In our days, any alleged discrimination was attributed to racism, or, if the victim was a woman, to sexism. Much has changed since then. On 31 January, the ILO Tribunal, in Judgement 2004, found WHO’s Administration guilty of gender bias against a male colleague in Washington, D.C. Its conclusion was based largely on the following:

- The WHO “Cabinet has decided to secure that 6 out of 10 new appointments are women until parity is reached,” D-G, March 1999.

- “...there was a gender mountain to climb,” Executive Director, Mgmt, in assessing the chances that Mark S. Matthews, Chief, Budget and Finance, AMRO, graded P-6, become Director, Mgmt, Geneva, graded D-2

- “Selection of staff members shall be without regard to race, creed or sex,” Staff Rule 4.3.

In the first case ever of reverse discrimination in WHO, and probably in the U.N. system, a 53-year-old male challenged, successfully, a bias against him for being a man, and was awarded $5,000 in moral damages and $1,000 in costs -- satisfying, though hardly grand amounts, even in our time, considering the injury.

“There is nothing wrong in having a policy aimed at gender parity... but this policy cannot be achieved by setting quotas and by reverse discrimination,” the Tribunal declared in a criticism of the Administration, intimating that the means did not justify the ends.

The since-then, celebrated “gender mountain” statement by Exec. Director, Mgmt, was “highly irresponsible,” the Tribunal held, for which “she was rightly censured by the HQ. Board of Appeal.” She also recommended appointment of a woman, identified in the judgement as “Ms. W” from an outside agency, to correct the “gender inequity” in Mgmt. That led the Tribunal to rule that WHO “will have to hold another competition,” in which the woman selected “can, of course, be a candidate.”

All told some 650 applied for the post; six were short-listed. Six took a three-hour written test, but only five were interviewed in person. The appellant was interviewed by video, which, in the Tribunal’s view, was “open to the interpretation of unequal treatment”. In general, the Tribunal said it had “no way of assessing the fairness of the (selection) process.”

Also, with the sole exception of the appellant, no party was named, as was the practice in our day. Instead they were referred to by title or, almost coyly, by initial. Hence, “Ms.W” and, referring to two other candidates, “Mr. A” and “Mr. S.”

We have not heard the last of this case.

—Peter Ozorio, Editor
Before retirement

Counting the Days

For nearly 23 years now I have been committed, as a Finance Officer, to unliquidated obligations, debits and credits, and budget over/under spending. It is a great responsibility. Every project budget has to be vetted and discussed with the appropriate project officer. And one has to ensure that everything is in accordance with the Financial Rules and Regulations.

Now my days in the services of the International Maritime Organisation, London, are nearly numbered. The time is not far off when I shall call it a day and retire. It will not be easy. My life will change...at a very awkward age - I am now too old to be a swinger and too young to be a dirty old man. *(The politically correct phrase now is "sexy senior citizen". - Editor)*

When I was young I was full of ideals. Have they come true? Mostly not, I am afraid. I dreamed, for example, of becoming one of the idle rich. Rich? With the UNJSPF pension, though reasonable as it is going to be, I won't be able to call myself rich. It will keep me in some comfort though, I hope. I shall be able to splash on an occasional bottle of bubbly and to finance a regular supply of Viagra.

And idle? Certainly not! I shall never have enough time to spare, I have so many plans. First of all, I plan to live to be a hundred, that's nearly four decades of merry life of gardening, eating and drinking, dancing, visiting girl friends, travelling and, in later years, learning how to operate a Zimmer frame.

At last, I hope to have enough time to practise my piano playing which I abandoned as a young man all those years ago. I have always wished to be able to play a tune without people running away and blocking their ears.

Oh, those will be the glorious times of the autumn of my life. Wish me well - but not yet! There are still two years of expenditure reports and budget revisions to go before that golden age arrives.

—Dalbot Sudwell

*(Finance officer, IMO, London)*

Excerpted from the FICSA Quarterly, December 2000

RIP: Tom & Albert

Tom Strasser, columnist for *QN’s “Health Corner,”* passed away in Geneva on 8 March 2001. His first column appeared on these pages in *QN* 2, summer 1990 when he wrote about “Your Blood Pressure and You,” his last was about “Erectile Dysfunction,” a sign indeed of changing times, written for *QN* 42, Autumn 2000.

All of us who work on the *QN* grieve at the loss of this gentle and courageous colleague, a faithful contributor for over a decade, and at the loss, too, of his creation, Albert, a friend, with whom he regularly shared chocolate cake and conversation. *(A fuller obituary is planned for the next issue of *QN.* — Editor)*
After retirement

Recounting Florida Ways

Retirement is a state all of us wish to reach and, all too sadly, many of us do not. If we are lucky enough to age, we should enjoy it.

In Florida, the elderly are running whole towns. In places, for instance, like Sanibel Island on the west coast, they are in charge of supermarkets, post offices, hotels and banks. Not only are they enjoying their work, they do it with pride and competence. If this works in Florida, it would work elsewhere in the world.

There is something wrong with society when at 59 years, 11 months and 29 days one is considered competent, willing, reliable and able, whilst less than 24 hours later, having reached the pinnacle of a career, often heading a whole department, one is shown the door and considered unemployable! Wrongly, it has been accepted that once people reach the age of 60, they qualify for work stoppage. With such a negative attitude in society, no wonder there is negativism towards retirement.

In fact, we, the retired, are winning over those among the young who believe we are good for nothing much any more. We broke the sound barrier with manual tripewriters (and that is not a spelling error!), we mastered banda machines, white stencils, carbon copies and hours of tedious shorthand. And we are catching up with computerisation! In the world of today, it is the computers who do the spell checks. In our day, we did it.

Many of us find a full life in retirement. It is pleasant to be able to start the day without a deadline. No need to be anywhere particular by 8.45 a.m. Instead we can amble into town and enjoy a croissant and coffee with friends, arrange to lunch out of town or pass the day on the boat. Switzerland is a haven for retirees and medical and social facilities are of the best. Voluntary work is available to those who wish to continue in the business community or in the field of health and care.

Still, retirement is a challenge because it represents a step into the unknown. We all fear that and need courage to face it. Some of us face it with a partner, others alone. Either way it can be enjoyable. Finally, we can enjoy saying to the young: “I’ve been there. I’m past that bit. I’ve done all that. Just send me an e-mail, now that I have figured out how to do it!”

—Joy Pattinson

(formerly U.N. Geneva and a frequent contributor to U.N. Special)
Kosovo is quiet, relatively

The daily United Nations security briefing in Kosovo is often opened with a phrase such as “the situation remains tense but relatively quiet.” Then follows a list of “incidents during the past 24 hours” – murders, abductions, rapes, arson, shootings and mine and grenade explosions. It all sounds depressing, yet outside the shops are full, people window-gaze, traffic snarls itself into endless jams, smugglers tout cigarettes and counterfeit CDs, and children laugh to and from school.

For staff of the WHO humanitarian office in Kosovo (most of them are based in Pristina, the capital), there are other problems than the reports and rumours of distant violence, some big, many small. Desk space is at a premium, telephones go down, electricity fails, a project prepared over months is delayed for no good reason, working trips have to be postponed because of a security incident along the road. Everyone has learnt to expect something unexpected to intervene in what should be straightforward.

One threat, however, is receding: the danger from landmines. KFOR troops and the NGOs involved in mine clearance now reckon they have cleared almost 50,000 mines – about one-third of the estimated total – and hope to declare large areas of Kosovo mine-free by the end of 2001.

Children were among this summer’s mine victims, but a lot of the others seem to be smugglers coming across from Albania, mainly with cigarettes and liquor. More recently a different kind of goods was seized, bomb-making material – detonators, timers, everything except the explosives. Typical terrorist material.

A surprisingly high number of people seem to keep small armouries in their houses, according to security reports. A report in September listed the confiscation of 14 pistols (with several thousand rounds of ammunition), one ground-to-ground missile, two grenade launchers, two automatic rifles and a couple of mines. U.N. police reckon that weapons confiscated by the authorities can be replaced without great effort. Those arrested are usually released within days, and sometimes hours. But none of this is noticed necessarily by the WHO staff. It is a passing item at the morning staff meeting.

Meanwhile summer has gone: the first anniversary of the end of the war, the first harvest for two years, the first chance to pretend that life is back to whatever is considered normal. With winter coming, it is time to stock up on wood and fuel, to buy candles and cooking gas, to shake out the woollies and unpack the boots. The electricity company said it hoped to provide regular supplies by the end of November, but things in Kosovo always take a few months longer than expected.

At least water seems to be available regularly, although not constantly, and we know that many of the health facilities will this year for the first time have standby generators. Life is definitely improving.

—Edward J. Poulterney
(Information Officer, WHO, Kosovo)
Excerpted from FICSA Quarterly, December 2000
Pensions

CHEER ON APRIL FOOL’S DAY

For those who may not have noticed, pensions increased, as a result of rises in the cost of living, effective from 1 April 2001. In Switzerland, for the first time in about five years, it increased by 4.2 per cent and in France by 2.9 per cent. The range however was from a low 2.4 per cent in Denmark to a high 18 per cent in Turkey of 35 countries listed by the U.N. Joint Staff Pension Fund. Figures for some other countries follow:

- Australia (5.7 per cent)
- Austria (4.7)
- Belgium (2.5)
- Canada (3.3)
- Chile (4.6)
- Cyprus (3.2)
- Finland (6.4)
- Germany (3.9)
- Greece (6.8)
- Ireland (5.9)
- Italy (2.8)
- Holland (3.0)
- Norway (6.0)
- Poland (8.6)
- Portugal (4.8)
- Republic of South Korea (4.5)
- Spain (7.0)
- Sri Lanka (10.8)
- Sweden (2.5)
- Thailand (2.0)
- United States (6.1)
- United Kingdom (2.9)

Actuarily Quotable. “We fully realise that the present USA-led economic boom (and the U.N. Joint Staff Pension Fund’s consequent large actuarial surplus) may go into reverse at any time. We approve keeping a portion ready to cushion the next downturn.

“That said, we give the highest priority to using part of the surplus to repeal the various economy measures that have been listed (in its report), specially those affecting beneficiaries.”

Excerpt from report of Informal Meeting, AAFI/AFICS Geneva, 26 October 2000, (i.e. before the economic downturn)

MAY DAY, MAYDAY FOR WHO “TEMPS”

Although momentum is picking up for a fairer deal for WHO temporary staff, the resolution of the problems linked to their status is still far from imminent. Defined as “temps” by this Administration and many others before it, their length of service, which ranges from 5 to 12 years, belies such a characterisation. If they are indeed “temps,” then they are most assuredly “long-term temps” doing full-time work in essentially full-time positions.

Acccording to projections by serving staff, by 2002 their number will make up a half of staff worldwide. Already, they comprise 40 per cent in Geneva, and 57 per cent in EURO. Staff representatives say discussions with ADM since 1998 have resulted in “only two minor concessions, promised but not yet applicable, for health insurance and maternity leave.”

To point up the condition of the “temps,” staff of WHO and other Geneva-based agencies observed Labour Day, 1 May 2001, under the theme “Justice for Long-Term Temporaries” with a mass picnic on WHO’s green grounds, which was a good use of premises.

Earlier, representatives of AFICS/AAFI meeting informally last October in Geneva, also gave temporaries cause for cheer in declaring that: “Current pension conditions for short-term staff are unsatisfactory.” Whether or not put into effect, proposals to make it less so include the following:

That they be allowed to “buy years of service for pension calculation purposes,” that the qualifying period for pensions be “reduced to three years’ service instead of five,” and that there be “more flexibility when contracts are drawn up.”

Noting in its report that the current trend away from careers “towards short-term contracts are at variance with the raison d’être of the Pension Fund,” the representatives warned that it “will inevitably give rise to problems, i.e. to more costs.”

OF MEMBERS & DUES

Our membership totals 1,556, of whom 466 pay dues annually, and 455 are Life Members, a recent check of the computer shows. This means that 921 contribute financially to AFSM but that 635 do not.

In large part because of the drop in annual fees, the Association reported an operating loss for the first time ever in 1999. That led to a plea aimed at those in arrears to bring themselves up to date. Among the recommendations made then by out-going Treasurer, Joe Chang Wailing, was that the CHF 20 fee, unchanged for over a decade, be raised, and that there be a drive to attract new members.

A long unresolved problem, however, is just how to facilitate payment by members abroad, who are without Swiss francs. There is an arrangement with the administration in SEARO to collect dues in rupees for credit to Geneva. There is nothing like that in AMRO, for instance, where colleagues have been known to want to pay but cannot do so, nor in other regional offices. Thus, a challenge to AFSM’s newly-elected officers.
TAXES CSG AND CRDS:

In two decisions taken on 15 February 2000, the European Community's Court of Justice censured France for applying the CSG (Contribution sociale généralisée) and CRDS (Contribution pour le remboursement de la dette sociale) to the full-time and part-time earnings of salaried or independent workers residing in France but working in another state of the European Union. The decisions, as rendered, referred solely to French frontaliers employed in a country of the European economic area and thus excluded the 80,000 frontaliers who work in Switzerland.

This did not escape the notice of Charles Millon, Deputy for l'Ain, who, on 28 February 2000 - just days after the judgements were given - drew the attention of the Minister of Employment to the situation. After summarising the significance of the judgements, the Minister responded, announcing that "the bodies responsible for repayments (URSSAF) have been given precise instructions to reimbursing the amount wrongfully paid by the taxpayers for CSG." She added that "these arrangements are applicable to all those concerned, namely frontalier workers domiciled in France and working in Switzerland." (Official Gazette of the French Republic, Assemblée National, ref. 42514, 23 October 2000).

This broader interpretation seems to extend the benefits of this tax relief to all those who are resident in France and (1) have full-time or part-time earnings coming from abroad, and (2) do not benefit from a French system of social security. This would seem to be the case of many retired WHO staff.

So now, would it not be useful to have this declared officially, by asking an association representing retired people (such as AFFI/AFICS) to approach the French authorities and ask for retirees to be recognised as frontaliers? Or may one hope that those authorities might tacitly admit it by ceasing to collect the two contributions and, better still, by reimbursing the overpayment, as they at present seem to be doing? (See related story, elsewhere on this page.-- Editor)

Claims on the CSG should be addressed to the URSSAF (14 rue Pavé d'Amour, 01016, Bourg-en-Bresse, Cedex), and on the CRDS to the tax centre appropriate to the taxpayer, before 1 January 2003.

—Jean Leclercq
(formerly TRA)

AAFI / AFICS ON THE WEB

The Association of Former International Civil Servants, Geneva, now has its own web site. To access it, first open the Home Page of the U.N. Office in Geneva <http://www.unog.ch>. Click on "AFICS/AAFI Geneva branch" to find introductory text plus photos.

Unfortunately, only the English version has been developed so far. The French version will follow in due course.

Excerpted from the AAFI/AFICS Bulletin, December 2000

GETTING THERE

HURRAH, LE FISC PAYS BACK

Whether others have been reimbursed is not known, but one surprised and satisfied colleague has reported the receipt of a cheque from French fiscal authorities at Bourg-en-Bresse returning monies that he had been required to pay to the government as his Contribution Sociale Generalisée (CSG) over the years.

Just how many years, he could not say off-hand, but the amount repaid was about 7,500 FF. A covering letter admitted that it was "wrong" to have subjected him to the CSG ("au remboursement des sommes perçues par tort par notre organisation."). On 15 February 2000, the European Community's Court of Justice had ruled that those living in France but working outside must not be subject to the CSG ("ne devaient pas être assujettis à la CSG."). On 24 November he received the cheque.

Frontaliers, particularly those who worked in Germany, have long contested not only the CSG but also the CRDS assessments, the latter being the Contribution pour le remboursement de la dette sociale. The court ruled that the two contributions were not taxes, as the government had claimed, but rather assessments for social goals, in effect up-holding the argument of the frontaliers. There has been no word of reimbursement of the CRDS as yet.

—Jean Leclercq
(formerly TRA)
In early 1993, WHO found itself exposed to much unsolicited and unwanted publicity as a result of multiple murders in France’s Jura region on a Saturday in January.

Jean-Claude Roman, who lived in the village of Prévessin, bludgeoned his wife to death with a rolling pin, shot his two children, ages 5 and 7, then after lunching with his parents some 10 miles away, killed them too. He was ashamed of them learning of his double life. The murderer, much respected in his community, passed himself off as a medical doctor with WHO in Geneva. The media, unknowingly and in the haste of deadlines, reported the inaccuracy throughout the length and breadth of the Hexagon, at least initially.

Since then the crimes have been re-visited by Emmanuel Carrere in a best-selling book, L’Adversaire. Now its English version, The Adversary: A True Story of Murder and Deception, translated by Linda Coverdale, is out. The review in February by the International Herald Tribune, naturally, didn’t fail to mention WHO, noting that the imposter claimed to have “worked for nearly 18 years as an eminent physician with WHO. Except that he didn’t.” At first, he “went to WHO every day, later on less regularly,” the author says, “...where he swept up anything printed and free: his house and car over-flowed with papers bearing the letterhead or stamp of WHO.”

In another aspect of the book, the author gives this impression of the international civil servant in neighbouring France:

“The Gex region is...in French territory (but) is essentially a residential suburb of Geneva, an aggregate of well-to-do villages that have become home to a colony of international officials who work in Switzerland... All enjoy more or less the same way of life.... The husband drives to office in a Mercedes. The wife does her shopping and carries out her charity work in a Volvo....”

**UNWANTED PUBLICITY**

After posting warnings on the intra-net in November and February, WHO’s General Support Services cracked down in March on what it considered as parking “infractions.” GSS staff began placing “tickets” on the windscreen of offending vehicles, advising owners that they would be reported to the police, (“Une plainte sera donc déposée auprès du Chef de la Police”), who could then fine them.

Former staff, who do not have access to the intra-net, which is the in-house system, were among the first victims of “ticketing.” Yet, according to e-mail correspondence, AFSM was asked by the Administration “to transmit WHO current parking regulations to your members,” only on 20 March well after the start of the new get-tough parking policy. And two days later, the Chairman, Staff Association, pointed out that there had been no consultation between Staff Representatives and the Adm. on parking.

While cancelled in some cases, in at least one other, the “ticket” had already been sent to the police, leading the unfortunate colleague to question, with some asperity, “if the Geneva police are accustomed to deliver fines around the perimeter of an international organisation.”

In a reference to parking for diplomatic missions, another colleague, more fortunate in that his “ticket” was cancelled, asked: “Is it logical for ten spaces to be reserved from sun-up to sundown for diplomats who normally work in the mornings?” His suggestion: that the CD spaces be open to all after lunch.

Former staff learnt retroactively of the “new rules” on parking, being advised through a circular letter from the Chairman, David Cohen, dated 5 April 2001, which also carried assurances that the Adm. “is studying...measures to make parking within WHO easier.”
These colleagues, former and serving, have contributed chapters to the blockbuster book "Politics of Emerging and Resurgent Infectious Diseases."


All Alone

After 17 years of service with PUB, as editor, Simone Herbulot Simonov retired in 1980. Now, some two decades later, she has published her memoirs.

It is aptly entitled Les Fleurs de Nuremberg, Un amour...en instance, because two events impelled her to write: her husband's death and the 1995 commemoration of the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals in Caen, France, to which she was invited. "Writing didn't take much time," she told QN, "everything was already in my heart and my head."

Here's the way the publishers summarise the book:

"...in the extraordinary microcosm created by the Nuremberg trials, certain individuals from very different backgrounds suddenly meet again, and a passionate affair develops between a French woman and a Soviet officer. This story follows them throughout the century with an emotion that is often tinged with irony, as the circumstances that reunited them separate them again, only to bring them together once more in a final twist of fate."

Allowing that she is "a poet, but not a novelist," the authoress said: "There is not an ounce of fiction in my work; everything is rigorously authentic and nobody has been able to change even a comma in my text, since it was self-edited - and I've become maniacal about that, thanks to my time at WHO," when she was responsible for translating or summarizing articles for WHO's Bulletin. Among Anglophone colleagues of the time, she said, were John Fraser and Richard Harrison.

Prior to joining WHO in 1963, Mme Herbulot, a lawyer by training, was administrator for a theatre in Paris, and also played a part in establishing the International Business School in Lausanne (IMEDE).

She lives in Geneva, where her book is on sale at FNAC, Librairie Descombes, and Ramedu d'Or. It is published by Les Bois Flottes, 74270 Clermont-en-Genevois, France. Price: 13 EURO.

Anything but Retired

- Formerly admin. assistant, CVD, and chairperson of the Staff Association, Mary Jane Watson who left WHO voluntarily, before the appointed hour, was asked to return and serve as Ombudsman for six months beginning from 2000 to 2001.

- Formerly director, MNH, Norman Sartorius was an invited speaker on World Health Day, 2001, the theme of which was "Mental Health: Stop Exclusion. Dare to Care." He is now President, European Psychiatric Association.

In Memoriam

Armando Pares: Leaving his beloved Cuba in the late 1950s because of political changes, he arrived in the United States with his wife, Lidia, and $100 secreted in the sole of a shoe. As a banker and accountant, qualified and experienced, he was recruited by AMRO, Washington, in the budget and finance unit. He assumed responsibilities as Chief, PAY, Geneva in 1968 — a position he held until retirement in November 1989.

A man of compassion and high principles with a strong desire to help, Armando did not "suffer fools" gladly. A champion of justice and an advocate of correct behaviour among staff at all levels he challenged, fearlessly, the Admin-
administration on issues that adversely affected our conditions of employment.

Quintessentially our "resident priest," he assisted us in personal problems, advised newcomers how best to settle in the Geneva environment, and helped us secure loans from SBS, whose officers he enjoyed splendid relations. He counselled us to spend wisely but also to take advantage, while we could, of the bank's credit facilities. A vacation with the kids was not an extravagance, he would say, but an investment in their up-bringing.

As a member of the Hq Board of Appeals, he spent hundreds of hours reviewing cases, frequently upholding appellants' claims even though it was considered "ill-advised" to do so. (One notable example: the ILO Tribunal accepted the minority report of the WHO Appeals Board, of which he was a member, as proper remedy for the appellant, who had been improperly transferred from Kuala Lumpur to Fiji. It was unprecedented. — Editor)

He opened the door for us to the U.N. credit union (M.E.C.) thus making possible low-interest loans, with a minimum of paperwork. He played a role in the U.N. Joint Staff Pension Board's decision to fix a U.S. dollar rate at a time when the dollar was low, thus preventing financial losses to colleagues retiring then. As Treasurer of the 33rd Staff Committee, he organised a memorable gala for us at the Hotel Intercontinental, twenty four years after a similar event was held, believing it was time for us to get together to show our pride in WHO.

None of us who had the honour of knowing and working with Armando will forget the UNHCR poster on the door of his office that said: "A refugee would like to have your problems." Even while helping us, it was his way of asking us to keep our perspective as international civil servants.

He passed away on 2 January 2001 at the Hôpital de la Tour. We miss his warm smile, his engaging personality and his tender heart. Our condolences go to Lidia, his life-long companion, and son, Constantine. ¡Vaya con Dios, amigo! —Ron Anderson (formerly Act. Chief, CWHO)

Bainbridge Island, Washington State, U.S.A.

Herbert Loeb Friedman:
A clinical and research psychologist, he joined WHO in 1976 as a part-time consultant, becoming later chief of the adolescent health and development programme, strong in the belief that the goal of family planning should be to improve health and well-being, rather than just to reach economic targets or to reduce mortality rates.

This profoundly human view was reflected in the phrase he coined, "reproductive health," and popularised in his work during the 1990s and which was accepted by the international conference on population and development in 1994. He also persisted in speaking of "sexuality" in reference to adolescent behaviour, arousing some controversy as this obliges us to consider the human relationships of teenagers.

He drew international attention to the health and development of adolescents, and to the importance of meet-

ing their needs for better public health and social services. As adolescence is a crucial period of life, his interest in adolescents reflected a deep understanding of, and commitment to, the ways in which human development relates to health. The world is now striving to give meaning to his vision of harnessing the force of adolescents to improve themselves and their societies.

He passed away on 20 December 2000. His colleagues and friends are unanimous in remembering him as a gentle, respectful, intense, conscientious and humorous person.

—Jane Ferguson (Child and Adolescent Health, WHO)

David Barnes: It was with sadness that I learned of his recent passing, for we had known each other for around 33 years. We joined the staff at WHO headquarters in Geneva roughly at the same time, in late 1967, he, I think, from Papua New Guinea, while I was on reassignment from SEARO, New Delhi.

I remember the day clearly; we were being briefed on those aspects of living in Geneva not directly related to WHO, e.g. buying a car, getting accommodation and obtaining all those household and other personal items that newly-arrived staff and their families needed. Those were probably the so-called "good old days" in Geneva.

In those early years, I used to meet him socially, along with others from our country to "shoot the breeze" and to speak true Australian, which we all understood but which others could not. Like most expatriates from the antipodes, we put everything to rights, irrespective of the subject and whether or not anybody had the facts right.
Winter, No. 43

Cricket was his passion, and I guess he invited every staff member from cricket-playing countries to join him to "make up the side" whenever a match was scheduled. He even had me playing for a local Australian side on one or two occasions, but not, I emphasise, to test cricket standards. He served as president of Geneva's Cricket Club for some 30 years.

Our careers continued in their respective directions and, eventually and inevitably, retirement caught up with each of us. I shall miss David; his ready smile, cheerfulness and welcome - "G'day mate, 'owyer goin?" ("Good day mate, how are you going?")- are breach left by the abolition of the post of editor World Health, becoming also responsible for WHO's only illustrated publication. The best of the two magazines later were amalgamated into the Bulletin, which relied on his advice for its new look.

Among his other achievements: he was a member of WHO's publications committee from its inception in 1987; as well as of the editorial board for the annual World Health Report, from 1990. He was a coordinator for the observance of WHO's 40th anniversary, and assistant to the President, World Health Assembly, from 1989.

On the lighter side, he was renowned for the gløgg and gravadlax (dry-cured salmon) party he gave annually at Headquarters, and an invitation to it was much prized. (These recipes are a legacy to us; available on request).

After retirement, through writing, interviews, and workshops, he continued to promote the health causes so dear to his heart. Just four days after turning 70, he passed away peacefully at home in Bergen, Norway, on 13 March 2001. His wit, energy, friendly manner, and effervescent kindness will be sadly missed; everyone who knew Eilif has lost a good friend.

—Barbara Campanini
(formerly World Health Forum)

Contributions to the David E. Barnes Global Health Fund would be appreciated, made payable to the:

Friends of the National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research, 1555 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20036.

The fund will promote health through oral health, a concept which he espoused during his career with WHO and with us.

—Lois K. Cohen, Ph.D.
(National Institute of Dental and Craniofacial Research), Bethesda, MD 20892-6401

Eilif Liisberg: After working in the field with Save the Children, with UNRWA and as a U.N. casque bleu, he began a career with WHO that ended 22 years later, on 30 June 1992. His early assignments included that of WR in the Republic of Korea, and of medical officer, Family Health, Geneva, where he was a forceful advocate of the "risk" approach to health care, contributing also to the concept of "health by the people," the forerunner to WHO's goal of "Health for All. By the Year 2000."

He made his mark however, in health communications and information. In 1985, he became Editor of World Health Forum, and quickly introduced, in hitherto rather formal pages, a display of postage stamps depicting health, and a study on health in strip cartoons. He was an advocate of WHO messages on shopping bags and sunhats. In 1991 he stepped into the

A GENEROUS GIFT

As I am still fine at age 97, and I assume also still a Life Member, it seems to me that I should send a contribution to AFSM. I'm enclosing therefore a cheque for £100 sterling, which I hope will be in order. If not, please let me know another way of remitting.

—Kathleen Duckworth-Barker
Winchester, Hants, UK

LETTERS

(Unless stated to the contrary by correspondents, letters received are routinely considered, and edited, for publication to encourage an exchange of views among colleagues.— Editor)
SERVICE APPRECIATED
(Re: New Exec. Group Now In, QN42, Autumn, 2000)

We wish to express our appreciation of the very good job done by Rajindar Pal during his chairmanship of the AFSM, and our satisfaction that he is carrying on in the Executive Group, which we wish well in its work for former colleagues.

We enjoyed the October reunion, meeting friends and colleagues. Our sole regret is that we did not have time to speak to many more.

—June Hargreaves Beer & Fred Beer
Hampshire, England

THE GNOME AT UBS

I needed to transfer funds from one account to another, then change a sum into French francs. The sole teller at the UBS guichet refused to make the transfer and sent me to the gnomic machine at the entrance. The Gnome seemed to make it but returned my card without confirming the transaction.

Dilemma: repeating the manoeuvre might move the amount twice. I appealed to the lady at the guichet, who had now replaced the reluctant man, who kindly came out to guide me. At first my card returned without a confirmation, but eventually we succeeded. I then headed for the queue for French cash. But a desperate colleague in the line hailed the lady, who returned graciously to the Gnome and spent ten minutes with him. I waited till they were through.

Net result; a job that could have taken four minutes took me 25; the guichet was unattended for even longer and the queues lengthened. Death to Gnomes!

—Alastair Anderson
(Formerly World Health magazine)

FRANCOPHONE WIZARD WANTED
(Re: Soon a Website for Us, QN 42 Autumn 2000)

My congratulations to colleagues who established the AFSM website. May I take this opportunity to emphasise that it should be, as soon as possible, bilingual, while calling on French-speaking computer wizards to participate in this effort.

—Michel Fèvre
(formerly Chief, CRC, WHO, Geneva)

IN THE PRESS

BLAMELESS BANKERS

In December 1998, a Swiss furnishing company mailed a cheque for 13,987 French francs drawn on the Banque Cantonale Vaudoise (BCV) to a French supplier. Two months later, however, the French supplier complained that its bill remained unpaid. On enquiry, the Swiss company then learnt that the cheque had not only been paid but paid in Swiss francs. Receiving a photocopy of the cheque the Swiss company was appalled to see it no longer specified the currency of payment, named a different payee and was not crossed. A forger had falsified the cheque and cashed it at a Lausanne branch of the B.C.V.

The Swiss Code des Obligations provides that losses resulting from a falsified cheque are the bank’s responsibility only if fault can be attributed to the teller cashing the cheque. However, in common with most banks, BCV has built in a clause limiting its responsibility under the Code.

“Our terms state that undetected errors are to be paid by the client except in the case of a serious error by the bank. In this particular case, on the basis of the facts known at present, our employee did not commit such an error,” according to the legal adviser of the BCV.

He said the bank would not compensate its client to avoid setting a legal precedent and added: “We generally dissuade our clients from using cheques, which are not a very secure payment method. It is better to send bank transfers.”

—Virginia Monnet
(Excerpted from “C’est notre problème,” Tribune de Genève, 10 October 2000)

(Shades of Alberto Besa, the WPRO colleague, whose life-long savings of CHF 154,000 was transferred from Geneva to Bangkok, unbeknown to him, under questionable circumstances, then cashed and lost to him. The bank, then SBS, settled with the victim for half but admitted no fault. —Editor)
WHO'S CORRECTION

WHO has retracted a statement backing the South African government in a court battle with pharmaceutical companies. "What we meant to say was that we had provided technical assistance to South Africa on issues that were being addressed in this court case," it said in a correction issued 7 March 2001. "WHO's general policy (is) not to take a position on litigation in Member States."

A group representing 39 of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies had filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn a law that would allow the South African government to import cheap generic medications in an emergency.

They argued that the Medicines Control Act – signed into law in 1997 but never put into force because of the court challenge – undermines their patents on medications. The law could affect any pharmaceutical, but it is primarily aimed at providing cheaper sources of AIDS drugs.

(Excerpted from AP, 7 March 01)

(The lawsuit was dropped in April. —Editor)

Readership Survey

The Quarterly News has now been put out for over a decade.
The pilot issue, QN No. 1, was dated 1989/1990.
It is time, therefore, for a little, unscientific, survey of readers.
Please cut/copy, and circle your response to the questions below.
Put your answer in an envelope, mark it "QN Readership Survey," and return to:

"The Editorial Board, QN, room 4141, WHO."

1. I read the QN: Fully Most of it Not at all
2. The contents are: Very good Good So so
3. The layout is: Very well done Well done Mediocre
4. I prefer QN: 4 times yearly 3 times yearly 2 times yearly
5. For AFSM, QN is: Essential Necessary Marginal
6. I would like to add (bouquets/brickbats/suggestions):

(Separate sheet may be added, but signature is optional.)

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The opinions of the QN are those of the authors, not necessarily of AFSM.