



# NEWSLETTER OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER PAHO/WHO STAFF MEMBERS

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- UPCOMING EVENTS - See Page 8 -

## EDITORIAL: YOUR ASSOCIATION NEEDS YOU!

Associations thrive and flourish when all their members participate and contribute to the fulfillment of their goals and purposes; when the expectations of members are being met and everyone is getting what they need; when members are being represented on matters of interest to them. Associations can play an effective role in assisting with such important issues as health insurance, pensions, taxes, and the general well being of their members.

The Association of Former PAHO/WHO Staff Members (AFSM) was founded nine years ago, when some 25 former staff members attended the first Annual Meeting and elected the first Board of Directors; now we have about 450 names on our mailing list and are expanding our membership into Latin America.

During this time, the Association has done a competent job in fulfilling its purposes:

- It has organized seminars and presentations on various subjects, such as health insurance, long-term health care, revocable living trusts, and hearing aids. Reports on some of these seminars have been circulated to the membership (e.g., long-term health care, to members in the United States). Through representation on the Regional Committee of the WHO Health Insurance Surveillance System, it has promoted matters of interest to retirees. It has contributed to the preretirement seminars presented by PAHO.
- Through the Newsletter, important information has been disseminated on subjects of interest to retirees (such as health insurance, pension fund, Medicare eligibility for non-U.S. citizens, and mature driving), on the whereabouts and activities of its members, and on activities of PAHO, WHO, the UN, and others.

These activities were carried out by the Board of Directors with the help of a few other colleagues. ***In order for our Association to thrive and flourish, we need the participation of ALL of our members. We need your comments and suggestions on the Newsletter and on the activities of the Association; we need your contributions on any subject of interest to former staff members; we need your active participation in AFSM.***

***Please become actively involved to the extent you are able—  
don't expect that "someone else" will do it all.***

**We need the active participation of ALL of our members!**

### Editorial Committee

Hans Bruch  
Dana Dashiell  
Jean Surgi  
Jaime Ayalde, *ex Officio*

### 100th ANNIVERSARY SLOGAN

PAHO is still looking for a slogan for the celebration of its 100th anniversary in 2002. In seeking broad participation, the Administration has asked for suggestions from former staff members. We think we should come up with the right slogan!

The ideal slogan should be short and to the point. Try to use the words "one hundred" or "century" and "health". Please send your suggestions to AFSM by electronic mail or by regular mail, or, if you prefer, send them directly to PAHO, attention DPI. Thank you!

## UN SECRETARY-GENERAL LAUNCHES THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF THE OLDER PERSONS (IYOP—1999)

It gives me great pleasure on this International Day of Older Persons to join you in celebrating the launch of the International Day of Older Persons. I am especially pleased to know that nongovernmental organizations are here in full strength alongside Governments. We see again the unique ability of the United Nations to promote partnerships of the "like-minded, and to serve as a place where "we, the peoples" can come together to address key global issues.

We live in an age to which many labels have been attached: it is the post-Cold-War age; the post-industrial age; the age of the Internet, the age of globalization. Let me add one more today, for our time is also, undeniably, **the age of longevity.**

In the course of considering my remarks here today, I learned some remarkable facts.

In the second half of the 20th century, 20 years have been added to the average life span.

Within 30 years, a third of the population in more developed countries will be over the age of 60. The world as a whole will reach that proportion by 2150.

And the older population itself is aging. Today, about 10% of the population over age 60 is already age 80 or older; this will rise to 25% before 2050.

These and other aging trends are changing family structures. The traditional pyramid in which there are many youth and few elders is giving way to the opposite: an inverse pyramid of one child, two parents, four grand parents and several great-grandparents.

There is also a significant gender dimension to this portrait of humanity's "coming of age." Women nearly everywhere are living longer than men. Women are more likely than men to be poor in old age. They face a higher risk of chronic illness and disability, discrimination, and marginalization.

Women are also more likely to be caregivers and sometimes face a triple burden: childcare, elder care, and, of course, seeing to their own well-being. But these contributions—to their families, communities, and economy—are often overlooked.

In short, we are in the midst of a silent revolution. It is a revolution that extends well beyond demographics, with major economic, social, cultural, psychological, and spiritual implications. And it is a revolution that hits developing nations harder than others, not just because the majority of older persons live in developing countries, but because the tempo of aging there is already—and will continue to be—far more rapid. Developed countries have been dealing with the greying of their societies for some time now. With mixed success. Developing countries, as they do when faced with many other global challenges, will find their situation much more acute.

It is fitting, then, that last year of this millennium has been designated as the International Year of Older Persons. The Year is guided by the Vienna International Plan of Action on Aging, adopted in 1982, and by the United Nations Principles for Older Persons, promulgated in 1991. Promotion of the principles is our overall objective, and we will do so under the year's theme, "towards a society for all ages." What exactly do we mean by this?

A society for all ages is one that does not caricature older persons as patients and pensioners. Instead it sees them as both agents and beneficiaries of development. It honors traditional elders in their leadership and consultative roles in communities throughout the world. And it seeks a balance between supporting dependency and investing in lifelong development.

A society for all ages is multigenerational. It is not fragmented, with youths, adults, and older persons going their separate ways. Rather, it is age-inclusive, with different generations recognizing—and acting upon—their commonality of interest.

And a society for all ages is committed to creating an enabling environment for healthy life-styles as people age. This means there are special needs in terms of transportation, housing and communications. Public health and social services are another consideration. Countries searching for cost-saving public-finance measures might want to think again about cutbacks in these areas, which

are particularly harsh on older persons, especially older women.

Just as the potential of youth can be developed only in the absence of poverty, so too with aging. Longevity requires wise investments in the earlier phases of life: in youth and childhood, when the imprints and tools of both self-reliance and interdependence are acquired; and in adulthood, when stores of capital are built up—not only economic capital but human capital of skills and self-knowledge, and the social capital of trust and collaboration.

Indeed, midlife should be seen more and more as a prelude to an active old age. This means we should invest in midlife as deliberately as we invest in youth. Pensions are just one form of investment; but even here, as we have seen in developed countries, such systems are increasingly in crisis. Still, developed countries have been able to mature gradually. Developing countries face the challenges of development and aging populations simultaneously.

*(Quarterly Bulletin of AFICS-New York  
January 1999)*

## WHO WANTS MORE MONEY

Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO, told the US and other industrialized countries that the Agency will be unable to do its job properly unless they increase funding. The Agency's resources have shrunk by more than 20% in real terms over the past decade under a policy of "zero nominal growth" that makes no allowance for rising costs. WHO's proposed budget for 2000 is \$1.8 billion.

*(Secretariat News, UN Headquarters  
New York, January-February 1999)*

## BULLETIN

The Quarterly Bulletin of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (New York), which provides valuable information of concern to retirees of all UN-related international organizations, is now on the Internet. The address is:  
[www.un.org/other/AFICSny\\_P1](http://www.un.org/other/AFICSny_P1).

Have you paid your 1999 dues?

They're due!

## THE CLOSING OF THE GENDER GAP

Even in the UN Pension Fund, the gender gap is narrowing if not closing. Recent changes in its provisions, although affecting all spouses, essentially represent a break for divorcees—the women who hitherto had no claim on the UN Pension Fund after the deaths of their ex-husbands.

Effective from 1 April 1999, thanks to amendments (mainly to Article 35), they are now entitled to the "survivor's benefits" despite their divorce. While that's the up side, there is a down side: the amendments are not applicable in cases prior to that date, which means scores of women still are out in the cold.

The problem wrought by divorce has been before the pension board for some years. Under changes adopted December 1998, divorcees will be entitled to a survivor's benefit on the deaths of their former mates under certain conditions:

- If they had been married to the deceased for at least 10 years.
- If they had not remarried and they were at least 40 years old.
- If the death of their ex-husband occurred within 15 years of their divorce (with the exception being cases where financial support has already been ordered by court).
- If the pension has not been taken into account in a divorce settlement).

Most indicative of how mores have evolved is the change that allows, where the husband has remarried, the divorced spouse, or even spouses, to pro-rate the survivor's benefit in proportion to the length of their unions. In short, no longer does the newest, and in all likelihood the youngest, wife take all.

*(Quarterly News of the Association of Former WHO  
Staff, Spring (April-June) 1999 - No. 36)*

## THE AGE OF LONGEVITY

by Hans Bruch

The growth of the global older population, citizens who are living longer productive lives, is considered one of the most challenging demographic trends of the 21st century. A steady stream of 1,000,000 persons a month now crosses the threshold of age 60, and 80% of these are in developing countries. The total number of those aged 60 and above is projected to reach 600,000,000 by the year 2001 and to reach 1.2 billion by the year 2025, when over 70% of them will be living in what are today's developing countries.

John Glenn shoots his way back into space; President Bush goes skydiving. Both men are in their seventies. Sean Connery, Sophia Loren, and Robert Redford, all in their sixties, are still sex symbols.

"If you live long enough, you will probably become infirm and develop at least some of the trappings of old age. However, you can make that happen later rather than sooner. You can delay the onset of disability and chronic disease so as to enjoy life and remain vigorous and independent for most of your later days," says Dr. Isadore Rosenfeld, M.D., author of the book *Live Now Age Later: Proven Ways to Turn Back the Clock*. Dr. Rosenfeld is an attending physician at New York Hospital and Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center.

Each chapter of the book deals with a specific aging complication—Alzheimer's, cancer, stroke, depression, osteoporosis, heart attack, prostate enlargement, and loss of vision, libido and teeth. For each condition, Dr. Rosenfeld presents the cause, diagnosis, treatment and specific strategies for lessening risk. I enjoyed the book, which I found to be useful and easy to read. I recommend it to my colleagues.

## SWEEPSTAKES MANIA

Beware of all these wonderful claims that you have the winning number in a sweepstakes. Attorneys-general in six states are suing well-known sweepstakes companies for fraud. Before returning sweepstakes, take a good look at the

promises and at the odds of winning such wonderful prizes.

Thousands of people truly believe they have won big money. Many, in entering sweepstakes, spend large sums on magazines and other products they don't want. Think twice before you join their ranks!

## HERBS AND BOTANICALS CAN HELP BUT CAN ALSO HARM

Many Americans have turned to herbal pills and powders, teas and tonics, in search for cheaper, gentler, natural alternatives to mainstream medicine. Using herbs can be chancy. Just because botanicals are labeled "natural" doesn't necessarily mean that they are without risks. Before using them consult your doctor.

Some herbs have potentially toxic effects. You will find an abundance of information on herbs in bookstores, on newsstands, and on the Internet. Look for material from respected health institutions, and skip the commercial ballyhoo!

## YOUR HEALTH MATTERS

### Ivy Dermatitis

by Jaime Ayalde

Ivy dermatitis results from irritation of the skin by urushiol, the toxic resin of the poison ivy, poison oak, or poison sumac plants. It is medically known as *Rhus dermatitis*.

*Rhus dermatitis* occurs as poison oak dermatitis in the western United States and poison ivy and sumac in the rest of the country. The interval of time between skin contact of poison ivy and the first appearance of symptoms varies from a few hours to several days depending on the sensitivity of the patient and possibly conditions of the skin. Symptoms include moderate itching or burning sensation followed by small blisters, which usually rupture and are followed by oozing of serum and subsequent crusting.

The dermatitis may occur as a direct exposure to the plants in your garden, in parks or other outdoor areas, or as a result of contact with pets or other animals that might have been exposed to these plants.

Lesions may be acute and disabling or, more commonly, low-grade and persistent. Most patients with significant *Rhus dermatitis* do not respond to topical corticosteroids, but they usually respond to oral corticosteroids given over a 12- to 14-day period. A two-week course of oral prednisone is usually the treatment of choice. (Antihistamines are ineffective in contact dermatitis.)

Since the treatment involves systemic corticosteroids, it is recommended that the primary care doctor or dermatologist be consulted. The patient should complete the full course of the medication even if the rash has subsided in the meantime.

In addition to the systemic (oral) corticosteroid regimens, topical treatment is often used: edematous areas with broken vesicles may be dressed for 15 minutes three times a day with compresses that have been soaked in astringent solutions. These may include aluminum acetate (Burrow's) solution diluted 1:40 in water for oozing or weeping lesions.

To dry up lesions and prevent bacterial infections, other agents such as antiseptic and drying paints may be used (carbolfucsin solution, gentian violet 1%). In addition, an antipruritic lotion (calamine) is often needed.

As a preventive, learn to recognize the plant. While in the garden, use long-sleeved shirts, long pants, and gloves. If contact occurs, wash with water and soap, apply calamine lotion, a cool wet dressing of Burrow's solution, or Epsom salts.

If you are particularly sensitive to poison ivy, use an ivy-blocking lotion. These are available over the counter and produce a clay-like coating that can be washed off with soap and water. Apply it 15 minutes before you might be exposed to the plant.

Have you paid your 1999 dues?

They're due!

## PERSONAL CORNER

### Yong Ho Bang, Napa CA

Dr. Yong Ho Bang has sent us his book *One Dollar a Day—Poverty in Indonesia*. Dr. Bang understands poverty. He grew up poor and has spent much of his adult life in tropical countries in Africa and Asia in which poverty is simply a way of life. Now he may have developed a solution which could diminish—if not solve—the ongoing problems of poverty.

Many good people from both Korea and the United States afforded Dr. Bang education and training opportunities, allowing him to exit his long cycle of poverty. His own experiences, as well as those of many people whom he encountered in his 30-plus years while working in stagnating villages, provided the impetus for him to write this book.

A native of the eastern part of what it is now North Korea, Dr. Bang earned his doctorate degree from Washington State University with an academic background focusing on agrobiolgy. He worked for the World Health Organization from 1966 to 1990, carrying out research and training on the ecology and control of mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever, yellow fever, malaria, and filariasis.

Dr. Bang retired in 1990 in Napa, California, with his wife and near his three sons. He continues traveling, consulting, lecturing, and writing.

### Sumedha Mona Khanna, Gualala CA

It is always a great pleasure to read the Newsletter of AFSM. I have been privileged to have worked in two of the Regions of WHO. I therefore also receive the SEARO Newsletter. In our international life, we meet so many people, work with new colleagues in many places and make new friends. But when we leave that part of our life, we also find it difficult to keep in touch with our many friends. Some we completely lose track of, with some we exchange Christmas greetings and, if we are fortunate to live in a community where some of our friends also reside (e.g., Washington DC and its vicinity), we can remain in closer contact with them if we choose. For people like me, who have chosen to live in an "adopted" country and in a "remote" area, Newsletters like these are most welcome. They bring news of friends and their families, and

sometimes tears to hear about the passing away of some colleagues and friends. One becomes even more conscious of one's own mortality.

I was so happy to read about the celebration of Dr. Alfred Gerald's 50th wedding anniversary that I sent them greetings and have established contacts with them through e-mail. Likewise, I have also reconnected with several others through e-mail. So, thank you for the good work you are doing for us all.

I think I wrote to you last year about my activities. This is an update. I opened a Center—Healing *Well*—dedicated to healing and wholeness of women, in Gualala, Mendocino County. Gualala is a small town, located in the southernmost part of the county—a border town between Mendocino and Sonoma counties.

Some time ago, after taking early retirement from WHO, I had visualized the concept of creating a place where women could gather informally and share their unique wisdom and knowledge about their health and wholeness. I studied different systems of healing and health issues that women encounter, especially in their midlife and beyond. The idea of a *Well*, came to me in meditation. The well, as we know, has a unique significance for women, especially in the developing countries. It is a place where women gather not only for collecting water, but also for gathering and exchanging information about their lives. So, why not a "Well," where women could come to share and exchange information and knowledge about what creates health, what preserves it and what destroys it. Thus the "Healing Well" was born.

It is a small center, in the heart of Gualala, with a beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean. The center offers women's health circles on choices in healing, integral health lessons, resourcing creativity groups through art and writing, etc. It also has a well-stocked library which local women can join for a small annual membership. I am enclosing our Winter Newsletter, a brochure and a newspaper clipping about the celebration of the Center's first anniversary. The center was opened on International Women's Day, March 8, 1998.

I am truly enjoying this phase of my life, doing the work of my heart, away from the political and managerial tension. As I personally move on to a more spiritual plane of my life, I will also be exploring other topics such as spirit and health, healing, and spiritual support for those facing terminal illness, when conventional medical systems have nothing to offer. I am also doing some writing. I am preparing a practical "Workbook on integral Health Promoting Lessons," and other writing projects are in the pipeline.

I would love to hear from my friends through e-mail or otherwise, especially those who are pursuing spiritual aspects of their lives and would like to share this information. If you feel this information will be of interest to others, please feel free to share this in any form you wish.

Thank you again for your efforts in keeping us connected. This is also the work of your heart. Blessings of health and peace.

***Editor's Note: Thanks for such a beautiful letter. For those of us who prepare the Newsletter, this is a wonderful recognition to our efforts. Colleagues may write to Dr. Khanna at PO Box 95445, Phone 707-884-9168, Fax 707-785-9169, or E-mail khanna@mcn.org.***

**Habibuz Zaman, Chesapeake VA**

Dr. Habibuz Zaman, who was an Adviser in WHO's Regional Office in New Delhi in the 1980s, has written a book entitled *Seventy Years in a Shaky Subcontinent*. This is a collection of articles from magazines and newspapers in Bangladesh in which Dr. Zaman recounts with clarity 70 years in the Indian subcontinent, from its violent partition and the Bangladeshi War to the present day.

*A Muslim born in Calcutta, Dr. Zaman lends his own wide experience and perception to his writings which make them of special value. Perhaps the core of this compilation comes in the last article, with its heartfelt plea for tolerance and understanding.*

To purchase a copy of this book, contact Janus Publishing Company Limited, 19 Nassau Street, London WIN 7RE; Fax: 071-636-5756; e-mail: publisher@janus publishing.co.uk; phone: 071 636 5756. The 413-page paperback is priced at £12.00.

## IN MEMORIAM

Since the last issue of the Newsletter, we have been informed of the deaths of the following colleagues. We extend our sincere sympathy to their families.

**Mrs. Vivian V. Drenckhahn** on May 14, 1998, in Minnesota, at the age of 98.

**Dr. Alfredo Leonardo Bravo** in December 1998.

**Dr. Ruperto Huerta** on February 6, 1999, in Ocean View, Delaware.

**Dr. Manuel Sirvent Ramos** on March 26, 1999, in Mexico D.F, at the age of 85.

## A LITTLE JUDICIAL HUMOR ON THE COMPUTER'S GENDER

To lighten up, United States District Judge Thomas Penfield Jackson began an afternoon session by saying that the court is on "some e-mail humor list." He then read the following entry, which he found to be amusing:

Women and men were asked what gender would be most appropriate for computers.

Women agreed that computers should be masculine for the following four reasons:

1. In order to get their attention, you have to turn them on.
2. They have a lot of data, but they are still clueless.
3. Most of the time, they are a problem.
4. As soon as you commit to one, you realize that if you waited a little longer you could have a better model.

Men agreed that computers should be feminine because:

1. No one but the Creator understands their internal logic.
2. The native language they use to communicate with other computers is incomprehensible to everyone else.

3. Even your smallest mistakes are stored in long-term memory for later retrieval.
4. As soon as you make a commitment to one, you find yourself spending half of your paycheck on accessories.

(AFISC Quarterly Bulletin, Vol. XXX, No.2-April 1999.  
Reprinted from *New York Times*)

And speaking of computers:

Eye halve a spelling chequer.  
It came with my pea sea.  
It plainly marcs four my revue  
Miss steaks eye kin knot sea.

Eye strike a key and type a word  
And weight four it two say  
Weather eye am wrong oar write;  
It shows me strait a weigh.

As soon as a mist ache is maid  
It nose bee four two long  
And eye can put the error rite;  
Its rare lea ever wrong.

Eye have run this poem threw it  
Eye am shore your pleased two no  
Its letter perfect awl the weigh—  
My chequer tolled me sew.

### AFSM VOICE MAIL - 202-974-3500

This voice mail only. It is not a phone that will be answered when you call. Its main purpose is to keep you informed about activities at PAHO in which you may be interested. We frequently learn about these too late to send out flyers.

We will record new items of interest as soon as we receive them; we will monitor the voice mail and reply to your input as soon as possible.

You can call in any time (days, nights, weekends and holidays) to learn the latest news and to leave questions and information for the AFSM Board on the tape.

When you dial the AFSM number you will first hear any messages that have been recorded for the membership. At the end of these, there will be a beep, after which you can either hang up or leave messages for us.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### ANNUAL FALL GET-TOGETHER ON THE RESTAURANT CRUISE SHIP DANDY, SATURDAY, 25 SEPTEMBER 1999

Let's get together this year and enjoy a luncheon on the cruise ship DANDY as it sails up the Potomac River past some of the Nation's Historic Monuments. While enjoying lunch, we will view the Washington Monument, the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials, the Kennedy Center, Watergate, Washington Harbor, Georgetown and other beautiful landmarks. The trip will take 2½ hours.

#### MENU: Choose one)

- . Eggs Benedict
- . Chicken Marengo
- . Fillet of Haddock
- . Vegetarian or Pasta Selection

All entrées are served with salad, seasonal vegetables, and French rolls, and there is a choice of desserts and coffee or tea.

**PRICE: \$35.00 per person** (including tax and gratuity) (Cash Bar Available)

**The DANDY leaves its dock in historic Old Town Alexandria, at Zero Prince Street**

**Boarding time: 11:30 - 12:15**

**The Cruise leaves ON TIME:**

**No waiting for late passengers**

Parking (\$7.00) is available within walking distance. There is one facility on Strand Street, between Duke and Prince Streets and adjacent to Prince Street Pier.

**VERY IMPORTANT: Please let us know IMMEDIATELY if you want to go!**

**The company has to be informed as to the number of attendees far in advance.**

**Call Hortensia R. Saginor  
Phone: 301-654-7482  
TODAY!**

### WORLD MENTAL HEALTH DAY, 8 OCTOBER

#### Invitation to AFSM Members from the Staff Assistance Service (SAS)

The following e-mail has recently been sent to AFSM from SAS:

"We would like to extend an invitation to the members of AFSM to attend a symposium on the occasion of World Mental Health Day, which will be observed on 8 October 1999.

"The theme of the eighth annual World Mental Health Day is "Mental Health and Ageing" in observance of the United Nations' International Year of Older Persons, Towards a Society for All Ages. World Mental Health Day occurs on 10 October every year and serves to raise worldwide awareness of mental health issues. The Day is organized by the World Federation for Mental Health (WFMH) and co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"This year World Mental Health Day will be observed on six continents and will reaffirm that the fundamental rights of older people are the same as those of all other citizens. Because 10 October 1999 falls on a Sunday, we will observe the Day on 8 October.

"Here in Washington DC a symposium is being organized by PAHO on Friday, 8 October, from 11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. We hope the event will be successful in attracting broad attention and community response to the importance of mental health.

"Dr. Itzhak Levav, Program Coordinator of the Health Lifestyle and Mental Health Unit of PAHO, will facilitate the symposium.

"We hope members of AFSM will be able to join us."

**AFSM Annual Meeting  
Tuesday, 16 November**