**Health**

**PAID IN FULL**

The Staff Health Insurance has received payment in full for the costs of emergency hospitalization of a colleague, who claimed reimbursement from a pharmacy in France after it had misfilled his prescription.

The prescription had been written for 1 mg of anti-coagulant, but was filled for 4 mg. In a letter to the pharmacy his Siss cardiologist had said that the error had placed his life in danger, necessitating his readmittance to Hospital La Tour urgently, from where he had been discharged after heart surgery just 48 hours earlier.

As health coverage was therefore under the "catastrophic" section of the scheme, no part of the reimbursement was due to the patient: the health insurance received the entire 1,000 CHF paid.

**ILLNESS AT AN ADVANCED STAGE**

Colleagues who live in countries which provide national health services free, or almost so, often forget – to their detriment – that they are covered also by their WHO health insurance. Yet in the event of illness at an advanced stage, there are cases where the physician at home is unable to prescribe treatment because its high costs cannot be met from public funds.

"So, if your doctor comes up with an unpleasant diagnosis, remember to say that you are entitled to the best possible care under WHO's Staff Health Insurance," counsels Rosemary Bell, member of the AFSM Executive Board, and formerly a long-time representative of staff.

**Pensions**

**STILL OUT IN LIMBO**

Pity our Russian pensioners! Despite promises by the government, self-professed "sympathetic", over three years ago, their claim for restoration of their U.N. pension, which had been signed away – against their will – to the former Soviet Union, remains unresolved.

According to the last report by the Standing Committee, U.N. Joint Staff Pension Board, the government "was suggesting an internal solution, whereby a small amount would be added to State pensions; this amount was minimal – less than $10 a month."

It was rejected by the Federation of Former International Civil Servants Association, Moscow. Former staff retiring between 1981 and 1990 now receive, in roubles, the equivalent of less than $20, and are growing older in limbo.

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**REAL OPENNESS**

If you haven't examined it closely before, look now at the fairly-new payment advices from our health insurance plan. It's all there: How much you have been reimbursed over the last three years, how many credits you still have for dental and eye glasses. And if a bill was paid directly by the insurance, it shows the balance owing by you to the doctor or the hospital.

That, says QN's Wise Old Owl, making its first appearance on these pages as observer, is openness, or in the politically correct word now -"transparency".
After an investigation of geographical areas and locations in the United States, we settled on Bainbridge Island (where scenes were shot for the movie "Snow Falling on Cedars"), Washington State (where the best-seller by the same name was set). It takes about 25 minutes to cross to Seattle. The ferry (which was a prominent part of the film "Sleepless in Seattle") runs approximately every 45 minutes from 6.00 to 2.00 a.m. so we never feel cut off from the mainland.

The island is about 20 miles north to south and 12 miles east to west. Population: 17,000, 50 per cent of whom commute to Seattle, others work on the island, or are retired. This is not a retirement community, however, as the average age is 49.

The island is self-contained, with small shops, a cinema complex, several good restaurants, petrol stations, food markets. There are many artists among the community including a local theatre group which perform throughout the year. In addition, there are two golf courses.

The environment is relaxed, with a high level of personal security, apart from petty theft. Personal security, combined with the good reputation of the schools, were the key reasons for our choosing Bainbridge Island rather than the mainland. While Seattle is not too large, has many cultural attractions, its main drawback is traffic. It is rated the fifth most congested city in the U.S. A lot of people who work there look for solutions, and Bainbridge Island is one of them, consequently property values have increased.

When I first saw the house we are renting and the others in the neighbourhood, I was reminded of a Hollywood film set, where nothing is real, particularly the gardens. We were lucky to find a rental home as they are few and far between. A home is rented not more than 48 hours after being announced. There are about 20 houses in our community: families are either couples in their seventies or in their mid-to-late 30s. Everyone has been very welcoming and helpful. To be honest, we much prefer the way houses are built in Europe perhaps because the gardens are a bit sauvage yet beautiful. Everything here is too "organized." I can’t think of a better word for it.

My wife, Val, who is very English, has adjusted well. Bainbridge is not typical of U.S. society in many respects. She misses many things and finds the quality of many items here lacking in comparison to France. We are however much impressed by the variety of choices of food plus non-edible consumer goods. While food is not cheaper here than in France, by any means, clothing and many other things are less expensive. The major gap for us is our friends. We miss all of you. That has been the most difficult part of moving. I like to believe that it will prove to be a correct decision, especially for our children. There are many more opportunities here for them as well as for us, which is perhaps the best aspect of U.S. culture – ensuring something for everyone. We will know better as time passes.

—Ron Anderson
(formerly A/Chief, RMB)
Bainbridge Island, Washington, USA
(E-mail: valron@Bainbridge.net)
WHO’S FIRST D-G SERVED ONE TERM

Brook Chisholm - Doctor to the World records the life of a distinguished Canadian, born in Oakville, Ontario in 1896, who is well known abroad for the right reasons and remembered at home perhaps for the wrong ones. It describes his growth and maturation; his medical studies, general practice; his interest in psychiatry; his military service in World Wars I and II, where he rose to the rank of Major General; his role as Deputy Minister of Health; and his international service, initially with the United Nations, then with WHO.

Despite his international reputation, Brock Chisholm tends to be remembered at home as "the man who killed Santa Claus," and unfortunately the author, Allan Irving, overemphasizes this myth. Chisholm used that metaphor frequently to warn parents against the wrong education of children and the need of mature, enlightened youth to lead a just society.

The second part of the book is devoted to the man of WHO. He now worked for the world, confronting its prejudices and realities, accords and rivalries; its population of healthy and sick. The inequalities he witnessed led to a belief that health must be a bridge to social justice and world peace. This was to become his legacy to his successors.

I first met this doctor in 1951 when, as the representative of my graduating class, I meekly went to invite him to officiate at our Hippocratic Oath-taking. He was delighted to accept, and devoted his address to the necessity of us new doctors infusing our profession with noble ideals of service, ethics and human consideration. Even more than technology, he told us, the future of mankind was in the hands of the younger generation, who should not repeat the wars, errors and nuclear madness of his generation.

In one single term (1948-1953) as D-G, Chisholm fine-tuned his stance towards the attainment of world health. He anchored it in a concept revolutionary for the times, that broke down imperialistic and nationalistic boundaries, and that affirmed the best-quoted part of WHO’s Constitution: "Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."

At WHO’s fiftieth anniversary in 1998, another visionary D-G, Dr Halfdan Mahler, described Chisholm’s mission as "soaring and down to earth." His humility also is legendary: before joining WHO, I paid him a courtesy call at his home in British Columbia. In our conversation he gave no hint at all of his having been invested, that very day, with Companion of the Order of Canada, his country’s highest honour. I only learnt of it reading the papers on the ferry back to Vancouver.

A s half the book is given over to Chisholm’s international health work, a more analytical study would have underscored his advocacy of peace; his position against biological weapons; his contribution to Pugwash (which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1995); his vision of an international peace force (today being advocated by Kofi Annan, U.N. Secretary-General); his ideas on world federalism (now reflected in the European Union); and other forward-looking concepts.

One feels that this book falls short of a deep study of a superior man, but it is informative, well-written and must be required reading for all WHO colleagues, past and present.

(William Gunn, M.D.
(Former Director WHO Emergency Relief Operations,
Now administering the International Association For Humanitarian Medicine, Brock Chisholm.)
ONE DOLLAR PLEASE!

Looking out on a wintry day in Geneva, I long to roll the weeks back and bask again in the sun on the Caribbean’s largest island – Cuba. Lush green countryside, sun-drenched white beaches, warm turquoise seas, an ice-cool rum punch and the lilting sound of salsa music. Sounds like paradise, doesn’t it? But as always there is another side to the picture.

Tourism is fast becoming the major dollar-earner for Cuba but it is a mixed blessing. Beggars, freelance guides, prostitutes and souvenir vendors are appearing, all anxious for dollars since the dollar was legalised as a usable currency. Basic foods are on ration for the Cubans and their choice is limited. Salaries vary little; whilst the girl rolling cigars may earn 200 pesos a month or a bus driver 300, a fully-qualified doctor earns only around 500. (The peso is officially at par with the dollar). Tour guides who receive tips in dollars can earn up to 20 times more than a teacher, and you find doctors or engineers working as bell-boys in the tourist hotels.

After decades of tyrannical and corrupt military dictatorships, Fidel Castro led a revolution that brought him to power in January 1959. Eventually all land and property were nationalised and a ban was put on private enterprise. Many previously “wealthy” Cubans left, and the United States placed a trade embargo on Cuba which it still upholds today.

Castro outlawed racial discrimination, slashed rents and increased wages; volunteers taught the peasants to read and write. Today Cuba has a literacy rate of 95 per cent – higher than that of the United States. Health services are excellent and free. But due to the U.S. embargo, medicines are not readily available and pharmacy shelves lie empty. Plant medicines are however being developed, with promising results. People travel mainly by horse and cart, by bicycle, in overcrowded buses or by hitch-hiking. Few Cubans own cars, and those date back to the 1950s!

I travelled with a tourist group from one end of the island to the other, visiting most major towns. Everywhere you see vestiges of Spanish colonial times, particularly the beautiful though faded and decaying mansions, but historic monuments and museums are well-run and well-documented.

If you go to Cuba, stuff your pockets with one dollar bills: one each for the chambermaid, the museum guide, the ever-present musicians, the toilet attendants, the taxi-drivers. If you photograph people in the street, they too expect a dollar. Some people approach you rubbing their arms; they are asking for soap, which is rationed and of poor quality.

My fear is that the tourist boom will explode, bringing back some of the evils the revolution fought so hard to eliminate, causing a sort of apartheid, with one set of rules for tourists and another for the local population. As the world moves towards globalisation of trade and the lifting of barriers, surely it is time for Washington to end its senseless and immoral blockade against Cuba. To quote the United States own Chamber of Commerce, “it is behaviour unworthy of a great nation.”

—Dorothy Hoffmann
(formerly INF)
"Sorry for being late," said Albert, "I had a terrible lumbago this morning, and wanted to stay in bed, but then Alberta persuaded me to get up, and now I feel better."

Alberta gave wise advice. According to Scientific American (August 1998), the dictum that bed rest is the mainstay of therapy of lumbago is one of the seven myths about low back pain. Of course, when severe back pain occurs for the first time, one should not take it automatically for "let it be; if your back hurts, you should take it easy until the pain goes away" is myth No. 3, according to the same paper. It is appropriate to consult a physician and to delegate to him the responsibility of thinking about the possible cause of the pain.

The Merck Manual – since 1899 the "bible" of (anglophone) practising physicians – in its 15th edition lists nine groups of possible causes of low back pain, this in itself shows how complex the question may be. Nevertheless, most low back pain comes from spraining the ligaments or straining the muscles of the back, and tends to be self-limited, or transitory. Next in frequency are bone and joint disorders (osteoarthritis, spondylarthrosis) in the region of the back; these increase with age, and are present in more than 50 per cent of people above age 60. (By the way, is this the reason why retirement age for WHO collaborators had been fixed for their 60th birthday?) With further ageing, occasional lumbago becomes more and more common, definitely a fact of significance for the Association of Former Staff Members.

On the other hand, "everyone with back pain should have a spine x-ray" is, again, one of the myths. Since most elderly people do have changes in the spine, imaging may not really contribute to a diagnosis of the cause; pain is often not related to the x-ray findings. A further myth is that everybody having a "slipped disk" should undergo surgery; patients to be operated upon should be carefully selected by specialists. Indiscriminately done, operations often result in failure. On the other hand, according to a study of pain-free individuals, about two thirds of people have disk anomalies, without any pain. Surgery rates for back pain vary from country to country, depending on the cultural atmosphere. Thus, in the United States, the rate for back surgery is five times higher than in Britain, showing that there exist, even in serious medicine, culturally conditioned fads.

Coming back to Alberta’s common-sense advice, various studies were done on the value of bed-rest as a treatment for lumbago. One such study showed that the absence of patients from work depended only on the doctor’s recommendation for how long to stay in bed. Four days of bed rest turned out to be no more effective than two days, or even no bed rest at all. Those who remained active despite the pain did better in the long run – they had fewer and lighter recurrences. Physical activity may also have some preventive effect, i.e. the onset of lumbago may be less frequent in physically active persons, though this is not formally proven; but patients who have developed lumbago do benefit from adequate exercise, once the acute pain has subsided, or even before, while having some pain.

Patients often tend to seek relief in various so-called alternative treatments, such as chiropractic, acupuncture, electrotherapy, "transcendental meditation." Naturally, such procedures are followed by some positive results, since the pain, as in Albert’s case, often subsides spontaneously, thanks to Mother Nature. The medical phrase customarily applied is therefore "watchful waiting as treatment", complemented by classical pain-killers, such as acetylsalicylic acid, the good old honourable aspirin – often more effective than modern sophisticated combinations of chemicals.

Talking of olden times, where does the term "lumbago" come from? According to the Dictionary of Word Origins, the distant ancestor of the Latin lumbus was probably Germanic; this gave in the 17th century the present term denoting lumbar (loin) ache. Said Albert: "Who needs etymology? I need it as much as a pain in the neck."

—Tom Strasser, M.D.
(formerly CVD)
CIOMS has established a lecture on ethical aspects of health policy named after Zbigniew Bankowski, now retiring as its Secretary-General after serving for 25 years. The lecture will carry with it a special honorarium and be funded from contributions from colleagues.

A WHO staff member from 1965 to 1975, Dr Bankowski was Responsible Officer, Research Coordination and the Programme for Research Training, and Grants, then served as WHO Rep to Tunisia, while holding a Visiting Professorship of Histology, Faculty of Medicine, Tunis.

CIOMS (the Council for International Organisations of Medical Sciences) was created jointly by UNESCO and WHO in December 1949, and to mark WHO’s 50th Anniversary, organised an International Conference on Pharmacovigilance and Related Ethical Issues.

**Big Day for AAFI/AFICS (We Have One Too)**

The news is already out, published in the Tribune de Genève (20 January 2000), that it will be a big day for AAFI/AFICS on Tuesday, 4 July 2000 (coincidentally a big day too for a Member State). As the Associations turn 60, they pledge, among other things, to "strengthen their capacity for serving the international community," and at a practical level, to "avoid competition among associations for members."

Indeed, to do the latter, it may be possible for retiring staff to join its own association and AAFI/AFICS through "a combined application and a combined contribution, where feasible (of course)." The main events to mark the occasion are first, on 4 July, an anniversary lunch, and second, on 22 July, a concert by the Chamber Orchestra of Geneva, both naturally at the ILO, the grand-daddy of all staff associations.

Guests of honour at the lunch are Juan Somavia, D-G, ILO; and Dominique Follmi, President, Diplomatic Club, and former President of the Republic and Canton of Geneva.

(Meanwhile our AFSM will mark an occasion too on Wednesday, 5 April, it holds its first ever general meeting, at 13.30, salle C)

**Little Liners**

- WHO’s is the largest association of former staff. It has 1,200 members; followed by ILO, with 700; ITU, with 160; WTO with 100; and AFIS (the Association of Former ITC Staff Members) with 65.

- AAFI/AFICS, the umbrella organization that published these figures, has 3,000 members, about 2,000 in the Geneva area alone. It is open to staff of all U.N. agencies, thus many members are listed elsewhere as well. The Chairman, AFSM, sits on its executive board.

- Mail & Internet courses, four of them, were offered by AAFI/AFICS to members in 1999 who were at different levels of skill, with generally good results reported. An example of continuing education that AFSM might like to emulate, says QN’s Wise Old Owl. To be fair though, AFSM is exploring the possibility of organizing bridge sessions, a welcome initiative.

- Vera Kalm, former Director of WHO’s Liaison Officer, U.N., New York, has translated into English by Jean-Jacques Chevron, which according to a forward by U.N. S-G Kofi Annan “gives a simple, clear and concise account of the history and work of the U.N.” Profusely illustrated and ideal for schools and colleagues, it is available at Naville, Palais des Nations.

**QN38: By Long Distance**

The QN editorial team produced QN38, its last 24-page issue, by long distance – working from Naples, Florida (Peter Ozorio), from Malta (Rosemary Bell), from New Delhi (Michel Fèvre), from the Geneva area (John Bland, David Cohen, Yves Beigbeder, Jery Kilker, Jean Leclercq, Alain Vessereau and Marianne King, the glue in the operation). Last but not least, from Glasgow (Humphrey Matthey, who does the QN layout).

It all went well, except for the loss in the Christmas post of the envelope with all of the newsletter’s artwork. That led to a wild scramble to find duplicates, and to a delay, but not by much, in production. Thus, with e-mail, fax and, as a last resort, the old-fashioned telephone, and the post office, none could escape the long arm of editorial duty and responsibility.
Treasurer Joe Chang-Wailing read this sign over a pastry shop last year while on a trip to Peniscola, Spain, with wonderment. It brings to mind what colleague David Payne, formerly CID and now in Wales, earlier concluded about WHO: “Fortunately, or unfortunately, you cannot get rid of it…”

WHO TRANSLATORS, REST EASY

Hurrah, at last a solution to all our translation problems, thought John Bland, former editor of World Health. He had discovered a two-way Automatic Translator Service on the internet, which will – for free – translate, thereby doing away with mere human translators forever. A lover of words and, more precisely the right word, he tested this e-novation with a short passage, then reversed the process, putting it back into English.

His original: When Sue Black had left the party, Faith Woods was still dead set on making the do go with a bang. She cried: “Come on, let’s cut a rug. We’re going to rock around the clock tonight.” Not to beat about the bush, she was cut to the quick that Sue had jumped the gun and done a bunk.

The translation: Quand le noir de Sue était parti de la partie, les bois de foi étaient encore-positionnement mort sur faire vont de pair avec un coup. Elle a pleuré: “Avancez, coupons une couverture. Nous allons basculer vingt-quatre heures sur vingt-quatre ce soir.” Pour ne pas battre au sujet du buisson, elle a été coupée au rapide que Sue avait sauté le pistolet et avait fait une couche.

The re-translation: When the black of known had started from the part, the wood of faith were still positioning died on making go hand in hand with a blow. It cried: “Advance, coupons a cover. We will rock twenty-four hours out of twenty-four this evening.” Not to beat about the bush, it was cut to the rapid which Sue had jumped the gun and had made a berth.

His conclusion: WHO translators, rest easy, your jobs are secure.

To test it on your computer: first, ‘Copy’ your English (or French) text, then go to babelfish.altavista.com on the Net; next paste in your text; then select English to French (or vice versa) and hit “Translate”. Your text will promptly appear on screen.

LIFESTYLES

SELF-Help GROUP SEEKING HELP

AFSM’s Self-Help Group apparently is in need of help to decide on a regular spot for its late-morning-coffee/luncheon gathering. It meets on the first Friday of the month.

Hotel Suisse, which provided service at table, has been the choice until it closed its restaurant. The next venue was the Bagatelle, across from Cornavin station, and then the Hotel Warwick for the year-end do. It was a trifle pricey, but then the hotel is rated four ****.

“We had a pleasant room and a number of round tables. This, together with the apéro served outside made it easier for everyone to talk to everyone else,” reports Rosemary Bell, one of the organizers. “To be repeated.” But that was not to be. Since then, it has been (temporarily) the Migros cafeteria at Balexert, which because of its clamour made chatting difficult, and instead of being served, it is cafeteria, self-help style. A suire.

For more information or suggestions, call her (phone/fax: +33 450 422678 or Margaret Baker (phone +33 450 36 88 63). From Geneva or nearby Vaud, 059 instead of +33.

SAILING, SAILING

A first cruise on the Mediterranean has been announced by the AFSM Executive Group. It is being planned on the Italian liner “Costa Romantica” from Monday, 23 Oct to Friday, 3 Nov 2000. Its route: from Nice to Italy, Egypt, Israel, Cyprus and the Greek Islands.

To benefit from highly attractive Group Rates, a minimum of 20 bookings must be made by 1 June 2000. Prices: Categories A: 8,950 French francs; B FF 9,350; C FF 10,350 and D FF 11,050. Nl 2 beds to a cabin.

To book, write/fax/e-mail AFSM, room 4141, attention Drs David Cohen, Daniel Flahault.

FOR SALE BY FORMER STAFF MEMBER:

Superb villa(160m2) with lovely garden (1200m2) in Thoiry. 5 minutes from village centre and Val Thoiry; 4 bdrms, 2 baths, living/dining with fireplace, workshop/storage area, laundry room, one car garage with shelter for another 2 cars, beautiful terrace. Price: FF 2.3m Available 1 September 2000. Tel: Mrs H. Geweniger (059) 450 41 28 96.
Jean-Noël Malavallon: All the colleagues and friends of Jean-Noël Malavallon were deeply saddened to learn of his death at the age of 62. Jean-Noël joined WHO in 1962 as a Messenger-Driver and his qualities were quickly noted and appreciated. Extremely serious as a driver and meticulous in maintaining all the official WHO cars, he very soon received promotions and became driver for the Director-General.

Apart from his always impeccable appearance, his tact and discretion were well appreciated both by the management and by all the important dignitaries whom he had the opportunity and the honour to drive. After more than 35 years in his career, he never had the least incident or accident, nor had to pay a single fine to the gendarmes of Geneva or anywhere else, which rates as quite a professional exploit when you consider that he drove more than a million kilometres on European roads.

It is noteworthy that he was just as active and appreciated in the commune of Ferney-Voltaire for his participation in a great many social activities and as an elected member of the Municipal Council for many years. The crowd present at his funeral is sufficient proof of the immense professional, social and family impact that Jean-Noël had on all around him throughout a lifetime of service.

On behalf of them all, a big "thank you" to you, Jean-Noël, for all that you brought to us; we will all keep in a corner of our heart the memory of a faithful colleague and friend. To his wife, Jeannine, and all her large family, we can only repeat our sincere sympathy and all our friendship.

—Jean-Pierre Aimé, (Formerly CMS)

Eulogy 12 January 2000, Notre-Dame Church, Ferney-Voltaire

Joan Short: The news that Joan had passed away last November in Dorset, England, where she was enjoying her retirement left us very sad.

She was a Secretary in the seventies and early eighties in the Division of Environmental Health, and will be remembered for her efficiency, competence and dedication.

I had the good fortune to work with her for some years, and recall her kindness, sense of humour and ready smile. Joan always had WHO and her friends close at heart, and visited Geneva from time to time. She will certainly be missed.

—Vic Pinto (formerly EH)

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—Vic Pinto (formerly EH)

In the House

To Big Business, A "Howdy Pardner"

"Since I have become Director-General (in June 1998), WHO has been reaching out to new partners in its effort to conquer disease. We have strengthened ties with U.N. agencies and established good collaboration with a handful of private-sector companies."

Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland
(Fact Sheet No. 235, October 1999)

The "first-ever" partnership with the business world occurred in 1948, with vaccine manufacturers and another notable one took place in 1988, with the pharmaceutical giant Merck & Co., (which developed the drug Ivermectin against river blindness and provided it free).

But it was in 1999, that "major partnerships were launched" to fight leprosy and malaria, as evidenced in the naming of 12 Japanese pharmaceutical companies as partners to develop new anti-malarials in WHO's campaign "Roll Back Malaria."

The D-G's statement is the most recent and probably the clearest public indication ever of WHO's diminished fear of an old bête noire, which should be encouraging to programme managers. "Conflict of interest" used to be frequently cited by Legal in order to shoo away the private sector.

Today, no longer as bashful, or fearful, of commerce, WHO seemingly wants to be a game player as well, making the point in a Backgrounder headed "Trade and Public Health" released for WHO's 3rd Ministerial Conference in Seattle in September 1999. All of this, of course, would be news to former staff.

The Staff Association's satirical newsletter, Le Serpent Enchaîné, in December 1998, playfully commented on this trend, thusly:

Corporate Chums: Now that the D-G has lunched in Geneva with 25 corporate leaders, and has met the CEO of Coca Cola in Washington, Serpent is sure that LEG, often overly careful with them (in one case, making it impossible for a programme to accept $1 million donation from Mars) has adjusted its position.

Even Nestlé may now find favour, muses Serp, considering that it has named a breakfast food "Clusters."
A BRAIN AT HOME
(Re: "A Burden of a Brain-Bank?", QN 38, Autumn 1999)

To begin, I remember well the briefings of Dr Kenneth Sinclair-Loutit presented at the annual planning meetings. They were colourful, honest and straightforward. However, I wish to respond to his question about invitations by the administration to former staff to serve WHO.

Although we may be surprised once in a while, such as in the case of Herb Crockett (another dear colleague), who was invited to assist WHO on the recent MAS/RIF, and Dennis Warner, once, according to his own words, I personally know of only a few cases when (usually well-connected) retired colleagues were invited (usually by directly befriended active staff) to serve.

As to myself, since my retirement in Copenhagen in mid-1993, living there until my departure to Israel in February 1995, and since then, I have never been called on to help or to serve WHO - despite several verbal and written indications that I would. I had thought that I could be of some use after 25 years of service, and after my initiation and implementation of many environmental health projects.

For me, therefore, it is not a case of a "Burden" or a "Brain-Drain", but a "brain" sitting at home wishing to be used before drying out....

—Michael J. Suess, Sc.D.
(formerly EURO, Copenhagen)
Tel-Aviv, Israel

UNINVITED
(Re: "Pleased and Displeased", QN 38, Autumn '99)

I never miss an opportunity to visit Geneva as I remember the happy years I spent there, and I would also make an effort to be present at the Annual Reception. The only problem is I have never been invited. The only time I have been present was when I gate-crashed a reunion in 1993. I had no conscience about doing this as I felt I had a right to be there.

AFSM must be the only association where all members are not invited to annual receptions - and they should be. I sometimes regret becoming a Life Member as I feel the association is run for the people who have settled in the Geneva area.

Perhaps this matter could be discussed at the AGM on 5 April. I presume all members have been invited.

—Jean Pounder
(formerly WHO, Geneva)
Darlington, UK

WHERE DID WE GO WRONG?
(Re "Honoured," QN39 Autumn 1999)

The welcome news of The Frank A. Calderone Public Health Prize being awarded to D.A. Henderson for smallpox eradication in 1980 reawakens an old mystery, why no Nobel Prize for WHO for this unique achievement?

Was it true that opinions were divided between the Medicine Prize and the Peace Prize? Surely removing a killer disease from the planet did as much for "peace" as UNHCR did in 1954, UNICEF in 1965, ILO in 1969 and UNHCR again in 1981.

—John H. Bland
(formerly Editor-in-Chief, World Health)

EASIER IN THE "BIG EASY"
(Re "Anything But Retired," QN 38, Autumn '99)

It's hard to believe that we have been at Tulane University in New Orleans for eleven years. Teaching two to three courses a year and directing a communica-
Iru rue PRgss

T 5 Top Economists HIRED

The task of a new committee created by Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO D-G, and headed by the U.S. economist Jeffrey Sachs will be to study ways of reducing the growing gap between the public and private economy. The distinguished Harvard professor was former adviser to the Russian government.

There has also been assignments for EMRO, which included a paper on health promotion and the media for the Regional Committee meeting in Alexandria in 1999. So it has been anything but "retirement".

It is agreeable to work in Tulane. We have adjusted well to the relatively slow Southern pace of life in "The Big Easy". There isn’t a long line at the post office, or at the bank. Even a visit to the motor vehicles office, a purgatorial trip in New York, is bearable here.

As we begin the new millennium, I wish to extend to my colleagues a healthy and successful new century. They are frequently in my memory.

--Jack Ling
Director,
International Communications Enhancement Center
School of Public Health, Tulane University.
(formerly Director, INF)

THANKS TO THE CHAIRMAN

Thank you for your intervention, through the HQ Surveillance Committee, which settled my claims for reimbursement of a hearing aid. It is encouraging to know that the committee of AFSM can render such services for those of us who live away from Geneva and who also miss out on the many activities of the Association.

—V.M. Eyakuze
(formerly WHO, EMRO)
Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

(Insurance rule 290 provides that “For persons requiring a hearing aid, one single payment not exceeding US$ 1,500 for each ear will be made in any five-year period.” —Editor)

Thank you for your intervention which helped to solve the problem of the payment of my pension benefits from December 1998 to May 1999.

—Roger Lion
Rixensart, Belgium

AFSM ASSEMBLY: 5 APRIL 2000

I regret I will not be able to participate at the first General Assembly of AFSM . However, I look forward to receiving the agenda and additional information.

I am always interested in the QN and, although I can understand the reasons for its late distribution (costs, priority given to the printing of other documents), if it could be received earlier, the information contained therein would be more appreciated.

—Jill Forman
(formerly WHO, Geneva)
Chichester, UK

IN THE PRESS

15 Top Economists HIRED

The task of a new committee created by Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, WHO D-G, and headed by the U.S. economist Jeffrey Sachs will be to study ways of reducing the growing gap between the public and private economy. The distinguished Harvard professor was former adviser to the Russian government.

Fifteen economists brought together by WHO have 20 months to develop strategies capable of responding to the health needs of the Third World, without deviating from the laws of the free market.

—Mathieu van Berchem
(Excerpted from the Tribune de Genève, 19 Jan. 2000)

LUVVERLY

This full-page advertisement for Viagra was carried by Parade magazine, a Sunday supplement that is distributed in all major papers in the United States. It is publicity from Pfizer, which self-describes itself as "an official sponsor of Valentine’s Day," 14 February. How very clever, these public relations types, admits Wise Old Owl.

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); Michel Fèvre, Jean Leclercq, Alain Vessereau (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.

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The following deaths have occurred since the last announcement:

Bekele, Maaza 19.02.99
CARVIN, Pierre J.M. 17.03.99
CHAND, Ram Bai 04.04.99
CHOUDHURY, Sukumar 17.07.99
COLINEAU, Jacques H. 29.03.99
KANDEEL, El H. 01.06.99
KAPRIO, Leo 14.08.99
KARAMUSTAKIS, Christos 18.05.99
DEUS, Leonor A. 03.04.99
DE ZIEGLER, Anne-Marie 12.06.99
DIAZ ESCOBAR, Antonio 05.03.99
GALATI, Pasquale M. 24.03.99
GALAZKA, Arthur Macied 11.05.99
GARG, Saraswati Devi 18.02.99
GATAN, Mayumi 12.02.00
GIBBS, William Nigel T. 24.07.99
GONZALEZ, M.G. 20.08.99
GUJRAL, Mohan 12.03.99
GUMNOLMAS, Pradit 15.05.99
HADJIOANNOU-HATZIS, K.G. 09.06.99
HAMMOUD, Esam I. 09.08.99
HUERTA, R. 06.02.99
HUSSEIN, Sayed Ali 28.08.98
JAUREGUI, Julio J. 10.02.99
KALLAB, Elke 29.03.99
KANDEEL, El H. 01.06.99
KAPRIO, Leo 14.08.99
KARAMUSTAKIS, Christos 18.05.99
KERESSEDLIDZE, Tamaz 28.12.98
LANDERER, Lucio 01.12.98
MACIAS, Luis Arnaud 05.08.99
MACKAY, Alice M. 13.04.99
MALAVALLON, J.N. 09.01.00
MAFFORT, Enearnacac C. 17.05.99
MATHEN, Mary 27.04.99
MOHAMED, Aisha Abdel 31.03.99
NOTANEY, Kartar H. 18.06.99
RAMIREZ, Natalia 16.02.99
RENDUELAS, Robert 10.06.99
RIDET, Jean 17.02.99
RODENBURG, Julia Y. 04.02.99
ROUZIC, Maryse H.A. 02.01.99
ROY, Leo 09.03.99
SHORT, Joan 20.11.99
SHOWMAN, Cecil 01.02.99
SINGUI, D. 16.04.99
SIRVENT, Ramos M. 26.03.99
SUTHERLAND, Arthur G. 29.01.99
TIERRA, Apolinario R. 10.08.99
TIMMERMANS, Yves H.R. 30.04.99
WERTHEIM, Ludwig M. 26.07.00
Dear Colleague,

The Executive Group of the AFSM is pleased to inform you that we are thinking of the participation of an "AFSM Group" - also open to WHO serving staff - in a cruise in the eastern Mediterranean from 23 October to 3 November 2000 on board the COSTA ROMANTICA. You will find a brief description overleaf.

However, before going ahead with this plan, we need to know how many of you are interested in order to obtain the most favourable terms, available for groups of a minimum of 20 people.

For this reason, we should be grateful if you would be kind enough to complete the pre-registration form below if you are interested and return it by 1 June at the latest.

This pre-registration - without commitment at this stage - will enable you to receive more detailed information concerning the boat, the choice of cabins, proposed excursions with prices, the possibility of reductions in these prices if several people sign up, the cost of drinks, tips expected, plus the telephone number of a travel agent able to reply your questions.

With our best greetings,
With the ASSOCIATION of FORMER WHO STAFF

A wonderful Mediterranean Cruise
open to both WHO former and serving staff

Nice / Genoa, Naples, Alexandria, Port Said, Ashdod, Limassol, Rhodes, Santorini,
Katakolon, Genoa / Nice

on the
COSTA ROMANTICA from 23 October to 3 November 2000
... with a lecturer for the group, opportunities for a number of attractive excursions around Naples, Cairo, Jerusalem, Cyprus, some Greek islands and many facilities offered on a luxury cruise!

Prices include the cruise with full board, port taxes and free transfers NICE / GENOA / NICE by bus. Not included: travel to NICE (or directly to GENOA), excursions, insurances, drinks, tips. Valid passport required.

N.B. All those interested in participating are invited to let us know - as soon as possible - by filing in the pre-registration form (see verso) sent 1 June at the latest to the WHO AFSM Secretariat, room 4141, Ave.Appia 20, 1211 GENEVA 27 - Switzerland.

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"Group" price / Tarif "groupe" (min. 20 p.)
Base: per person(ne) / 2 per cabin(e) / in FRF

| CATEGORY A (low decks/ponts inf.) | Int. cabin(e) int., 2beds/lits | 8.950 |
| CATEGORY B (high decks/ponts sup.) | Int. cabin(e) int., 2beds/lits | 9.350 |
| CATEGORY C (low decks/ponts inf.) | Ext. cabin(e) ext., 2beds/lits | 10.350 |
| CATEGORY D (high decks/ponts sup.) | Ext. cabin(e), ext. 2beds/lits | 11.050 |

*****

Avec l'ASSOCIATION des ANCIENS de l'OMS
une magnifique Croisière en Méditerranée
ouverte à ses membres mais aussi au personnel OMS en activité

Nice / Gênes, Naples, Alexandrie, Port Sain, Ashdod, Limassol, Rhodes, Santorin,
Katakolon, Gênes / Nice

à bord du
COSTA ROMANTICA du 23 Octobre au 3 Novembre 2000
... avec un conférencier pour le groupe, de nombreuses excursions possibles autour de Naples, du Caire, de Jérusalem, de Chypre, et de quelques îles Grecques ... sur un paquebot de grand luxe !

Ne sont pas compris : l'acheminement à NICE (ou direct à GENES), les excursions, assurances, boissons, pourboires.

N.B. Les personnes intéressées sont priées de se faire connaître - dès que possible - en remplissant le formulaire de pré-inscription (voir au verso) et en l'envoyant au plus tard le 1er Juin au Secrétariat de l'AOMS, bureau 4141, Avenue Appia 20, 1211 GENEVE 27 - SUISSE.