



# First page of the first AFICS *Bulletin*

BULLETIN OF A.F.I.C.S.

Association of Former International Civil Servants (New York)  
c/o U.N. Staff Committee Office, Room 546,  
United Nations, New York City, N.Y. 10017

-----

Vol. 1, N° 1

Quarterly

November 1970

This is the first issue of the bulletin of a newly formed organization and necessarily we have to limit ourselves to producing a very modest publication for the time being. We shall publish only a quarterly at present but hope that as our membership expands and our resources grow, we shall be able to publish more material more frequently. Our immediate purpose is to inform members of the work so far undertaken by the officers of the Association and to give some personal news of former colleagues.

## Organization of the Association

Since the number of retirements from United Nations service has much increased recently and is likely to increase at an even faster rate in the coming years, a feeling has steadily grown that an association should be formed to represent the views and interests of our retired colleagues in or near New York. A preparatory group duly met in October 1969 to discuss the situation, when it was decided to send out a questionnaire. A very favorable response having been received from over 200 former international civil servants, a general meeting was called for 10 June 1970, when some 50 persons attended and formally established the Association of Former International Civil Servants (New York). It adopted By-Laws, elected 12 members of a Governing Board, and held a useful discussion on possible activities that the Association might undertake.

## Aims and Purposes

The aims and purposes of the Association were outlined as follows : (1) to keep members informed of actions and developments affecting their interest; (2) to represent members' interests in their relations with administrations of the United Nations and other agencies and with the U.N. Joint Staff Pension Fund; (3) periodically to inform members of significant developments in the U.N. organizations, of major personnel changes and other matters of interest; and (4) to establish as soon as financial means permit an advisory bureau which would advise retiring international civil servants in matters of taxation, employment and investment.

## Officers

At the first meeting of the Governing Board on 26 June 1970, the following officers were elected : Frank Weisl (Chairman), Ernest Grigg (First Vice-Chairman), Henri Raymond (Second Vice-Chairman), Anne Goder (Secretary), Jacques Lippetz (Deputy-Secretary), George Janecek (Treasurer), Egon Schwelb (Deputy-Treasurer). The five other members of the Governing Board are Arthur Gagliotti, Adolf Lande, André Hadamard, Szeming Sze and Ping-Hou Wang. At the Board's second meeting on 15 September 1970, André Hadamard and Szeming Sze were appointed Editors of the Bulletin.

# AFICS/NY CELEBRATES ITS 50<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY

## History and Evolution

As we celebrate our 50th anniversary, it is fitting that we look back on the history and accomplishments of our Association. Margaret (Molly) Bruce, a former President of AFICS/NY, wrote a full, very informative and authoritative account of the history and evolution of AFICS on the occasion of our 40th anniversary. It was published in our 40th anniversary bulletin and is available on the AFICS/NY website (<https://www.un.org/other/afics/>). For present purposes and to set the scene for our 50th anniversary, we recall here the highlights of the last 50 years as noted by Molly in her article.

The Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS/NY) was formally constituted on 10 June 1970 with some 200 members. The newly constituted Governing Board held its first meeting on 16 June and elected Frank Weisl as the first President of the AFICS Governing Board along with 12 board members. We now have 2,838 AFICS/NY members, including honorary members, drawn from all United Nations organizations and living in many parts of the world although most live in the United States and Canada.

Since its founding in 1970, AFICS/NY has expanded both in numbers and in the scope of its activities. The Governing Board grew from the initial 12 to “not more than 21” and, as a result of new by-laws approved on 18 May 1995, to 23 members. Pension matters and after-service health insurance, including long-term care, continue to be priority areas of concern. The Association has broadened its activities substantially, and this is reflected in the numerous committees that have been established and the different kinds of programmes they have organized (e.g., Pension, Insurance, Ageing, Legal, Membership, NGO Relations and Information, Outreach, Social, and Finance). Also noteworthy is the establishment of the AFICS Library in 2005. Another important development in recent

years was the establishment of the AFICS/NY Charities Foundation in 1997. Its mission includes support for humanitarian causes such as the disastrous earthquake in Haiti and the situation in Yemen as well as assistance to qualified individuals facing temporary hardships.

Other organizations of retirees were also formed during the early years, beginning with FAO in Rome and somewhat later, UNESCO in Paris. It was agreed that in order to safeguard their rights, there was a need for close cooperation among pensioners from all UN organizations. As a result, the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS) was born in 1975.

While much has happened in AFICS/NY since the landmark 40th anniversary, we will not be able to match the live events of 10 years ago because of the constraints imposed on us by COVID-19. Nevertheless, we do have some exciting virtual events planned and many achievements to celebrate since 2010. Most notable among them is the increasingly active and direct role that AFICS/NY representatives have played in having their voices heard in key committees (for example, the Fifth Committee) in such important areas for retirees as after-service health care (ASHI) and the Pension Fund. AFICS/NY has also addressed aspects of ageing – how to maximize our retirement years – through interactive programmes. An increasingly important part of that is to maintain regular social interaction. While we are doing so virtually at these times, let’s take a moment to remember all the events that we have participated in over the years – luncheons, trips, meet and mixes and get-togethers after our Annual Assembly. The photographs below serve as a reminder of those times and we will have more in the Anniversary Bulletin itself.

All the living past Presidents of AFICS/NY have contributed an article on their tenure for the Anniversary Bulletin and will reflect on their achievements more fully than we can do in this “teaser” bulletin.



Photos: Velimir Kovacevic

## The Mohican Society Congratulates AFICS/NY

Hooray and a huge salute to AFICS/NY on its golden anniversary. As a member and on behalf of The Society of Mohicans, I wish you continued success going forward.

The Society, formed in 1945, comprised those staff members who worked at the UN in Church House, London and at Hunter (now Lehman) College. Only those staff members who entered service on or before 15 August 1946, prior to the move to Lake Success, were eligible for membership. The aim of the Society was to meet periodically to reminisce about shared experiences of those early days.

The name "Mohicans" was suggested by Al Katz, a Native American historian who pointed out that the "last" of the Mohicans was named "UNCAS." A constitution and by-laws were adopted establishing the tradition of meeting annually, and a Mohican emblem comprising a pin and tie clasp were designed and worn on those occasions.



From left to right: Veronica Bartlett, Josephine Guy, Frank Acinapura and Lottie Robbins.

Photo: Dawne Gautier

Between activities of AFICS/NY and the Mohicans, many friendships were established and we are thankful for those precious memories, one of which is captured in this photograph.

Congratulations AFICS/NY!

**Josephine Guy**

## Robert Kaminker Recalls the Mohican Society

Seventy-five years ago, on 10 January 1946, I began my first day as a reader in the French typing pool of the UN Secretariat, which was then installed in Church House in London. The six-week contract I had then was extended several times until it brought me to New York in April of that year, and was eventually converted to a permanent contract, which I honoured until my retirement on 30 April 1982.

As I came to know many years later, I had joined a group of staff members numbering some 600, who, after working in London, were transported to New York, where we worked in Hunter College in the Bronx until August 1946, when the UN opened shop in Lake Success, Long Island. Some years later, this group set itself up as the Society of Mohicans, with a convivial reunion at a luncheon event each year. The reunions lasted until approximately

2005, when some 18 Mohicans attended the last scheduled event in the Delegates Dining Room at Headquarters. Some of us kept in contact, mostly thanks to two of the group who had organized the reunions for quite a few years, namely Lucile Fisher and Mel Silverman.

The Society of Mohicans, as far as I know, did not have any official standing nor any operational connection with AFICS/NY, or with the Staff Committee and of course not with the Administration. As the years went by, and the number of Mohicans was subject to attrition, the existence of the Society became less and less known. Today, few, if any, UN staff members know that it existed although many Mohicans were among the UN retirees when AFICS/NY was created.

Having been away from UN Headquarters at other duty stations for many years, I unfortunately



attended only very few of the yearly luncheons, and I thus lost track of many members. I would like to mention that I know for sure that I was most probably the youngest Mohican, which makes me, at 93 years of age, one of the LAST of the MOHICANS!

Being a UN Mohican has been, and still is, a source of pride: I was one of the many staff members who, as early as 1946, believed in the ideals set out in the UN Charter. And I still think that the world could be a much better place to live in if the UN goals had met with a higher measure of accomplishment over the past 75 years.

**In the full anniversary bulletin, we will hear from many AFICS/NY members. Here Lydia G. Ontal gives us a foretaste of what you can expect.**

---

---

I began my UN career at the Visitors Section in the DPI Guided Tours Unit. As a General Service Staff with a relatively short period of service, there was really nothing significant about my experience. The only memorable experience that comes to mind was the 50th Anniversary of the United Nations in 1995, when I was one of the DPI staff members assigned to escort the Heads of States to their assigned spots at the commemorative photo session in the Trusteeship Council Chamber. I escorted Mr. Fidel Castro to his assigned spot on my row. Seeing him in person, together with other controversial figures like Chairman Yasser Arafat and many other famous faces that I only saw on television and newspapers, was very fascinating to me.

Not long after my assignment at the Visitors Section, I became Secretary to Mr. John Wong upon his promotion as Chief of Publications Service in the Department of Public Information. One day, Mr. George Saddler, President of AFICS/NY, who was a friend of Mr. Wong, dropped by the office to visit and he told Mr. Wong that he was looking for a Secretary/Office Assistant. Three months after my retirement, I found myself in the AFICS office as Secretary/Office Assistant. The office had just moved from its tiny office space in DC2 which only had five desks and chairs, two word processors and a typewriter. Mr. Saddler took his friend Mr. Benon Sevan, then Assistant Secretary-General for General Services to see for himself the sad situation of the

AFICS office. Mr. Saddler and Mr. Sevan knew each other when they were working in the Budget Office. Through Mr. Sevan's intervention, AFICS/NY was given the coveted space in DC1 where we are now. We were furnished with new PCs, a fax machine, a heavy-duty copier and a space large enough to have a conference room for Governing Board meetings.

When Mr. Saddler was elected President of FAFICS, the FAFICS Secretary, Mr. Anders Tholle, had asked for an assistant because he was based in Geneva where the FAFICS Secretariat is located and the President was based in New York. The position of Assistant Secretary was created at the next Council Session and I was elected to that position which I held for several years until it was abolished years later. However, I continued to be actively involved with FAFICS as the representative of AFICS Philippines. I had organized AFICS Philippines together with a retiree from UNDP Manila during the incumbency of Mr. Andrés Castellanos, who was focused on increasing membership to FAFICS. AFICS Philippines was accredited to the Federation in 2009 and has since increased its membership to almost 200 active members. I represent them as a member of the Executive Board as Vice President for International Relations. Except for the Council Session that was held in Nairobi, I have attended all Council Sessions held in Geneva, Vienna, Paris, London, Rome, Montreal and New York during the incumbency of six FAFICS Presidents.



Working directly under AFICS/NY Presidents Mr. George Saddler, Mr. O. Richard Nottidge, Mr. Edward Omotoso and Mr. Andrés Castellanos as AFICS/NY Secretary and as FAFICS Assistant Secretary, has given me the opportunity to meet thousands of UN retirees and representatives of the 63 Member Associations of FAFICS and interact with them at the annual Council Sessions. It has broadened my perspective of how the UN system and its agencies work, the active participation of FAFICS in the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund, and the After-Service Health Insurance Scheme in protecting the interests of United Nations retirees and beneficiaries, especially on matters relating to pensions and health insurance.

To me personally, it has been a privilege to be part of a team that in many ways, great and small, helped in transforming FAFICS into what it is today. I have learned to appreciate and respect the diversity of people around the world and its different cultures and I have been fortunate to work with many talented and dedicated retirees with unquestionable commitment to the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants.

# WHY AFICS

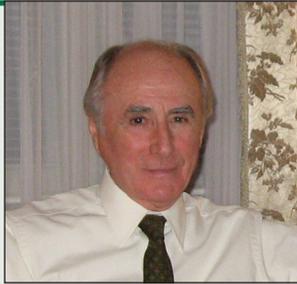
by **Federico Riesco**

You retired a couple of years ago and you've been quietly going about your business, not looking back very often on your days in the United Nations system. Naturally, you've been concerned when there's been negative news or commentary about the UN, and annoyed by the recurrent scapegoating of the Organization. But when you've wanted to discuss the latest events, you haven't found anybody with enough interest in these issues which are so close to you.

Then one day you find yourself at an international event of some kind, in a room where many of those present are speaking English with a distinct foreign accent or using other languages, and you experience a surprising reaction ... you feel you've come home. Or you may be at a gathering where you spot people you knew from the UN. Even if they were not close colleagues, you are delighted to see them again. Now you can discuss your concerns with people who understand exactly what you mean. It's like meeting relatives you haven't seen in a long time, but with whom you share a family bond and common childhood memories.

It is then that you realize how much you've missed the UN experience, the enriching diversity of the Organization's unique environment, the play of cultures, not clashing or competing, but brought together by a common purpose.

For many of us, particularly those for whom joining the UN system means leaving our countries and cultures, the Organization becomes a surrogate home country and an extended family. It gives us a particular identity, and affords us a certain measure of support and protection. On retirement, we abruptly lose all that. At the UN the separation of retiring staff members is complete and drastic. There is no gradual phasing out, or the option of an unpaid continuing association like some governments offer. The separation, even if expected, is sudden and total.



However, we don't have to feel dropped from the family and pushed out of our home, because there's AFICS.

AFICS/NY is an extension of the environment that surrounded us in the UN system. It is an association of people who, notwithstanding the diversity of their opinions, their backgrounds and their professional experience, continue to share the basic values that led us all into the UN system to begin with. AFICS helps us maintain our UN identity and offers us avenues to stay engaged in UN endeavours. It formally links the retiree community to the UN system, and represents its interests wherever they may be at stake. It also provides a support structure that offers advice or assistance to retirees on a host of practical issues, from pensions and health insurance to tips on smart ageing and access to UN facilities.

Like the UN itself, AFICS can be different things to different people: we can go to it for social interaction, to continue our involvement in UN system activities, or to participate in new and rewarding activities. We can also go to AFICS for some of that support we felt the UN provided. Granted, AFICS can't issue a *laissez-passer* or request a G-4 visa, but it can offer you expert advice on your income taxes or visa status and, in normal times, it can get you flu shots and discounts at New York museums and restaurants.

Somewhat surprisingly, now and then we hear misapprehensions about AFICS/NY. One of these is that it is too "local". While it is necessarily New York-based (as is the UN Secretariat), its approximately 3,000 members reside not only in the tri-state area but elsewhere in the USA and on every continent except Antarctica, and include nationals of most UN



Photo: Susan deSouza

Member States. There are over a dozen nationalities represented on the current AFICS/NY Governing Board.

Another is that AFICS is “static” or even “backward-looking” — a group of ageing folks that get together to reminisce about old times and complain about the present. That might be fun sometimes, but it is not at all what AFICS is about. The first point in AFICS’ mission statement is “to support and promote the purposes, principles and programmes of the UN System.” We cannot do that by sitting around and talking about the day we saw Dag Hammarskjöld in the cafeteria. AFICS members support the Organization, for example, by becoming UN volunteers or UN speakers. In any case, check out the AFICS/NY website and you’ll see that this is no old folks club, but a vital and vibrant association.

By its very nature AFICS is a self-renewing organism. Its ranks are swelled every year by a new graduating class of retirees, and it constantly welcomes staff members who join before retiring. As for the Governing Board, its renewal is ensured by the AFICS by-laws, which set term limits for Board members and provide for the election of six new members every year.

Recently, we’ve heard some members — and others — say that AFICS is not aggressive enough in its defense of the interests of retirees. There might be a misconception here. AFICS is not a trade union and doesn’t have the leverage available to that kind of entity. After all, retirees can’t go on strike. What makes AFICS the effective advocate that it is are mainly three things: its expertise in the issues that are most important to the retiree community, its contacts within the UN system and the respect it enjoys among our colleagues in positions of authority around the system. Collegiality and fact-based persuasion are its tools, rather than antagonism and confrontation.

Anyhow, if you happen to have doubts, complaints or strong views about AFICS, that’s all the more reason to join, and then volunteer for a committee or run for a seat on the Board, and make your voice heard where it counts. Sniping from the sidelines can be fun, but it usually doesn’t accomplish much.

And let’s close on a very light note. When you are still on active duty but approaching retirement, you’ll notice now and then that most of the colleagues you



Photo: Velimir Kovacevic



Photo: Susan deSouza

work with or meet in the corridors are younger than you. If you join AFICS right after retiring and attend one of its meetings or social events, like the ones pictured here, you are very likely to find that you are the youngest person in the room.

To sum it all up, what AFICS means is that, whenever we want or need to be in touch, the family is still there.

---

---

## HONORARY MEMBERS

Martti Ahtisaari  
Ban Ki-moon

---

## PRESENT GOVERNING BOARD

Steven Avedon  
Thomas Bieler  
Gail Bindley-Taylor  
Marianne Brzak-Metzler  
Lowell Flanders  
Anthony J. Fouracre  
Elaine Fultz  
Suzan Habachy  
Nancy Hurtz-Soyka  
Barbara Linardo  
Joan McDonald  
Sudershan Narula  
Nancy Raphael  
Federico Riesco  
Warren Sach

## GOVERNING BOARD HONORARY MEMBERS

Andrés Castellanos del Corral  
O. Richard Nottidge  
Edward Omotoso  
George F. Saddler  
Linda Saputelli  
Jane Weidlund

---

## OFFICERS

**President:** John Dietz  
**First Vice-President:** Deborah Landey  
**Second Vice-President:** Jayantilal Karia  
**Secretary:** Demetrios Argyriades  
**Deputy Secretary:** Susan De Souza  
**Treasurer:** Angel Silva  
**Deputy Treasurer:** Mary Ann Chiulli

Photo: Velimir Kovacevic



**AFICS members after a great boat ride in NY harbour.**