacology at King's College, University of London, and McGill University, Montreal, where he, a man of science, received an MA degree—a tribute to his ranging interests and talents.

Among the organizations in which he was a member of honour: International Ski Club, Geneva; Fédération Internationales Pharmaceutique, Royal Pharmaceutical Society of Great Britain; Societe Italiana di Scienze Farmaceutiche; American Society of Hospital Pharmacists; AAFI/AFICS (of which he was president from 1968-76); and the Order of Kentucky Colonels.

He is survived by his wife, Henriette.

(Those wishing to honour the memory of Paul Blanc are asked to make a contribution to Terre des hommes, Cpo 10-11504-8. —Editor)
WHAT ABOUT MALARIA?
(Re: The More Things Change, QN No. 34-35)

Your cover story and the theme of the D-G’s statement to the WHA52 dwell on change. Change for the sake of change? Would the person responsible for malaria tell us what has changed in the programme – not in the structure, administration or the people, but the changes which have occurred in the programme itself!

—Bernd Dieterich
(formerly Director, Environmental Health)
(The manager for the programme “Roll Back Malaria” has been asked to provide a suitable response. —Editor)

LES MOTS JUSTES
(Re: A Former ADG on His President, QN 36)

The English text of my article states correctly “I do not condone extra-marital affairs and lying about them.” The French was mis-translated reading “Je ne condamne pas les liaisons extra-conjugales et le mensonge qu’elles entraînent...” as if I had written the contrary: “I do not condemn extra-marital affairs and lying about them.” —which reflects badly on my moral character.

So that the francophone readers do not get the wrong impression, I would ask you kindly to insert a correction in the next issue of the QN.

—Warren Furth
(formerly ADG, Admin)
(The appropriate phrase should have been “je n’excuse pas”. QN regrets the error — Editor)

ANYTHING BUT RETIRED

After 17 months here I finally got my own lab last week; the fridge arrives next week, and maybe a $40,000 grant from the Health Ministry to buy more equipment – meanwhile I borrow another lab’s. I have a bright Brazilian post-doc, and a summer student from Yale, who brought with him the reagents to detect arboviruses and hantaviruses by PCR – except that we can’t get the test to work yet.

But “ProMED-mail” is going great guns; we’ll hit 18,000 subscribers from 150 countries by our 5th anniversary in August, at which time we’ll collaborate with the International Society for Infectious Diseases, Harvard School of Public Health and Oracle Corp (world’s 2nd biggest software company) to go state-of-the-art.

I have interviews about emerging infectious diseases going with Japanese TV, in Portuguese and with a northern European English-language newspaper; I gave a paper at a NATO Advanced Research Workshop on biological warfare in Bucharest in June, and I am reviewing papers for the Journal of the American Society of Tropical Diseases and Ken Alibek’s book on Russian biological warfare for The Lancet. Also had an article in the Encyclopaedia Britannica’s 1999 Medical & Health Annual. So it’s all go!

—Jack Tooldall
(formerly HST)
Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

INTERNET: PAYNE WHO
(Re: Showing They Still Care, QN 36, Spring)

I read this feature with singular empathy. What struck me was the statement by the former Deputy D-G, Dr Hu Ching-Li: “once you join WHO, you become a member of WHO’s family forever. Fortunately, or unfortunately, you cannot get rid of it because you care.” Absolutely right. After nearly 34 years of service and seven years of retirement I still feel as firmly attached as ever.

The statement also put me at ease about an assumption I made when I was choosing a user-name for the Internet. I tried all the usual combinations of my name without success. Then I had an inspiration, I tried “payne-who” and it was accepted.

I discovered, whilst exploring this possibility a bit further, that “payne-ex-who” wasn’t acceptable. So even the Internet agrees, we are WHO until death us do part!

—David Payne
(formerly CTD)
Penarth, Wales

P.S. Welcome back, Mr Editor
**FRANCE : THE END FOR THE CSG ?**

Frontaliers are on the verge of winning the legal battle which they have waged for years to avoid two levies which Paris imposes on all individuals having "résidence fiscale" in France : the CRDS (Contribution pour le remboursement de la dette sociale) 7.5 percent of taxable income, and the CSG (Contribution sociale généralisée) 0.5 percent (The CSG is the levy that has been demanded from some former staff—Editor).

The Attorney-General in the Court of Justice of the European Communities has proposed that the Court condemn France for violating the rules governing the free movement of individuals and the systems of social security. The judgement of the Luxembourg-based Court is expected this autumn, [and] it is virtually certain that the frontaliers will obtain satisfaction.

The CSG was introduced in 1991 and the CRDS five years later. France claims that these are taxes and that no person taxable in France is exempt. The frontaliers, the European Commission and now the Attorney-General maintain that these are social contributions. The two payments, in fact, subsidise the French social security system. Foreign workers should only be subjected to the social security legislation of the state in which they work. This is true for members of the European Union and also for frontaliers working in Switzerland.

The Frontaliers' Association of Ain, Haute-Savoie and Franche-Comté has always invited its members to resist the CSG and the CRDS. The Association’s lawyer, Guylaine Riondel, has herself submitted several thousand such claims. She says : «Frontaliers should immediately protest to the fiscal services and the Trésor public to contest this charge. We have persuaded these services to agree not to reply to frontaliers until the Court pronounces on the matter. This will avoid us having to run to the administrative tribunal every time and to pay legal charges. »

Referring to the CRDS, she says : « Some frontaliers have seen the bailiffs arrive at their homes ; others have had funds seized from their bank accounts, in France as well as in Switzerland, » adding that those who have paid the CSG and the CRDS in recent years have no chance of being reimbursed should France be condemned. The Frontaliers' Association has prepared a standard document to contest these charges, which thousands of taxpayers will no doubt want to fill in during the coming weeks when the Notices of Tax on 1998 Revenues arrive.

—Michel Eggs

(Excerpted from the Tribune de Genève, 11-12 September 1999)

**SENIORS WHO WANT TO WORK**

In Van Woustraat, Amsterdam, a placement agency, opened 20 years ago, provides work for the 65 and over, placing from 200 to 300 persons every week. A subsidiary has been opened in The Hague.

While retirement at 65 is a right in the Netherlands, there is no prohibition to working beyond. The 65+ offer many advantages. According to the agency and the firms "they are very motivated, very reliable, never sick, they keep the work ethic of past times". Furthermore, they are willing to do part-time work, work overtime and on week-ends. Moreover, their salary is less than that of younger workers ; firms do not have to pay social charges for them.

Once firms were reticent : now, they want more seniors. This is no welfare work; the 65+ are efficient and cost-effective. Some have no pension and need to work. Others work to supplement their pension ; most appreciate the social contacts and some hope to work as long as possible.

(Excerpted from Liberation, 21 June 1999)

**MY DOCTORS AND I**

So at 80, relaxed and smiling, what will I be doing all day ? Mostly what I am doing now. There is very little time for anything else.

Mostly I'll be sitting out my golden years waiting for doctors, waiting for God. There is only one God, but every year my list of doctors gets longer.

I have a special doctor for my eyes, and for my ears, and for my skin, and for my sinuses, and for my teeth, and for my gums, and for my heart, and for my stomach, and for my intestinal tract, and for my feet. They are all, of course, in addition to my regular doctor.

In between waiting rooms (and sometimes in the waiting rooms) are all the necessary naps. The days fly by at incredible speed. You know what they say : Time flies when you're having fun.

—Whit Hobbs

(Excerpted from the Tribune de Genève, 11-12 September 1999)

Acknowledgements : The Executive Group thanks those who have made possible this issue, especially Peter Ozorio (Editor) ; Yves Beigbeder, Rosemary Bell and Jery Kilker (Editorial Board) ; Rajindar Pal (Chairman), David Cohen, Jean-Pierre Dustin, Michel Perre, Jean Le Clercq (French translations) ; John Bland (English) ; also Marianne King (Editorial Assistance). Layout by Humphrey Matthey, Glasgow.

The opinions of the QN are those of the authors, not necessarily of AFSM.
IN MEMORIAM
Deaths announced since last list

AZEVEDO, A.  
29.10.98

DEMOLIERE, Georges  
07.12.98

FIGUEROA, Ramon Carmito  
02.10.98

GLYNN, Gerard J.  
05.10.98

GORDILLO, Nydia  
12.10.98

GRANET BLANCARD, Andrée F.  
09.10.98

HUSSEIN, Sayed Ali  
28.08.98

JIMINEZ, Carmen  
22.02.98

MABIALA, Pascal  
03.04.98

MARTINEZ RODRIGUEZ, Ramon  
14.09.98

MENDES, Edson S.  
28.10.98

MOUKOUYOU, Michel  
23.08.98

NIEVAS, Raquel  
08.10.98

N'DIAYE, Assane  
29.08.98

SECK, Gana  
14.08.98

SKRIVER, Borge  
25.04.98

SUNDARESAN, Thalanayar K.  
27.04.99

TAHA, Awad Ahmed  
29.06.98

WARNER, Yolande K.G.  
10.10.98

YACUP, Sofonias  
31.10.98

Annex  Quarterly News, Former WHO Staff  No. 37, 1999
The following deaths have occurred since the last announcement:

MARSONO, Sulur
09.09.99

MATHEN, Kochettu K.
18.01.99

MURRAY, Anne Davidson
23.01.99

PHARISS, John W.
22.01.99

PIENCIKOWSKI, Louis J.
31.01.99

POLLIAND, Gisele
15.12.98

PRASOBCHOKE, M.
06.12.98

RAO, Nutulapaty U.
29.12.98

SANTA MARIA, M.
23.10.98

SENTICI, Mohamed
07.01.99

SESTAK, Zvonko
21.12.98

SILOU, François A.
10.12.98

TANNER, Doris
10.12.98

VANDERHOEVEN, Jan A.
20.12.98

WEGMAN, Myron E.
20.09.98

ZOURE, Lorbayes
Date unknown