Editorial

The General Assembly of 16 October 2003 was particularly lively - a bit long according to some people, since it started at 13h15 and finished at approximately 18h15. This only went to show, however, that many of our members felt concerned and do have opinions to defend.

Two "firsts" left their mark on this Assembly: firstly the surprise visit of the Director-General, Dr Lee Jong wook: effectively, it's the first time a Director General has paid us a courtesy visit. The second is the nomination as Minister of Health of Bolivia of Dr Fernando Antezana, a few days after he had presided over our General Assembly.

A significant part of the reunion was occupied by the discussion on the Quarterly News. As you are aware, Mr Peter Ozorio has excellently produced the first fifty numbers of the journal, but wished to take a break; we thought that you should not be deprived of the News, especially since we did not know precisely if and when Mr Ozorio would return. For these reasons, with the assistance of the Editorial Board and others, No 51 and then No 52 were produced, whilst at the same time a search was made to find an Editor (man or woman) desirous to take up the challenge; and here now is No. 53, with the collaboration of Laura Ciaffei, who has already participated in the production of a UNESCO bulletin.

I must say that overall, and in spite of the criticism expressed at the General Assembly - which has been listened to - Nos. 51 and 52 were well received. It should be pointed out that these two editions did not cost the Association a single penny.

A question which was seen differently was that of the "promotion" of the objectives of WHO, as stated in our Statutes. Of course, this can only refer to general objectives of public health which concern us all: ageing, tobacco, environment, on which we are all unanimous - our principal aims are, without doubt, long-term care, retirees, etc., which, I believe, we are very actively engaged in promoting.

Long-term care* is our major preoccupation, since the present degressive system puts to one side dependency arising from an illness or accident, which for that matter is also possible among the young. A few tragic and urgent cases impose an urgent solution of the question, solution which has been slowed down by costly and useless inquiries and counter-inquiries: we sincerely hope for a rapid solution to this problem.

It only remains to regret that the abundance of subjects discussed did not permit us to touch upon social questions, but we will come back to these during the course of the year. D. Cohen.

* See page 6, bottom

SUMMARY

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Association of Former WHO Staff Page 1
GENERAL ASSEMBLY of 16 October 2003

The Director General addressing the Assembly:
on his left, Dr Antezana, Dr Cohen, M. Ferrari.

Views of the Assembly

These photos (and others) were taken by our colleague Dr Jean-Paul Menu

Besides those outlined in the editorial (page 1) other issues discussed included: health insurance and retirees - introduced by Mrs Van Hulle; taxation in Switzerland and France - introduced by Mr Mathieu (AFICS); financial report for the past biennium - introduced by Ms A. Foster who thanked the auditors Mr T. Ingram and Mr M. Nicolet; amendments to the Statutes - introduced by Dr Y. Beigbeder; social activities including the Baltic Cruise organised by Dr Flahault and the visit to the exhibition of Paul Signac at the Gianadda Foundation in Martigny, organised by Samy Kossovsky; regional AFSM branches - introduced by Dr R. Pal; and action to promote selected WHO objectives. The full report will shortly be made available to all members.

Send us your contributions to the News: they will be welcome!
A monument in memory of UN staff inaugurated in Geneva

UN Day this year, the 58th anniversary of the Organization, was of a special significance. This 24 October was the occasion to pay homage to the many former colleagues who had lost their lives in the course of UN missions.

Two monuments were inaugurated on the same day, in ceremonies held in Geneva and in New York. Classical remembrance monuments usually have imposing forms delivering an impression of grandiosity which could actually tend to confuse the visitors rather than invite them to remember. In the UN/Geneva instead, although situated in a busy park where staff members and other people pass by every day, the place itself and the simple shape of the monument invite to meditation.

The Geneva monument is a large, whitish boulder whose shape may recall that of a sail flowing in the wind. A metal plate on the front side reads, in the six official UN languages: "To the memory of those who gave their lives for peace". Weeping willows surrounding the monument are a symbol of loss and, at the same time, continuity of life. The monument, as emphasized by the UNOG Director-General Mr. Sergei Ordzhonikidze, pays homage to all those, be they civilians, military or policemen, who gave their lives for peace while on official duty in the UN.

For many years the UN staff had to endure the criticism of which the UN was the target. Public opinion seemed unaware of the sacrifices which many UN colleagues voluntarily accepted, leaving behind a comfortable life to deliver instead their services in war-torn countries or to work under very difficult conditions. They went to help re-establish normal living conditions and peace in those countries. Employment with the UN means to apply in everyday work the principles of the UN Charter, something which has a particular meaning for those carrying out missions in difficult countries. The merits of the UN and of its staff have recently been officially recognized at European level: on 23 October indeed, the European Parliament awarded the Sakharov Prize to the UN Secretary-General Mr Kofi Annan and through him to all UN staff. The Prize was especially dedicated to the staff members who were killed in the attack on the UN HQ in Baghdad on 19 August 2003. Among them, a WHO senior official, Dr. Nadia Younes, was killed in the attack. In her speech Ms Marlène Sequeira, executive secretary of the Personnel Coordination Council at UNOG, summarized what UN Staff really feel. "Our UN House is built on principles by which every staff member must abide" she said. "We are the pillars and the crossbeams of our house. When one of us dies a victim to human folly, the principles which he or she upheld collapse and the very foundations of the UN House will start trembling...."

It should be noted that the idea of a monument was proposed by the Editorial Board of the monthly magazine, UN Special, and was designed and realised by UNOG teams. Something really remarkable, it took them less than six months to complete the memorial.

Laura Ciaffei
ALMA ATA revisited

In September 1978, The Conference on Primary Health Care (PHC) was held in Alma Ata (now Almaty), Kazakhstan in the then USSR. It was a watershed in the history of public health in the world and gradually almost all governments, health professionals, NGO’s and peoples around the world embraced the concepts. PHC was to be the means towards achieving Health for All (HFA) by the Year 2000 to allow all peoples to lead socially and economically productive lives.

Many of the retirees have fond memories of Alma Ata and PHC but gradually the concepts have been overtaken by events and developments such as selective PHC, macroeconomics and health, HIV/AIDS, etc.

Although the goal of HFA by 2000 has not been achieved, the relative obscurity of PHC in WHO is manifest by the lack of its recognition in Geneva 20 years after Alma Ata in 1998.

Dr. Lee, the current DG, has decided to revisit PHC and Alma Ata and has succeeded in bringing together the three previous DG’s to WHO for the first time.

The WHO representatives meeting in November 2003 provided the backdrop for the ceremony which brought back a shared pride among many of the staff of WHO. The ceremony was opened by a short video of reminiscences by four people who had been to Alma Ata. It was followed by relatively short speeches by all the DG’s – current and past.

- Dr. Brundtland emphasized that the shared vision binding together WHO is HFA.
- Dr Nakajima was lighter in his tone; he also invoked his trips to the Pacific islands and the biggest fish he has caught is Dr. Lee who grows fresher and bigger by the day.
- Dr. Mahler, who was reputed to be a long and inspired speaker, emphasized the underlying principles of PHC and stressed that the struggle between memory and forgetfulness could be resolved by recollections of Alma Ata.

A plea has been made to revive the principles of PHC – adapted to the conditions of current day world. Any personal recollection of Alma Ata will be very welcome by the Association.

A footnote to Alma-Ata:

What was not expected by WHO

Philip Morris in Alma Ata:

It seems that Philip Morris celebrates in its own way the 25th Anniversary of WHO's Alma Ata declaration on Health For All. By a strange coincidence, Philip Morris is building in Alma Ata itself a huge cigarette plant. The $14-million tobacco factory will process up to 7.5 tonnes of tobacco a day, i.e. almost 10,000 tonnes in the next six months. Most of the processed tobacco will be sold locally. Whether this will be on the same line as "Health For All" remains to be seen!

Advertising against Tobacco

"Ladies, do you want to stop smoking? At an underwear exhibition in Tokyo a world-famous manufacturer of ladies underwear has presented a sort of "smoking-cessation" brassiere. The cups are equipped with capsules diffusing lavanda or Jasmin scent which, specialists say, takes away the urge to smoke."

Roberto Masironi
Health

Thanks to the network FluNet, coordinated by WHO, the migratory movements of the various strains of the influenza virus throughout the world can be known as they happen. In the Summer of 2003, the outbreak in Australia was due to the strain A-H3N2, said to be more formidable than the B strain that held sway in Europe last winter and which might cause a fairly bad epidemic in 2003-2004 ... you have been warned!

However, the virulence of such an epidemic could be attenuated by another rather unexpected phenomenon: El Niño, the current de-

About keeping fit: Some practical, sensible tips

Alcohol:
Some speak of benefits, but they remain unproven
Reduced risk of cardiovascular disease thanks to the consumption of alcohol, or rather wine, seems now to be widely admitted *
Bread, cereals, potatoes etc:
Some common fallacies. In the late 1970's it was commonly thought that bread, cereals, potatoes, etc, made one fat, and many people persist in this idea, which should be dropped. Rich in starch and fibre (especially when unprocessed – whole wheat, etc.), these products are a source of lasting energy and are "filling" so that one can go longer without wanting to "nibble" or have a snack between meals. To eat properly at each meal with bread, pasta, rice or potatoes does not make people fat provided, of course, that little fat or oil is used in the preparation.
Salt, a matter of habit:
Salt brings out the taste in food, but by reducing the intake progressively one can adjust one's sense of the savoury. The first goal is to stop adding salt before even trying the food. Then one should reduce the amount of salt in cooking, cut down on salty snacks. Turn your attention rather to herbs and spices for flavour.
Physical activity:
No need to be a sportsman to keep fit
Even mild physical activity is useful. Don't feel you have to join a gymnastics club or go running at a stadium; half an hour of walking as part of everyday life is sufficient: do your shopping on foot; get off the bus or underground a stop before your destination; park the car a few hundred yards away and walk the rest; use the stairs rather than the lift; be a handyman (or woman); do the gardening and the housework - some of the many opportunities to use up more energy. (From Recherches et Santé, July 2003)

* However, one must admit that the results of studies are not conclusive and if, at the beginning, one referred mainly to wine, countries of beer consumers claim the same results for beer; in fact, nordic countries, heavy beer drinkers, show more cardiovascular accidents than southern countries. No comparative studies have been done with countries where alcohol consumption is forbidden. Let us be cautious and say that the equivalent of two glasses of wine is probably beneficial.

A couple of glasses of Burgundy!!!

A Harvard Medical School researcher, David Sinclair, has apparently identified a substance, resveratrol, that activates enzymes known to extend the lifespan of yeast. Red wine contains resveratrol – especially those cultivated in cool, northern areas such as Burgundy. Scientists have long surmised that something in wine helps counteract the unhealthy effects of a French diet high in animal fats. Until now, lengthening of lifespan was believed to be best achieved by consuming 30 to 40 % fewer calo-

ries than normal – at least in mice. Now there is hope that such a drastic step may not be necessary. However, the yeast that did the best had the lowest concentration of resveratrol – it appears that there can be too much of a good thing. The second caveat is whether experiments with yeast can be replicated in mice and in human beings. But why not try to mimic the treatment even if unproved!!

From International Herald Tribune, 29 Aug 2003

FLU ALERT!

placing warm water masses in the oceans, though its effects are forecast by the climatologists to be quite mild this winter.

Its influence on the spread of malaria and dengue has already been proven, but what about influenza? Some research workers think that the inverse cold current, called La Niña, could strengthen an epidemic of flu.

How far can one trust experimental statistical models? Only the future will tell; meanwhile elderly people like ourselves should think seriously about... having their flu jab!

Dr Daniel Flahault
DISTINCTIONS

Dr Dhiman Barua. Award for lifetime Achievement in Diarrhoeal Disease Control

Dr Barua, a former staff member of WHO, has been awarded the “ASCODD (Asian Conference on Diarrhoeal Diseases and Nutrition) Award for Lifetime Achievement. A tribute to him and to WHO / CDD. The award will be presented during the Conference to be held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, in December 2003. The ASCODD, whose secretariat is in the International Center for Diarrhoeal Diseases Research in Dhaka, has recognized the contribution of Dr Barua in the promotion and widespread use of Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) which has been most effective and much less costly than intravenous fluid in reducing mortality in children from around five million to about two million. It led to the creation of the Special Programme for the Control of Diarrhoeal Diseases (CDD) in 1978." Congratulations!

Dev Ray

Presentation of Global Sanitation Award to WHO

On 22 February 2003, WHO was bestowed the Global Sanitation Award by the Sulabh International Social Service Organization, an NGO founded 30 years ago by Dr B. Pathak with the ultimate aim to eliminate the scavenging of human excreta by “untouchables”. The award was bestowed in recognition of the Organization’s early work in environmental sanitation and the citation noted, especially, WHO Monograph Series 39 "Excreta Disposal for Rural Areas and Small Towns" by E. Wagner, a then WHO consultant. The award consisted of a golden medal and a cheque in the amount of US$ 50,000.

The presentation of the award in Delhi was officiated by the Deputy Prime Minister of India. Regional Delegate SEARO received the award on behalf of WHO.

A highlight of the ceremony was the attendance by Mrs. Sophie Lanoix, the widow of our late colleague Joe Lanoix who worked with E.Wagner in the Division of Environmental Health. They both received a gold medal on behalf of the Sulabh Organization. The RD thanked for the award and then handed a letter of appreciation to Mr Wagner and Mrs Lanoix.

A deeply moving event with much applause for a most successful work of WHO.

Bernd Dieterich

Long term Care : Now, it is urgent!

Many of our members are in a painful situation: being now at the 20% rate of reimbursement for medical and nursing charges, they can no longer pay. The medico-social establishment where they are staying does not for the moment, plan to put them in the street, but the bill is mounting daily, and it has decided from now on, to refuse admission to retired staff of international organizations.

In view of that decision, representatives of AFSM, AAFI/AFICS, and the WHO Staff Committee, have held a meeting with the management of the establishment. But no settlement has been reached. What an idea the Geneva population will get of the “Internationals”! This state of affairs must be rectified without further delay. We cannot wait until the end of 2004, or even 2005…

The Committee, Association of Former WHO Staff
A bit of humour...

Do we have all the rights?

During an interview with the journalist Luc Brunet, professor Albert Jacquard, geneticist and philosopher, said (in part):

One too often ignores what old people may offer, in terms of exchanges. And it is a fundamental error for a society to deprive itself of this real wealth. I have worked in Africa, in Senegal and in Mali. What struck me there is the place reserved to the old people: they have all the rights! If one walks in front of a cabin at meal time and remarks that it smells good, he is given a plate. Quite naturally, he is at home everywhere. Because, with age, one becomes at the same time the reputed wise person and the person who does as he likes. Exactly the opposite of what happens here.

The Stock Exchange and the Bank

The French text "La Bourse et la Banque" is a parody of the fable “The Cicada and the Ant” by the French poet, Jean de la Fontaine. John Fraser has attempted (with great success) to put into English verse the French text.

The Cicada and the Ant

The Cicada, having sung
All summer long,
Found herself wanting
When the north wind came.
Not a single morsel
Of fly or tiny worm.
She went begging for food
To her neighbour the Ant,
Asking her to lend her
Just a few grains to get by
Until the next season.
"I will pay you back, she said,
Before August, animal's honor,
Interest and principal."
The Ant is no lender:
This is the least of her faults.
"What were you doing during the warm days? She said to this borrower,
Night and day no matter what I was singing, like it or not.
Very glad…
Very well, start dancing now!"
(Jean de la Fontaine, Fables)

Dame Stock Exchange was riding high
All summer long.
When summer wanes, the fall is nigh.
So things went wrong.

Goodby to options, bonds and scrip;
Prompt aid was needed!
So down the street she took a trip
And humbly pleaded:

"Kind Mr Bank, I need a loan
To pay the rent.
When I go up you'll get your own
Plus ten per cent".

To lend without a guarantee
He scorned as foolish.
"What were you doing, Ma'am", said he
"When you were bullish?"

"Why, sir, I did", replied the Dame,
"What punters ought:
Without a penny to my name
I bought and bought".

"You bought, Ma'am? You did well.
Now sell!"
Social and Cultural News

SIGNAC : AFSM Visit to the Pierre Gianadda Foundation in Martigny on 30 October 2003

I was somewhat worried when I went, on Thursday 30 October 2003, to the set appointment at the Restaurant “Les Trois Couronnes” at the Bourg of Martigny, for the new cultural excursion. My worry soon disappeared when I found that we were 15, then 17 at the tables. Pleasant menu: good white and red Valais wines, good company. I had to apologize for the absence of Mr Léonard Gianadda who had telephoned two days before: an unscheduled invitation which he could not refuse, at the Phillips Collection in Washington – the works of art of this collection will be loaned next year to the Foundation and will be exposed in the Summer of 2004. He would be in the plane instead of welcoming us at the Foundation.

We then went to the Signac exhibition. Mrs Martha Di Giacomi, art historian attached to the Foundation, walked with us to look at the most significant works of Paul Signac, commenting on them with taste – not losing a word – placing them within the context of their period, drawing attention to this or that detail recalling the classical painters or striking because of their innovation, or by the flash of colour which transcends the “pointillist” process adopted by Signac. We then went on our separate ways: some of us revisiting the beauties of the Signac exhibition, some watching the outdoors sculptures in the gardens, or revisiting Leonardo da Vinci, or the Automobile Museum. Participants were pleased with this visit; many hope for another excursion, if possible in a collective bus.

Samy Kossovsy
Another AFSM cruise
in 2004-2005?

Fortified by its positive experience with its Eastern Mediterranean and Baltic cruises in 2000 and 2003, which both left, it seems, excellent recollections to those who had the opportunity to participate, the AFSM Committee considers organizing a third cruise for its members and their families in 2004 or 2005.

We are negotiating with some Companies, trying to obtain favourable conditions; you will be kept informed on the issue as soon as possible.

Right now, it appears that these cruises are privileged moments of relaxation and rest, sympathetic meetings with former colleagues and their families, coming from all over the world, giving the opportunity of interesting visits of cultural sites, in a cool although somewhat luxurious atmosphere – with a group price we are trying to negotiate at the best conditions.

. We will come back soon to you.

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Readers’ Corner

"I was delighted with this revised style for this journal. It was very interesting and of substance. Also I was very happy to learn more about WHO's current policies and direction. Congratulations ! Sincerely",

Jim Donald, La Cala de Mijas, Malaga, Spain

Thank you, M. Donald. Your comments are very encouraging.

... The new DG's priorities were important news, along with the good news of the adoption of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and the explanation about Long Term Care Insurance. The stories about the self-help group & the cruise, with photos, were interesting. But a rehash of a UN brochure on water resources tells us nothing that we have not already read in the media. What we expect from our magazine is material more closely related to our concerns as retirees. Since the 2002 General Assembly wanted us "to get more involved with WHO's aims and projects," perhaps we could have heard how retirees have been involved, perhaps as consultants or volunteers?

...And egregious typos like Heritage [sic] or "english-speakers", "october"

With best regards,

Jack Woodall, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

Thank you, Mr Woodall. Your remarks will be taken into account.

Have contributed to this issue: the editorial team: David Cohen (President Committee, editing, translations, layout); Laura Ciaffei, Yves Beigbeder, Daniel Flahault, Dev Ray, Rajindar Pal (articles, translations) Rosemary Bell, Roger Fontana, Roberto Masironi, Michel Fèvre, John Fraser, Richard Harrison, Averil Foster, Samy Kossovsky, Alain Vessereau (articles, translations, proof readers).

Many thanks to the Printing and Mailing Services of WHO
Obituaries

**Dr. Angel Petros-Barvazian** passed away during the night of 3 to 4 October 2003 after prolonged illness which kept her at home for three years.

Angel, of Iranian nationality, studied medicine at the University of Tehran. Subsequently, she served in the field and rapidly became the chief of Maternal and Child Health at the Department of Health and Director of the Health Centre in the province of Shiraz.

She then obtained a diploma in child health in London and one at the School of Public Health, University of Michigan (Ann Arbor, USA).

. On her return to Iran, she progressively became Associate Professor and Executive director of the Department of Community Medicine in the Faculty of Medicine in Shiraz.

In 1967, she joined WHO as chief of the Unit of Maternal and Child Health and after five years became the Director of the Division of Family Health- a post she occupied until her retirement (1992) 20 years later.

She developed many innovative programmes in nutrition, reproductive health, infant and adolescent health – leading to recognitions in Sweden and United Kingdom. Her remarkable qualities – both intellectual and moral – earned her great respect from her colleagues and innumerable collaborators all over the world.

As a pediatrician oriented like her towards public health, I was able to appreciate her remarkable intellectual and moral qualities.

Unfortunately, soon after her retirement she suffered from various serious illnesses and had to be hospitalised many times.

As her friends for a long time, my wife and I deeply regret the demise of this exceptional, courageous, sensitive lady. We shall all miss her and our only regret is that she could not enjoy her retired life fully.

30.10.03

Dr Olivier Jeanneret Professeur honoraire à l’Université de Genève

List of Deceased since last issue

- BANZOUSI Gabriel 22 04 2003  McDOWELL Helen 31.07.2002
- BECKINGHAM Ann 06 01 2003  MEHTA Kunti
- BIKOUTA André 06.03.2003  MEIJER Bert 04.10.2003
- CAMPANELLA Erica E. 22.02.2003  MESSINEZY Demetrius A. 13 01 2003
- CHARLESON Doris 25.11.2003  NAQI Mohammed 07 03 2003
- CHICAL Roger 03 03.2003  OLSZYNA-MARZYS Jeanine 12 03 2003
- DOUMTAE Ndokadjé L. 16.06.2003  PEABODY Jean A. 10 03 2003
- EBBING Hans Christian 15.08.2003  PERRY Fanny Zipora 06 06 2003
- GAillard Marcel 01.10 2003  PESEK J. 13 01 2003
- GILLESPIE E.. 17.03.2003  RAEDER-ROITZSCH Elisabeth 30 04 2003
- GONZALEZ Jorge Mario 20.03.2003  ROSSELOT Jorge V. 09 04 2003
- KALETI J. 07 04 2003  SANTI LLAN A. 19 03 2003
- KAYE Margherita D. 21.01.2003  SAVIC Dragutin 17 03 2003
- KIGONDU John Giceha 20.04.2003  SELL Helmut 25.05.2003
- LACROIX Marcel A. 07 04 2003  SMITH Horace A. 03 04 2003
- MAADOU Marcel 01 03 2003  YOUNES Nadia 19.08.2003
- MATHIS Harry L. 22 02 2003

Compiled by Rosemary Bell from friends, messages, and the AAF/ AFICS Bulletin (which functions in a similar manner – we cannot obtain direct access to the information for reasons of respecting the privacy of former staff).