



# NEWSLETTER

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

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### NEW DIRECTOR OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU (PASB)

The XXIV Pan American Sanitary Conference was held in Washington DC from 26 to 30 September 1994. The 38 countries of this Region unanimously elected Sir George Alleyne Director of the Bureau for the period 1995-1999. Dr. Alleyne, a native of Barbados, came to PAHO in 1981 as Chief of the Research Unit. He was appointed Director of the Area of Health Programs Development in 1983 and has served as Assistant Director of PASB since 1990. We congratulate him enthusiastically, and, as former staff members of PAHO and continuing family members of this 92-year-old Organization, we wish him a most successful leadership in his dedication to improve the health conditions and quality of life of the peoples of the Americas.

In his acceptance speech, Dr. Alleyne thanked the Governments of the Americas and detailed his plan for the future. The speech is an inspiring vision; it is included as an annex to

this Newsletter.

### PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE

At the XXIV Pan American Sanitary Conference, 38 countries, 9 intergovernmental organizations and 32 nongovernmental organizations were represented. Some of the main topics are highlighted below.

- In 1994 WHO called for the establishment of a global network of scientific centers to identify and combat new or re-emerging diseases, including those caused by antibiotic-resistant strains of infectious agents. These centers will contribute to an effective response to the resurgence of diseases such as tuberculosis, yellow fever, dengue, plague and cholera.

- Dr. Guerra de Macedo highlighted the reduction achieved in mortality and fertility rates in the Region of the Americas, while noting the existence of large inequities between countries and among groups of population within the countries. He also mentioned the emphasis placed on research and the dissemination of scientific-technical information to the various levels of the health sector.

- The International Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication recognized the improvement of the poliomyelitis situation in the Americas. The

Pan American Sanitary Bureau received a certificate for meeting the goal proposed in 1985, namely the interruption of wild poliovirus in the Western Hemisphere.

- The World Health Conference on Women and Health will be held in Beijing in 1995.

## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF AFSM**

The Annual General Meeting took place on 29 November 1994. The President welcomed the members in the name of the Association, and Dr. Robert Knouss, Deputy Director of PASB, welcomed them on behalf of the Organization. Sir George Alleyne, Director-Elect of the Bureau, presented his insights as to the future of PAHO. Mr. Abbas Ordoobadi, president of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS)/WASHINGTON, was the keynote speaker and presented the objectives, goals and activities of AFICS. There was a report on the activities of AFSM in the past year by the President, and a financial report from the Treasurer. Three directors, whose terms expired at the end of the year, were re-elected to the Board: Renate Plaut, Jean Surgi and Federico Varela.

## **AMENDMENTS TO THE BYLAWS**

Three proposed amendments to the Bylaws were approved by the membership at the Annual General Meeting:

1) Non-voting Members of the Board of Directors. The retiree representatives to the Health Surveillance Committee will be included on the Board of Directors as non-voting members.

2) Forms of Membership. Members shall have the option of paying their dues in one of the following three categories:

(a) annual membership, with payments due at

the time of application and annually thereafter on the first of January;

(b) ten-year membership, beginning at the time of the original application or at any time thereafter and payable each ten years on the first of January; or

(c) lifetime membership, to be paid in one lump sum at the time of the original application or at any time thereafter. The Board of Directors will keep the annual dues at the current amount of \$10.00, and has set the dues for ten-year membership at \$50.00 and for lifetime membership at \$100.00.

3) Commercial Endorsements. The Board of Directors of AFSM shall not encourage or endorse any specific commercial activity, either by its own members or by others, as such endorsement does not fall within the stated purposes of the Association.

## **SEMINAR ON U.S. INHERITANCE AND GIFT TAX LAWS**

With the support of the Office of Personnel of PAHO and the PAHO/WHO Staff Association, AFSM sponsored a seminar on "United States Inheritance and Gift Tax Laws: Implications for the non-U.S. Citizen." The seminar took place on 22 November at PAHO Headquarters and was attended by more than 70 persons, including both current and former PAHO staff. It was conducted by the accounting firm of Watkins, Meegan, Drury and Company and included a lively question-and-answer period. Reading material was distributed ahead of time so attendees would be prepared to ask questions. An additional document was distributed during the seminar. Anyone desiring copies of these documents may request them from the Association (AFSM, Pan American Health Organization, 525 23rd Street NW Room 316, Washington DC 20037).

## **PRERETIREMENT SEMINAR FOR PAHO STAFF**

A seminar called "New Horizons in Retirement" was organized by the Office of Personnel. AFSM had the opportunity to participate in this excellent seminar as observers and panelists. A considerable amount of well-organized information was presented to the participants; this will surely prove useful in the difficult decisions staff have to make before retiring. AFSM has offered to continue to participate in such seminars and, if possible, in the early planning stages, in order to share our experiences with future retirees.

## **STAFF HEALTH INSURANCE RULES**

The Board of Directors of AFSM has been reviewing the staff health insurance rules, especially as they relate to retirees. We are in the process of preparing a report on the calculation of the contribution rate for retired staff members and the determination of their eligibility for catastrophic expense reimbursement. This report will be distributed to the membership as soon as it is completed.

## **ESTROGEN MAY PROTECT AGAINST ALZHEIMER'S**

Estrogen replacement therapy may offer protection against Alzheimer's disease, scientists reported at a meeting in Washington of the Society for Neuroscience. "We found that women who had used estrogen replacement therapy were 40 per cent less likely to have Alzheimer's disease and related dementias compared to women who had not used estrogen," said Dr. Victor Henderson of the University of Southern California.

Dr. Henderson and colleagues studied the medical records of 8,897 women living in retirement communities. Of these, 2,418 died

between 1981 and 1992. The researchers found that 127 women had a diagnosis of Alzheimer's disease or related dementia on their death certificates. When they were compared with a control group, the risk of developing Alzheimer's was reduced in those who used estrogen and was reduced still further by increasing doses and longer duration of estrogen use.

Of those who had not received estrogen therapy, 18 per cent developed Alzheimer's compared to 7 per cent of those who were given the hormone.

Women with a history of estrogen therapy who developed Alzheimer's also performed better on cognitive tests than women who developed the disease and did not take the hormone. Dr. Henderson warned that it is too early to recommend estrogen replacement therapy for the purpose of preventing dementia.

Roger Johnson (From Quarterly News of the Association of Former WHO Staff. Excerpted from Medical Tribune, 9 Dec 1993.)

## **NEWS FROM OUR COLLEAGUES**

**Frank Lu**

The WHO Collaborating Center in Shanghai and the Shanghai Medical University (SMU), with the approval of the Chinese Ministry of Public Health and Ministry of Education, have established a **Frank C. Lu Foundation for the Advancement of Preventive Medicine**. The Foundation will grant annual monetary awards for outstanding teaching and research in preventive medicine, based on nationwide competition. The foundation has also established a Frank Lu

Laboratory for Advanced Toxicology and a Frank C. Lu Room in the Library at SMU.

The Foundation was formed in recognition of the cost effectiveness and other virtues of preventive medicine, as enunciated by WHO in its Edinburgh Declaration and promoted in earnest by SMU. The selection of Frank Lu for this honor was based on his long association with WHO, where he contributed to the establishment of permissible levels of toxic substances, thereby promoting the cause of preventive medicine. He served SMU by giving lectures on toxicology, advising graduate students, conducting seminars and arranging exchange scholarships for the faculty members.

While the Foundation was established on 15 November 1993, at Dr. Lu's request the official opening ceremony took place on 20 May 1994, considered to be a better time for subsequent tours.

## LETTERS FROM OUR COLLEAGUES

**Donald C. Johnson** (Turlok CA): Thanks for the Newsletter. It's great! Have recently been on a three-week assignment to Ethiopia dealing with post-Civil War training for health workers. Visited Geneva for debriefing at the time of the World Health Assembly, which offered the opportunity to meet with former colleagues and associates from around the world.

My wife Inez and I keep busy on a number of fronts at home and occasionally also abroad. Mostly on a voluntary basis. It keeps us involved and HAPPY. Best regards to all.  
**Patricia A. Deiman** (White Bear Lake MN): The Directory of the AFSM has enabled me to

get in touch with some long-lost friends and colleagues. I look forward to receiving the updated issue. Thanks much.

## ADDING LIFE TO YEARS

I lost sight of George in 1944, when "our hair was raven," both of us being 22 years old. I met him again half a century later, in 1994. He had emigrated from Central Europe in 1948, after that terrible war, to the farthest of all continents, and succeeded in acquiring financial independence, but no special wealth. Then together with his wife Agnes, they decided to start a second (or third) life. He is now sculpting for his own pleasure and she makes pretty ceramics; they are both now sculpting for his own pleasure and she makes pretty ceramics; they are both youngish at 72.

Advanced age is no bar to creativity. Verdi composed "Falstaff" when he was 80. Picasso painted up to age 92. Bertrand Russell wrote the "Art of Philosophizing" at 96, and Tizian is said to have painted a pietà at age 98.

Using psychometric tests, gerontologists have demonstrated a direct positive relationship between intellectual capacities and age expectancy; cognitive functions show only a slight impairment (or none at all) until late in life. Disease diminishes the cognitive functions of elderly individuals, but in the healthy ones intellectual activity and life expectancy are interrelated positively.

Thus, the somewhat wornout slogan "Adding Life to Years" may be rephrased: "By keeping intellectually active, live a pleasant long life."

(From Quarterly News of the

Association of Former WHO Staff, Geneva.  
Spring, No.17 - Dr. Tom Strasser)

### **IN MEMORIAM**

We regret to inform the membership of the death of our colleague, Maria Alicia Heusser, on 2 October 1994, in Santiago, Chile. Maria Alicia joined the Pan American Health Organization as a bilingual secretary in the Division Professional Education. During her almost 27 years of service with PAHO, she worked in the Departments of Health Promotion, Environmental Sanitation and Budget, and was a Statistical Assistant in the Health Situation Analysis Program when she retired in January 1993. Maria Alicia had many friends at PAHO; she will be sorely missed.

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#### **EDITORIAL COMMITTEE**

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**Hans Bruch**  
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**Carlos Daza**  
**Yolanda Hanson**  
**Jean Surgi**

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**XXIV PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE**  
**XLVI REGIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING**

WASHINGTON, D.C.  
SEPTEMBER 1994

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**ADDRESS OF SIR GEORGE ALLEYNE ON HIS ELECTION  
AS DIRECTOR OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU**

Mr. President,  
Director of the Pan American Health Organization,  
Director-General of the World Health Organization,  
Distinguished Ministers of Health - Heads of Delegations,  
Your Excellencies Ambassadors,  
Colleagues in PAHO,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

You will pardon me if I read from a prepared text, but since I had some idea of the waves of emotion that would wash over me at this time, I thought it unwise to trust myself to speak without the comfort of the written word.

First, I wish to thank my own Government for having preferred my candidature and you Ministers and Heads of Delegation for having supported it. The simplicity of this thank you should not mask the deep and profound gratitude I have for you, the Representatives of the Governments of the Americas who have elected me. I am conscious of the honour you have bestowed on me and my country.

But I do not wish to dwell on honours, I would rather speak of the responsibility that comes with your mandate. I am acutely aware of the illustrious history of this Organization that has been the voice for health in our Hemisphere. I reflect with humility that I stand in a line of distinguished health professionals who have so guided its affairs that it towers tall in the world of international health.

The names of Cumming, Soper, Horwitz, Acuña and Macedo could be written on tablets that would have pride of place in any Hall of Fame of Health. There is no such hall—perhaps happily so—but the legacy of their cumulative actions is shown in even more permanent places—in the faces of men and women without pox, in the gait of children who walk without callipers or crutches.



I wish to pay tribute publicly to the Governments of Peru and Colombia. I took their presentation of candidates for the Directorship of the Pan American Health Organization as a manifestation of their concern for its well-being and a genuine and sincere desire to see that there was quality in its leadership. I am confident that I can now count on having that care and concern manifest in close cooperation and collaboration with me in the years ahead.

I would be ungrateful if at a moment like this I did not also say thanks to my wife of 36 years who has been responsible for more of my formation than she knows.

It is natural and normal to expect every new director to speak of the changes to be introduced in his or her term of office. I am proud to have served in senior positions in the administration of Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo to whom I owe much, and I have the self confidence and I am sure the agreement of this body to continue such programs and practices that he put in place which have been successful and have done our Organization proud in the past 12 years.

But Mr. President, even in the continuity of which I speak there must be some modicum of change, because the times in which my predecessors were elected were different from today: the orthodoxy of our practices today was no doubt the heterodoxy of yesterday, and for sure will be the obsolescence of tomorrow. This is not the moment to enter into detail, but I believe that in order to adapt to such difference, in order to keep this Secretariat alive and responsive to the articulated needs of you in representation of the people of the Americas, it will behove me to restate our mission, redefine the product we offer and re-engineer those parts of the management of programs and resources that need it. It must be a management that is prudent yet innovative, one that knows how to focus and one that knows both how to subtract as well as to add as the times and circumstance warrant.

I am a product of my culture and an integral part of that culture is our sport—our national game is cricket, a team game, whose seminal rule is fairness. In a metaphoric sense I am assuming the captaincy of a team, and I do so with a consciousness burned into me almost from birth, that captains are as good as the teams they lead. I believe that in our Secretariat we have a good team and an important, though not the only, responsibility of the leader is to bring out the best in every player and have everyone see that the final result must be greater than could be achieved by the sum of the individual efforts.

What else can you expect of me? I can promise you that in this Director you will have a person who is sensitive to the individual needs of countries, alert to the variation that exists between and within countries, and ever conscious of the standards of ethical conduct that must guide an Organization like ours. I can pledge that you will have a Secretariat that lives the motto of service—a service that is not servile, a service that is transparent, a service that is as timely and efficient as human heads and hands can

make it, a service that is guided by frank and open dialogue between those who serve and those who are served. You will see your Secretariat make every effort to maintain or increase its diversity to reflect the face of our countries—diversity of sex, ethnic and national origin. You will see your Secretariat serve all the countries of the Americas—from Baffin Bay to Cape Horn—countries large or small, continental or insular—different yes, but united in the grand design of contributing each from its strength to improving the health of all our people.

We will spare no effort, ignore no suggestion that will enhance the cohesiveness and focus of our programs. There must be no doubt in anyone's mind that while we will continue to advocate positively or even aggressively for the understanding of the concepts of the proper place of health and for action in relation to our environment, we will not ignore the efforts that must be made to apply those health technologies that have stood the test of scientific enquiry.

I would like to think that one of the reasons you have elected me is because you share some small part or perhaps all of that vision I have of our world—one which I have articulated to some of you before. I have for a long time been gripped by a vision of a world in which there is no "otherness" in health. We may accept differences in physical characteristics—we may accept differences in ideologies—but in a very real sense, in the case of health there should be no "others" because we are indeed one, bound together by ties that go beyond our biology. For that vision to be realized we will have to use well that most powerful of modern instruments—information—perhaps the only instrument that can close the gap between the world that is and the world that might be—the only instrument that can relieve the ignorance of many of our people who pay the cost of that ignorance in the coin of ill health and suffering. In this world that might be or will be, our citizens will truly see that health is for living and agitate that they be allowed to live in the fullest sense of the word.

I extend my hand in cooperative friendship to all the agencies, institutions and organizations that would work with us in this enormous task of assisting the peoples of the Americas in their quest for the best of health. Experience has shown me that if the goals of our countries are clearly stated and plans accurately drawn without the petty consciousness of turf that serves no purpose other than to compound inertia with ineptitude, it is possible for us to work together and achieve together.

Mr. President, in a few months my name will be placed before the Executive Board of the World Health Organization to be appointed the Regional Director of that Organization for the Americas. I pledge that I will do all in my power to discharge that responsibility in such a manner as will bring credit to the Americas; I will seek to have others understand and respect the traditions and practices that have evolved over our 92 years, and hopefully contribute through sharing of knowledge and experience to ensuring that the world's health goals and objectives are achieved. I cannot in fairness speak of team spirit in the Americas and not try to translate this thinking to the global scene.



Distinguished Delegates, you have given me your support today and I ask for it during the course of my administration. With your support and council and with the help of the dedicated and competent band of men and women who serve their people through the Pan American Health Organization I will strive to ensure that our aspirations for the health of the Americas become realities.

And if you ask me for a bond and a surety that I will make every effort humanly possible to discharge my promises, I can only say to you, I give you my word.

Washington, D.C.  
28 September 1994