
AFICS/NY BULLETIN

Published quarterly by the Association of Former International Civil Servants/NY

Editor Emerita

Mary Lynn Hanley

50th Anniversary Bulletin Co-Editors

James Lee

Joanna Piucci

Graphic Design

Laura Frischeisen

Signe Kaljurand

Contributing Editor

Sylvester Rowe

Bulletin Group

Gail Bindley-Taylor, Chair

Mahbub Ahmad

Dawne Gautier

Please submit news, views, photos and letters to afics@un.org

Unless otherwise noted, throughout the Bulletin the term AFICS is used to refer to AFICS/NY. The views and opinions expressed in the reports, articles and illustrations in the Bulletin do not necessarily represent those of AFICS/NY or its Governing Board, nor does the AFICS/NY accept responsibility for the accuracy of information given. The mention of any product, service, organization or company does not necessarily imply its endorsement by the Association.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
INTRODUCTION	3
LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL	5
HONOREES OF THE ASSOCIATION	6
HISTORY OF AFICS AND REFLECTIONS	11
The Founding of AFICS	12
Presidents of AFICS	15
The Life of an International Civil Servant	16
The International Civil Service Revisited	20
The Role of Women in Advancing AFICS/NY	23
ACTIVITIES	25
Ageing Smart Committee	26
Information Technology and Communications Committee	28
Social and Other Events Committee	30
Membership Committee	33
Health Insurance Committee: ASHI: A Historical Perspective	34
Pension Committee:	40
UNJSPF: A Brief Summary of its Evolution	40
Is Socially Responsible Investment Good for UNJSPF?	48
Healthy Ageing and Coping with Change	51
Highlights of the History of the AFICS Lending Library	54
The Charities Foundation	59
PARTNERSHIPS AND SERVICES	61
AFICS and UNFCU: A Longstanding Partnership Built on Service	62
Leaving a Lasting Legacy of Support: The G-4 Family Coalition	63
Ombudsman and Mediation Services for Retirees	65
AFICS and the SDGs, especially SDG 16	66
The UN and Family Support	68
British Association of Former International Civil Servants: An Introduction	70
AFICS/NY RETIREES IN ACTION: STORIES FROM FAR AND WIDE	71
IN MEMORIAM: REMEMBERING OUR COLLEAGUES	110

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This anniversary Bulletin took a lot of commitment and hard work. Many people gave ideas and time to make our 50th anniversary celebration a success, and for their valuable contributions we say special thanks to Berold Hinds, for creating AFICS' first virtual raffle; Sharon Ross, who joined AFICS/NY just in time to help; Angel Silva, our Treasurer; Debbie Landey and Jay Karia, our Vice-Presidents; Mac Chiulli, our Assistant Treasurer; Diane Barkley, for keeping minutes of meetings as well as transcribing interviews for Mary Ferreira; Sheila Poinsette and Paulette Austin, for distribution of letters; Graciela Hall and Angela Zubrzycki, for help with gifts for former Presidents and special awardees; Gordon Tapper, for his ideas and support; Mahbub Ahmad, for help with social media outreach; Susan de Souza, for photos of AFICS/NY social activities; Dawne Gautier, for research and support to the Bulletin Group; Velimir Kovacevic, for arranging and monitoring meetings; former Presidents Andrés Castellanos del Corral, Richard Nottidge and Ed Omotoso for sharing their institutional memories; and all the members of the 50th anniversary Planning Committee, for their individual and collective efforts to make our 50th Anniversary a success.

PLEASE SEND US YOUR CORRECT EMAIL ADDRESS

Increasingly, we use email as a means of sending our members important messages – only to have many returned, having failed to reach their destinations because our information is not up to date. If you have not yet done so – or whenever you make a change – please help us by sending your current email address to us at afics@un.org. Thank you.

INTRODUCTION

Dear AFICS/NY members,



As part of our ongoing celebration of the 50th anniversary of AFICS/NY, I am delighted to share with you this special Bulletin. I hope that it will serve not only as a backdrop for our exciting anniversary programme on 4 May 2021 but will provide helpful information on our Association and serve as a keepsake of this milestone. Following on from the “teaser” Bulletin, which helped to mark the initial celebration on 9 December 2020, the Anniversary Bulletin draws on contributions from our membership at large. You will find detailed articles on some of the perennial issues that concern us as United Nations retirees: The Pension Fund, after-service health insurance, and smart ageing. AFICS members at large have written to tell us of their lives in retirement and you will see how active, productive and relevant their contributions to society remain. All this while maintaining the pride that comes from having served as staff members in the United Nations system.

Our 50th anniversary celebrations would not have been so encompassing without the dedication of those who volunteered to help. First and foremost, it is my pleasure to thank Gail Bindley-Taylor for her indefatigable efforts in chairing the Planning Committee and the Bulletin Committee. Her remarkable energy, her gracious leadership and good humour have kept us on course. Thanks are also due to the co-editors of the 50th Anniversary Bulletin, James Lee and Joanna Piucci, with the assistance of Mary Lynn Hanley and Sylvester Rowe; to designers Laura Frischeisen and Signe Kaljurand for their inspired work on the design of the Bulletin; and to Mary Ferreira for her untiring work on the videos available on the AFICS website. I also wish to thank all those who have helped to mark our anniversary in such a positive way and have paid tribute to them in the acknowledgements.

Finally, it is my pleasure to thank all those members who took the time to submit the articles in these pages, including the stories showing the rich fulfilment and contribution to so many worthy causes of so many of us in what can hardly be called retirement! They have made this Anniversary Bulletin truly a shared commitment, one that I am delighted in turn to share with you.

Happy Fiftieth Anniversary!

John Dietz
President, AFICS/NY



AFICS Annual Meeting

AFICS Cuba

Sr. John Dietz, Presidente de AFICS/NY

Con ocasión del cincuentenario de AFICS/NY,
tengo el honor de enviarles nuestra felicitación.

Ana Maria Gudz

Presidente

LETTER FROM THE SECRETARY-GENERAL



UNITED NATIONS

NATIONS UNIES

THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

--

**MESSAGE MARKING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE ASSOCIATION OF FORMER
INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS NEW YORK**

I am delighted to congratulate the Association of Former International Civil Servants in New York on your 50th anniversary.

We who serve the United Nations today are keenly aware that we build on the service of colleagues who came before us.

Your contributions across the decades helped to set the standards and traditions that guide us in advancing the objectives of the Charter.

We are also grateful for your continued engagement and for sharing your rich experience with others.

At this time of test for the human family, you help create understanding and goodwill for the work of the United Nations.

In today's interconnected world, multilateralism is more important than ever -- from overcoming the COVID-19 pandemic and combatting the climate crisis to ending conflict, achieving gender equality and reaching the Sustainable Development Goals.

I thank AFICS for your outstanding service and ongoing support as we strive to secure a future of dignity and peace for all.

HONOREES OF THE ASSOCIATION

Remarks and messages in recognition and praise of AFICS from Secretaries-General



U Thant

When receiving a delegation on 17 May 1970 to appraise him of the newly created Association, he praised and supported the founding of AFICS/NY as the alumni association that the United Nations had been missing. Since then, all Secretaries-General have expressed their support and recognition of the value of AFICS/NY in their messages to the annual assemblies.



Kurt Waldheim

Noted how pleased he was to see the Association growing and becoming more effective. He said that AFICS members scattered all around the world had a unique opportunity to promote understanding of the United Nations system, what it had accomplished and what it was doing. The Secretariat could not afford to ignore AFICS with such an available pool of knowledge and experience, on which it would continue to draw, as needs arose.

Excerpt from message delivered on his behalf by the Chef de Cabinet USG C.V. Narasimhan to the AFICS Annual Assembly, in May 1973



Javier Pérez de Cuéllar, *first Honorary Member of AFICS*

“I feel grateful that the whole body of international civil servants, including those who are working and also those who have retired has maintained its morale despite all discouragement. This dedication is a great asset not only for the Organization as such but also the world community as a whole”.

Excerpt from remarks at the Annual Assembly in May, 1989



Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *Honorary Member of AFICS*

“The retirees are a repository of unflinching support for the principles of the Charter, as AFICS membership is inextricably linked to the history and institutional progress of the United Nations”.

Excerpt from his remarks at the tree planting ceremony prior to the AFICS Annual Assembly, which he also attended, May 1995.



Kofi Annan, *Honorary Member of AFICS*

“You are valued members of the United Nations community. You are a storehouse of knowledge and memory, which any institution needs if it is to build for the future. You continue to play an important role in promoting the ideals and objectives of the United Nations. The current generation of Secretariat officials appreciate your experience, wisdom and, not least, the sacrifices you made during your time of service. We know that we are building on your achievements”.

Excerpt from his message to AFICS Annual Assembly, 20 May 2004



Ban Ki-Moon

"Thank you as well for staying engaged even in your retirement. I guess one can say that you can take the civil servant out of the United Nations, but you cannot take the United Nations out of the civil servant! I would like to thank AFICS for helping retirees in so many ways over so many decades. The fact that you give up your time, on a volunteer basis, to give back to the Organization you served, is to your great credit. You have provided sound advice and helped draw the attention of senior managers to the concerns of retirees".

Excerpt from message to AFICS Annual Assembly, 19 May 2016



António Guterres

I am honoured to open the Annual General Assembly of the Association of Former International Civil Servants/New York on behalf of the Secretary-General António Guterres. The Secretary-General has asked me to convey his deepest gratitude to you for your service. You collectively represent decades of effort to build the United Nations into what it is today. We all owe you our thanks for your immense contributions to the United Nations. On behalf of the Secretary-General, I thank you for your continued support to the United Nations. Rest assured that we will always be open to a fruitful dialogue with AFICS New York".

Excerpt from message delivered on his behalf by Ms. Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti, Chef de Cabinet, to AFICS Annual Assembly, 27 June 2017

From Other Honorary Members of the Association



Marti Ahtisaari

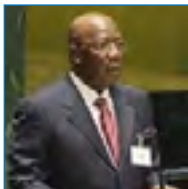
President of Finland, 1994-2000

Nobel Peace Prize winner, 2008

Former Under-Secretary-General for Administration

Member of AFICS/NY

"I am a civil servant. I keep on emphasizing this nowadays wherever I speak that I regard myself as a national and international civil servant. I am a professional at what I do. It was by chance the Finns were fed up with traditional politicians and they wanted me for six years but I don't think they were crying when I said that six years was enough and I wanted to go and do international work. So, I think that it is important in the UN Secretariat to give competent people a chance to go and advance in their professions."



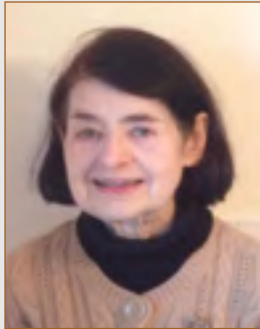
Alhaji Ahmad Tejan Kabbah

President of Sierra Leone, 1996-1997 and 1998-2007

Former Director, DAMS, UNDP

Member of AFICS/NY until his demise in 2014

"Sierra Leone tested the capacity of the United Nations and the international community to respond to major challenges... Your overall response to those challenges has been extraordinary... For these and for other forms of assistance we are profoundly grateful. Without the contributions of the various organizations and agencies, many of us would not have lived to see this glorious day."



MARY LYNN HANLEY

Mary Lynn Hanley has been the Editor of the AFICS/NY Bulletin since she was appointed to that position on 1 March 1998. For most of that time, the Bulletin was issued quarterly. That's 23 years and worth a big "Thank You." I am rather proud of the English language I grew up with and as President of AFICS/NY, I always read each Bulletin before it went to print. I do not believe I ever had reason to change, or even to suggest a change to, what Mary Lynn produced.

As Editor, Mary Lynn attracted over time many helpers, notably Helen Yong for production, Fidel Keymolen for design and layout, Marion O'Connor for her sketches, Dede Emerson for her cartoons and Laura Frischeisen for layout design. In 2006, Mary Lynn and Fidel were recognized by the Governing Board for their distinguished service.

As Editor of the Bulletin, Mary Lynn has attended the AFICS/NY Governing Board for all these years. For the most part, she does not intervene but is always ready to answer any question about the Bulletin. Mary Lynn is also currently Secretary of the AFICS/NY Charities Foundation.

But Mary Lynn has other talents. She is an actor and teamed with the late Tessa Mills, our long time Treasurer, in fund-raising variety shows for the Charities Foundation as well as acting in other arenas. Mary Lynn is also an accomplished musician, playing the flute and piccolo in the United Nations Symphony Orchestra.

I am sure that Mary Lynn has many more abilities but she quietly goes about her life contributing to AFICS/NY and cheerfully giving us her support and setting an example for all of us in how to volunteer effectively for AFICS.

O. Richard Nottidge

Former President, AFICS/NY

Association of Former UN Staff of Bangladesh (AFUNSOB)

On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary observance of AFICS/NY, the Association of Former UN Staff of Bangladesh (AFUNSOB) extends its deepest felicitations to the Association for its relentless efforts to protect and promote the rights and privileges of its members. Throughout its long, successful journey, AFICS was the role model for other associations across the globe.

We firmly believe AFICS will continue to play its unique role with great dedication and unwavering commitment for decades to come.

Long live AFICS!

Kazi Ali Reza
President – AFUNSOB
Bangladesh



Asociación de Ex Funcionarios de las Naciones Unidas de Argentina
AFICS Buenos Aires – Afiliada a FAFICS

M.T. de Alvear 684, Piso 4º, C1058AAH, Buenos Aires, Argentina
Tel. (54-11) 4319-4200 – Fax: (54-11) 4319-4201 – E-mail: argentina.afics@gmail.com
www.aficsargentina.net.ar

6 October 2020
CD-PS-004

John P. Dietz
President, AFICS/NY
Subject: AFICS Argentina sends its congratulations to AFICS/NY

Dear John, dear friends and colleagues,

On this happy occasion, we wish to send to all our colleagues and friends at AFICS/NY, and especially to its president John P. Dietz, our heartfelt congratulations on the 50th anniversary of your creation, at the same time that the United Nations system turns 75, and FAFICS celebrates 45 years of existence. AFICS Argentina was founded in 1986, so this year we are celebrating our 35 years of life!

We also express our recognition to AFICS/NY for the exemplary attitude and the wise guidance your association continuously provides to the international community of retirees and pensioners of the United Nations system. We would like to highlight your leadership in defending democratic and rights-respectful functioning in every opportunity within the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), a constant message you have maintained and continue maintaining with remarkable firmness.

With our best wishes,

Best regards from AFICS Argentina

Vice President
Mirta Roses

President
José Antonio Pagés

HISTORY OF AFICS AND REFLECTIONS

THE FOUNDING OF AFICS



The year 2020 marked both the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and the 50th anniversary of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS). Since this article first appeared in 2005, AFICS has further strengthened its advocacy work on behalf of UN retirees, engaging in constructive dialogue with senior managers across the UN system, with particular emphasis on Pension and Health Insurance issues. AFICS has also prioritized outreach to members, with Committees dedicated to Ageing Smart, IT/Communications, Membership, and Social & Other Events. Most AFICS activities have been virtual since early 2020 owing to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 1970, AFICS began with some 200 members. It now has some 3,700, including honorary members, drawn from all United Nations organizations and scattered over a number of countries, although the majority live in various parts of the United States and Canada. The Association is known as AFICS (New York) because

its headquarters are in New York. Our Association and its sister Association in Geneva (AAFI/AFICS {Geneva}) are the two largest formal groups of retired staff. AAFI/AFICS (Geneva) began as a group of former ILO staff members and was founded in 1940. In 1956, it expanded into an Association of individuals drawn from all UN organizations based mainly in Geneva.

The founding of AFICS was initiated by three “wise men” who had all been actively concerned with pension matters. They were: Alfred Landau, who was still a serving UN staff member at the time, and a participants’ representative on the UN Joint Staff Pension Board and its Standing Committee; Frank Weisl, an Assistant Director General of FAO, who had been an active member of the Pension Board and had served as its Chair; and Henri Reymond, who had represented the ILO Executive Heads on the Standing Committee and was also a life member of AAFI/AFICS (Geneva).

While serving as the participants’ representative on the Pension Board, Alfred Landau had been struck by the fact that governments, executive heads and the active staff were all represented on the Pension Board, but no provision was made for hearing the views of the pensioners themselves. In a letter he addressed to his two colleagues on 2 October 1969, he drew attention to the existence of AAFI/AFICS (Geneva), which had a sizable number of members in Europe but few from the Western Hemisphere, especially the United States. He believed that the establishment of a similar organization of retirees, or of a New York chapter of the Geneva Association, might be helpful in pressing for pensioners’ concerns to be aired at the Pension Board.

His two colleagues agreed, and on 16 October 1969, they met and drew up a list of possible signatories for an appeal to be addressed to all pensioners in the USA and Canada whose addresses were available. Twenty persons signed the appeal, which was issued

on 16 December 1969. Their names are familiar to some of us, since they served subsequently as Presidents or active members of the AFICS Governing Board: A.I. Friedgut, Arthur Gagliotti, Anne Goder, Ernest Grigg, Andre Hadamard, Christine Hellin, Maria L. Huntington, Alfred Landau, Adolf Lande, Jacques Lippitz, Eve Nolan, Marguerite Nowak, Henri Reymond, Nina Rubinstein, Maria Sa Pereira, Marc Schrieber, Szeming Sze, Abraham Tamir, Frank Weisl and G.N.T. Widdrington.

Two hundred positive replies were received to the appeal, making it possible to go ahead and found the Association. In May 1970, a small group drawn from the 20 signatories to the appeal drafted provisional by-laws under which the constituent Assembly was convened. It met on 10 June 1970 and elected Frank Weisl Chair of its meeting. It also elected the members of the first Governing Board, adopted the by-laws and considered suggestions concerning future activities of the Association.

Twelve members constituted the first Governing Board: Arthur Gagliotti, Anne Goder, Ernest Grigg, Andre Hadamard, George Janecek, Adolph Lande, Jacques Lippitz, Henri Reymond, Egon Schwelb, Szeming Sze, Pinghou Wang and Frank Weisl. They held their first meeting on 16 June 1970 and elected a Chair, Frank Weisl; two Vice Chairs, Ernest Grigg and Henri Reymond; a Secretary and Deputy Secretary, Anne Goder and Jacques Lippitz; and a Treasurer and Deputy Treasurer, George Janecek and Egon Schwelb. They were the first officers to serve on the Governing Board and to direct the Association's work on behalf of an ever-increasing membership. Sadly, few if any of these original founders of AFICS are still with us today.

When AFICS was formally constituted, AAFI/AFICS (Geneva) was of the view that the New York Association should be a chapter of that much older Geneva-based Association, and there was much acrimonious debate on this issue. Fortunately, these differences no longer exist, and friendly exchange visits back and forth have been organized in recent years.

Since its founding in 1970, AFICS 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. In recent years, 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). An important development in recent years was the establishment of the AFICS Charities Foundation in 1997. Its mission includes support for humanitarian causes, such as the recent disastrous earthquake in Haiti, 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.

By Margaret K. Bruce

Former President, AFICS

Honorary Member, Governing Board

Congratulatory Letter from Mexico

Dear members of AFICS/NY:

There is a saying in Spanish that reads: Mejor tarde que nunca. Our sincere congratulations for your 50th anniversary, and congratulations for all the work you have done and that the new members of AFICS/NY will continue to do for the years to come.

We shall join you virtually in your 4 May 2021 event.
Best regards.

Adriana Romero
President AFPNU
México

PRESIDENTS OF AFICS/NY

Our Association has had 16 Presidents since its establishment in 1970. All held key posts in the United Nations or its agencies where they served. From the early crusading days, they helped shaped policy in the various worldwide activities in which the Organization became involved. Each one came from a different field of endeavour, yet they all shared a common goal: promoting the success of the UN. As

a result of this leadership, AFICS has gained strength since its founding four decades ago. We are most appreciative of their many valuable contributions.

Remarks of past living Presidents appear throughout the Bulletin and the full texts of their remarks on the occasion of the 50th anniversary are available on the AFICS website.

Frank Weisel, 1970 - 1972

George J. Janacek, 1972 – 1974

Henri Reymond, 1974 – 1976

Dr. Szeming Sze, 1976 – 1977

Myer Cohen, 1977 – 1981

John McDiarmid, 1981 – 1982

Margaret K. Bruce, 1982 – 1985

Alfred Landau, 1985 – 1988

Patricia K. Tsien, 1988 – 1991

A. F. Friedgut, 1991 – 1994

George S. Saddler, 1994 – 2001

O. Richard Nottidge, 2001 – 2003

Andrés Castellanos Del Corral, 2003 – 2008

Edward Omotoso, 2008 – 2010

Linda Saputelli, 2010 – 2016

John Dietz, 2016 - present

THE LIFE OF AN INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANT



I have often entertained myself at night by recalling the events of my rich and varied 38-year career in the service of the United Nations and travels throughout the world. The result is a journey through the life of an American International Civil Servant, including some of her travels, both official and personal.

I was born in New York City on 12 August, 1924. I earned a BA from Barnard College of Columbia University and an MPA from the University of Michigan Institute of Public Administration; I was an international civil servant of the United Nations from 1946-1984.

During my junior year, in 1945, the charter of a new international organization was being drafted in San Francisco. Eleanor Roosevelt was probably the most famous participant and another delegate from the United States was the Dean of Barnard College, Virginia Gildersleeve. We students were very proud that she had been selected for this honor and began to follow news of this nascent organization. Another delegate was Grayson Kirk, later to become President of Columbia University. I immediately registered for a doctoral-level course in international diplomacy, which he gave at Columbia in a summer session in 1945.

Across the street at Barnard was Dean Gildersleeve in her campus apartment with those senior students who headed the political council, the international relations club, and student government. We savored

her informal behind-the-scenes explanations of the formation of government policy and international diplomacy. She also explained to us that the educators in the US delegation to the San Francisco conference were also concerned that the United States, not having been a member of the League of Nations, lacked trained personnel from that organization to help form the new United Nations. They therefore asked the Secretary-General designate, Trygve Lie of Norway, to create an intern program similar to the one existing in the American government in Washington. His designated Executive Assistant, Andrew Courtier of the University of Indiana, conveyed Mr. Lie's agreement and assured the educators that the United Nations interns would become a reality when the General Assembly met in New York in September 1946. Dean Gildersleeve sent 30 interested students by subway to the temporary quarters of the UN at Hunter (later Lehman) College in the Bronx where we were interviewed by UN personnel and three of us were selected to participate. I was excited about being one of them.

Just as the moving vans had deposited the last pieces of furniture from Hunter College in the Bronx to the UN's new home in the Sperry Gyroscope factory at Lake Success on Long Island, I arrived for what I expected to be the intern program. I took the oath of office as an International Civil Servant who neither accepted instructions from nor reported to any of the Member States of the United Nations Organization, which then numbered 44 countries. The International Civil Service was and is anonymous, with statements and authorships issued in the name of the Secretary-General.

Thus began my new career, which lasted for 38 years. I could not have dreamed of the changes that occurred in my life. I had arrived at Lake Success on Friday, the 13th of September, 1946. My career began at the bottom rung of the General Service ladder with a salary of \$2,190 a year; I was fortunate to live at home.

As soon as the UN moved to its Lake Success offices, thousands of people crowded the premises to see Eleanor Roosevelt, the Security Council, the delegates from the USSR and other notables. The UN Public

Information Department coped with tons of mail as well as hordes of visitors, and I was assigned to Visitor Services as secretary to the Director. He was an American educator whom I respectfully called Dr. Agar, and much later, Bill. He had three daughters about my age (22) and a son and I was fortunate to have his guidance. The fact that I didn't know stenography didn't matter because I could type and he would simply tell me the gist of what to say and I would compose all but the most important letters. Then we developed form letters to answer the bulk of the inquiries.

It was, however, the direct dealings with thousands of visitors that fascinated me. Dr. Agar organized three sections: one to disseminate basic information about the UN; a second to work with NGOs, and a third to work with schools, colleges and universities on educating students about the UN. It was all very heady, from assisting Dr. Agar in planning programs for VIP visitors to seminars for editors from every major American city, the Canadian and U.S. defense colleges and opinion makers from Germany and Japan in the late 1940s.

I worked with energy and zeal and loved every minute, never thinking of how to advance from General Service to a Professional classification. It was the Canadian Ambassador to the UN who told me that I was in a dead-end job; no promotion was available because there was no international budget for a higher post in the Visitor Services.

After that initial assignment of five years in the Department of Public Information, I moved successively to a tour of duty of seven months in Turkey in the Technical Assistance Administration (then the Department of Economic and Social Affairs); one year as Personal Assistant to the Under Secretary-General for Political and Security Council Affairs; and two years as Assistant Regional Representative of the UNDP in East and Central Africa, stationed in Dar es Salam, Tanganyika (later to become Tanzania), and then Nairobi, Kenya.

The Technical Assistance Administration of the United Nations sent me on my first overseas mission to Ankara, Turkey in 1950. It was also the first time that the UN had a Technical Assistance project in that country. I carried the United Nations flag, neatly folded in my

suitcase. I was to be the Administrative Assistant at a training institute on the appraisal of development projects in the agricultural sector. The assignment would take place over a three-month period at the University in the capital city, Ankara. My assignment would last seven months and include preparation for and assisting the workshop, five field trips within Turkey; and preparation of the final report. Participants were Economists, Agricultural Directors, Meteorologists, Irrigation Specialists and a Turkish Government Official, (head of the National Statistical Office) who was director of the project, jointly sponsored by the UN, the World Bank and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN and authorships issued in the name of-the Secretary-General.

Specialists from these agencies comprised the faculty. Lectures were conducted in English, French, German and Turkish, and interpreters were supplied by the three sponsors. I was responsible for documentation. UN, World Bank and FAO multi-lingual stenographers and typists produced hard copies of the lectures within 48 hours of their delivery; documents were mimeographed and pages collated and stapled by Turkish men who served as general helpers and "tea boys."

At the end of a seven-month assignment in Turkey, where I had enjoyed the satisfaction of a professional rank and a special post allowance at the P-I level, I returned to New York and was happily at home showing hundreds of slides and telling of my rich experiences. It was a big disappointment, however, to find that Personnel had returned me to my original General Service classification. I realized that I must make formal application for the first available established post at the Professional level and then begin climbing that ladder. Accordingly, as soon as a vacancy notice was tacked on all bulletin boards, containing the job description for an assistant to the Under Secretary-General for Political and Security Council affairs, I immediately submitted a written application for the position, was interviewed, accepted and appointed. I was relieved and satisfied, but the assignment did not live up to my expectations since I was expected to be a glorified secretary, serving at my boss's beck and call rather than having professional responsibilities, nor did the post provide scope for any creative thought. I missed the technical assistance work and the stimulus

of officers of several nationalities and accordingly requested a transfer. Personnel promised one but only after the current agenda of the Security Council had been accomplished.

That was the year of the Suez and Hungary questions. I remember arriving at the office one Friday carrying an overnight bag for a weekend trip; instead, I spent most of that weekend in the office during round-the-clock meetings of the Security Council, where I was on call to meet the needs of the USG. I remember encountering US Ambassador Cabot Lodge as we both looked at a large clock pointing to 5:00 a.m.! While I was returned to the technical assistance administration, during the course of the previous months I had given serious thought to leaving the United Nations in favor of employment in the American government or in an NGO devoted to international matters. Another serious possibility was to take a leave of absence and get a master's degree, which would facilitate my upward climb on the professional ladder at the UN. As I continued my exploration, I increasingly realized that I had moved on from thinking nationally to thinking internationally and that I should strive to enhance my career at United Nations Headquarters and with UNDP elsewhere in the world.

During a 12-month unpaid leave of absence from the UN, I studied at the Institute of Public Affairs in the Public Science Department of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. I had good introductions from UN friends to some faculty members in Ann Arbor and in my second semester the head of the Public Administration program offered me the opportunity of producing an annotated bibliography of the university's materials on patterns of administration in France, Germany and the UK which the professor would use in a new course in Comparative Public Administration. This I did in lieu of a thesis, and the work was published by the University.

I went back to UN Headquarters and my old job. The absence had cost me personally about \$10,000, but it was money well spent. I gave thought to continuing studies toward a PhD in political science and was accepted by New York University. I attended two classes, at which point UNDP offered me a field assignment of two years in East Africa. This was a lure I could not refuse. So, I became an academic dropout and never did get that PhD.

Because I was Officer-in-Charge for the first ten months of my assignment in East Africa, I took only one day's holiday during that period. I worked in the office Monday through Friday, interspersed with flying visits to Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar, and on Sundays went to the post office to collect the diplomatic pouches from New York Headquarters, UNESCO, ILO, and FAO, and proceeded to the office to open the bags and sort the mail by priority; I dictated replies on my portable Dictaphone. But if the correspondence necessitated research, it went into a different pile of papers to be processed on Monday. Despite this routine, I was able to enjoy a few respites.

A sundowner was the principal form of entertainment in Tanganyika in 1960, and indeed, later on after independence. It was a cocktail party held at the first hour of the day that hard liquor would be served. One memorable sundowner was at a house at the edge of the European residential area. I arrived early and parked my little car in the garage so as to leave space in the driveway for later arrivals. At the end of the two-hour party, I went alone to my car in the garage and turned on the ignition and lights. Something moved against the wheels in front of me and I discerned an enormous Mamba, one of the deadliest of snakes. The fat body appeared to be mottled yellow in color, stretched the entire width of the garage and made a hairpin turn around to the other side. I shut the ignition, peeled out of the car, ran out of the garage slamming the doors and returned to the house to tell my hosts about the Mamba. My hosts blanched and telephoned the police, who said they had no means of getting rid of it and instructed us to telephone the Wildlife Department. There, we roused a night guard who sounded incredulous but responded quickly, sending a pickup truck with a driver and two park rangers each armed with a shotgun. I stayed in the house. After conferring, they backed my car out, slammed the garage door shut and shot the snake through a crack in it. Once they were sure the Mamba was dead, the two rangers hauled its body out, put it in their truck and drove off. I never again attended a sundowner at that edge of town.

In the late 1960s, I was assigned to Iran as Deputy Representative of UNDP, based in Tehran. As in several countries in the Middle East, Iran had suffered from a shortage of water on many of its farmlands. Consequently, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO) had been called upon to provide

technical assistance for arid zone farming. During my assignment in Iran, Ari, an Israeli specialist, was advising his counterpart in a region north of Tehran. Ari felt that the Iranian agriculturalist would profit from seeing first-hand what was being done in Israel and FAO concurred. Arrangements were made for a two-week fellowship, which would include on-site visits throughout the country. I requested permission to take annual leave for one week and join Ari and the Iranian agriculturalist. Of course, I paid my own expenses. It was a wonderful week for me, since I got to see much of the country, and spent three days living on a Kibbutz.

For centuries, Iranian silkworms have chewed the luscious berries and leaves of luxuriant Persian mulberry trees. The silk they've spun has formed heavy and lightweight silk textiles, often fashioned, for example, into lovely scarves. During my tenure, the Government wished to strengthen the silkworm producers by introducing Japanese silkworms into Iran. A UNDP-supported project was designed and financed, and we anticipated the arrival of a senior advisor, a technician and the Japanese silkworms.

One day, I received a telephone call from customs and immigration reporting the arrival of a Japanese man clutching a small wooden box, which he refused to relinquish or open. Did he belong to UNDP and if so, who was he and could I get him to open the box for inspection? I said I would reply within the hour and would go to the airport. Meanwhile, I polled the diplomatic colony in search of a Japanese person; the only one I could find was a gardener. I picked him up and we went to the airport as quickly as possible.

The gardener reassured the custodian of the wooden box and customs and immigration were informed that it contained silkworms as part of an officially requested UNDP project. The box was not opened, but government officials were satisfied and the Japanese man was admitted to the country. The gardener was profusely thanked and returned to his duties. Immediately, I cabled UNDP headquarters and copied the Japanese government to report the arrival of the silkworms but the absence of the senior English-speaking advisor without whom the project could not commence. Within hours, a cable replied that the technical advisor had missed airline connections but would arrive in Tehran within the next two days. He came the next day and the project began in

earnest. The silkworms gorged themselves on Iranian mulberries, and in due course, the resultant silk was manufactured into lovely fabrics.

In the late 1960s, on my return from Iran to the UN Secretariat, my next assignment resulted in the project that I most enjoyed, and which is still flourishing. My legacy? Yes! The project began over a sandwich lunch at the desk of Julia Henderson, Director of the UN Technical Assistance Division. Miss Henderson said that the American Peace Corps was very successful in its global activities and that she believed that the idea could be broadened; an international corps of young people could be created under the UN flag to augment the work of senior technical experts and further the development goals of many countries. She wanted me to design such a corps and to draft a proposal in the form of a report of the UN Secretary-General. It should include cost estimates, budgets, and provisions for training.

I relished the idea, began the necessary research, consulted with Peace Corps officials and talked to similar groups in European capitals. After a week in The Hague with European directors, I traveled to Varna in Bulgaria to meet representatives of NGO voluntary organizations, which sent volunteers to work in many developing countries. It was fascinating to me to be at the hub of all discussions as the proposal progressed through the legislative machinery of the UNDP Governing Council, the Economic and Social Council and finally the UN General Assembly, where the Government of Iran submitted the resolution, which was then adopted with only one abstention – that of the USSR. Responsibility was given to UNDP, which situated UNV in Geneva (later transferred to Bonn).

The idea was that the volunteers could go to a country only upon that nation's request and that they might be individually assigned to assist senior technical personnel in small groups as wished by the requesting host Government. The UN International Corps of Volunteers was to be administered by UNDP as a UN entity comprised of the United Nations and its approximately 15 specialized agencies. UNV became operational on 1 January 1970. Now it is active in 130 countries worldwide. Am I proud? Yes!

Jane Weidlund
AFICS/NY member

THE INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVICE REVISITED



Amidst profound misery, untimely deaths and widespread economic downturns attributable to the Covid-19 virus, the United Nations International Civil Service – particularly in carrying out its functions in the humanitarian, human rights, and economic sectors – has demonstrated its usefulness and importance to the international community at large. Whether working at Headquarters in New York or in the operational locations in many countries, international civil servants continue to carry out their heavy responsibilities in the service of humanity. It is in this sense that we can say that the International Civil Service has clearly demonstrated its indispensability to the global commons.

Nevertheless, critics argue that the International Civil Service remains on life support. It is fair to say that we now have sufficient information to counter the canard that the International Civil Service breeds what is often disparagingly called “dead wood”. Far from it. It is hard to imagine what kind of a world we would find ourselves without the dedication of UN international civil servants.

At the same time, it would be wrong to deny that there are problems facing the International Civil Service that

should be urgently tackled. Attention has been brought in the past to various efforts by governments to weaken the foundations of the International Civil Service. With the revival of the service after the demise of the League of Nations by 1945, the founding fathers of the United Nations spared no effort to ensure that the International Civil Service was placed on firmer ground within the Charter of the United Nations. The then Soviet Union and its allies within the socialist camp made clear that they had no faith in the notion of an International Civil Service. To them, it was far-fetched that any individual could be neutral or impartial on a number of burning international issues. Specifically, when the Soviet Premier, Nikita Khrushchev, raised the same issue specifically during the Congo crises (1960-1964), Dag Hammarskjöld, the second Secretary-General of the United Nations (1953-1961), in his last official address at Oxford University in England, underlined that, while it may be true that no individual could be neutral on moral issues, international civil servants are obligated to carry out their duties impartially.

Moscow therefore rejected outright the concept of a career Civil Service with permanent contracts. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of UN Member States embraced both the independence and international character of the International Civil Service. It was only at the end of the cold war by 1990 that a surprising development emerged when some Western countries – which had been the main backers of an Independent Civil Service – began to wobble on this issue. This unexpected development has become the bane to a healthy International Civil Service. Certain developments have caused consternation among many staff members of the New York-based UN Secretariat who had envisaged that they were joining a Secretariat modelled along Dag Hammarskjöld’s ideas.

The most noticeable development was the setting aside of the very wise plan introduced by Dag Hammarskjöld. In his reform plan of 1954, he criticized the so-called “Gentlemen’s Agreement of London” which assigned major departments of the Secretariat

to the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: China, France, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States. He further argued that, with the permanent members having such sway in the Security Council, they should not play such a dominant role in the Secretariat.

Hammarskjöld therefore removed all nationals of permanent member nations of the Security Council from these key posts and placed nationals of middle-sized and small states in the key departments of the Secretariat. That very formulation by Dag Hammarskjöld enabled the Secretariat to function effectively. Most regrettably, Hammarskjöld's idea was changed during the administration of UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan (1997-2006), and remains in force to this day. Now, the UN departments of Political Affairs, Peacekeeping, and Humanitarian Affairs are occupied respectively by nationals of the United States, France, and Britain. Sadly, these posts are widely seen as "owned" by these three States, a very regrettable development that contradicts the international character of the International Civil Service as envisaged by Hammarskjöld.

This particular development has now convinced many staff members that the International Civil Service has been weakened beyond recognition. Some have argued that this is a case of naked realpolitik, and that there is no change in sight.

In truth, this may well remain the case as long as those willing to become Secretary-General of the United Nations will continue to campaign for the job. The position of Secretary-General should, however, not be compared to a politician seeking office within a Member State. By campaigning for the office, particularly in

seeking the support of permanent members of the UN Security Council, such candidates weaken themselves. One cannot blame permanent members, whose veto can make or break any prospective candidate from making political demands on them. This is why it is vitally important to make changes to the process of electing the UN Secretary-General.

Unfortunately, there remains the wrong perception that two of the greatest model international civil servants – Dr. Ralph Bunche of the United States and Sir Brian Urquhart of the United Kingdom – who during their service with the United Nations were heads of a key Political and Security Office at the USG level on the 38th floor of the UN Secretariat building, were assigned to the Secretariat by their respective governments. Far from it, those two staff members were bona fide and exemplary international civil servants.

In addition to the above developments, putative reforms in recent years have produced what should be called a distortion of the career service of the International Civil Service. There is now a tendency to equate the International Civil Service to private corporations, ignoring the special provisions stated in the UN Charter about the uniqueness of the International Civil Service. In doing so, few staff members can understand what constitutes career service within the Secretariat. This confusion has fostered a profound lack of commitment to the UN Charter among its hundreds of thousands of staff scattered around the globe.

James O. C. Jonah

former Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs

To the extent possible, AFICS/NY should become involved in current issues on the UN agenda. Many of our members spent their whole careers working on UN issues — the old, the recurrent or the newly emerging ones. Retirees are knowledgeable on these matters and remain committed to their resolution. Retirees can serve as good advocates, if engaged.

– Ed Omotoso, AFICS President, 2008 - 2010

Pakistan Association for International Civil Servants (PAFICS)

May 2021 marks the 50th anniversary of AFICS/NY. On this auspicious occasion, please allow me to extend, on behalf of the Pakistan Association of International Civil Servants (PAFICS), our warmest congratulations and sincere gratitude to AFICS/NY.

Over these past many years since its establishment in 1970, AFICS/NY has played a supportive role and it is hoped that in the future, too, AFICS will continue to work closely with its member associations to meet the needs and serve the interests of UN retirees, both national and international.

With sincere wishes,

Shahida Fazil

*President, Pakistan Association for International Civil Servants (PAFICS)
Islamabad*

THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ADVANCING AFICS/NY

Women have joined AFICS/NY in increasing numbers over the years and have frequently held key positions that have furthered AFICS/NY aims and impact.

It is worthy of note that from a small number in the initial stages of the Association, women have become a very meaningful driving force of its membership. For example, out of the first 20 signatories who on 16 December 1969 signed the appeal calling for the establishment of the Association, seven were women: Anne Goder, Marie-Christine Hellin, Maria Huntington, Eve Nolan, Marguerite Nowak, Nina Rubinstein and Maria Sa Pererira. Once the Association was founded in May 1970, the first Governing Board had only one woman among its members: Anne Goder, who was elected Secretary of the Governing Board. By December 1970, however, there were 50 women among the first list of members. The majority of them had retired from the UN Secretariat although some were still in service while a number of retirees on the list had worked in other UN organizations. As the years passed and AFICS/NY grew in numbers, there were 1,127 women members out of a total of 2,884 members, or 39 per cent of the membership when the Association celebrated its 25th anniversary in 1995. Moreover, by 2019, the count had increased to 1,450 women members out of a total of 2,770 or 52 per cent of the total membership of the Association.

Leadership positions of most of the AFICS Committees remain in female hands but the two most important, pension and insurance, have been firmly controlled by competent men. There are, of course, women who can serve in these positions and a conscious effort needs to be made to that end. The time has come as we mark our 50th anniversary to think of equity as an integral part of what we practice in AFICS – we should follow the strategic approach of the current Secretary-General in appointing equal numbers of women at senior levels. Yes, we are retired but achieving equity in every aspect of our lives is still an issue and one we must address as we move forward. Our history shows that while many women colleagues have served as Vice-Presidents of the Governing Board, only three have occupied the presidency out of a total of 16 Presidents in the more than half century of the Association's existence: Margaret Bruce (1982-1985); Patricia K. Tsien (1985-1988); and Linda Saputelli (2010-2016).



Margaret Bruce



Patricia K. Tsien



Linda Saputelli

50TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE ADOPTION OF THE UNIVERSAL DECLARATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

On behalf of FAFICS, AFICS/NY dedicated a plaque to be placed at the foot of the Eleanor Roosevelt Monument at the United Nations gardens to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted on 10 December 1948. The ceremony was organized by Margaret Bruce, former AFICS/NY and FAFICS President, who had also worked alongside Eleanor Roosevelt. Unfortunately, inclement weather curtailed the outdoor event, which had to be moved inside. The ceremony was the inspiration of Margaret Bruce and Virginia Saurwein, Co-Chair with Andrés Castellanos del Corral of the AFICS/NY Committee on NGO Relations and Information, who took care of the arrangements. Then AFICS/NY and FAFICS President George Saddler strongly supported the initiative, thus ensuring ample organizational reception to obtain official consent for the plaque and its location. The symbolic unveiling took place at the General Assembly Hall with addresses by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, George Saddler and Rosemary Waters, President of the United Nations Staff Union.



An anniversary is a momentous occasion. It recognizes the past, gives credence to what we are doing now and of course looks forward, in hopes that we have laid the groundwork so that the association can continue to work effectively for its membership. It is past, present and future combined. Right now, the present is important, but we will only be here for a few years; and I think what we do now will remain important for the UN retiree community in the future.

– John Dietz, AFICS President 2016 – present

ACTIVITIES

AGEING SMART COMMITTEE

AFICS/NY has been providing valuable and varied services to former UN system staff members for 50 years now. Along with the all-important Insurance and Pension Committees, which look after the prime entitlement interests of retirees, the Ageing Smart Committee has evolved, and has been addressing the many issues of concern to an ageing population. As a member of the NGO Committee on Ageing, we follow along and lend support to global issues of concern with the elderly population – Ageism, Equal Rights, Accessibility, Safety and Security among the most recent ones. Over the years, the Committee has organized in-person seminars on various topics based on member requests or on topical issues in the news, and more recently, has been able to broadcast these events live to a worldwide audience, and make the recordings of the presentations available after the event on our website, allowing members to revisit these informational sessions at their leisure and to share them with family and friends. During 2020, we resorted to using a virtu-

al format to present a number of live yoga sessions to the membership. We have also endeavoured to assist individual members with specific problems/concerns where we are able, by directing them to the relevant resources that might be available to them. Our website has been updated to broadcast articles and events of interest, as well as to share links to resources of particular interest.

Many UN system retirees enjoy long years of retirement, often splitting their time between their home country and their adopted working country where they have raised families and have put down roots, and this creates unique challenges and concerns, although the archives will show that the topics of concern remain largely the same, falling into the broad categories of housing, health/wellness, lifestyle and transitional issues. Special presentations over the years have included the following:

Housing

Retirement communities
Safety/Security
Transportation

Health/Wellness

Rehabilitation
Diet/Healthy Eating/Nutrition
Ageing Smart in NYC
Joint Health – available online
Brain Health – available online
Live Yoga sessions for stress, immunity,
balance – available online

Lifestyle issues

Volunteering
Travel
Essential Skills
Adding Life to Years,
Not Years to Life

Transitional issues

Women in Crisis
Transition Workshop
Stuff – What to Keep and What to Drop
Estate Planning
Financial Organizing for Now and Later



With a growing worldwide elderly population has come a global awareness of the issues facing the elderly, and we intend to continue to follow these matters closely and to share insights into this topic with our members for many years to come.

In this Anniversary Bulletin, you will also find an article by Dr Sudurshan Narula on healthy ageing and coping with change.

Mac Chiulli
Chair

My article, [Rejecting Ageism and Supporting the Human Rights of Seniors](#), which appeared in the 2011 Volume of the UN Chronicle (Volume 48, Issue 4) advanced the notion of the Association's role in the future agenda of the UN as being intrinsically related to a core mission, which is to support the needs and rights of seniors.

– Linda Saputelli, AFICS President 2010 - 2016

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Communication for AFICS/NY has changed dramatically over the history of the Association, from 1970 when we had mainly paper-based communications until now in 2020 with mainly electronic-based, along with telephone calls and visits to the AFICS/NY office in the DC1 building (except not the latter in times of pandemics). The Association has made quantum leaps from the time when the main forms of communication were using manual typewriters, telephone communications, printing and mass mailings to members, including the quarterly Bulletins, and visits to the AFICS/NY office to the present, when we have information readily available on the website and send emails to improve communications and social interaction among members. We always keep in mind that our members have varied information technology skills so there is always a balance to ensure we are inclusive and that all our members (technically savvy or not) can readily access the information they need.

The Bulletin has changed from being put together in a manual fashion (photos, articles, important information collated) and then being printed with assistance from the UN Print Shop, which has not existed for many years, to being put together online by Mary Lynn Hanley, who has worked diligently and quietly on producing the Bulletins throughout the years.

The current AFICS/NY website uses UN technology and allows easy access to information on issues of importance to members: health insurance, pension, social activities and events. We can thus provide faster and more frequent communications with members. We do of course communicate readily by email but, as of now, still vote using mass mailings and mail Bulletins to those who cannot access them online. What is most important when rolling out technology is to ensure that it is user-friendly to reach the broadest community of members. We cannot just think of the latest technology and what the tech savvy Millennials are using but how best to communicate easily with all our members. However, all the younger generations these days are technically savvy to varying degrees.

Some similar associations use other social media tools such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter and others, but AFICS/NY most recently focused on upgrading the website using current technology, as all these tools take time and effort to manage and maintain. Technology is always changing, and it is important to remain current. We are definitely in the information age, when communication has become instant, which is great but also takes considerable effort. Social media can be used well but also abused as many of us have witnessed in recent world events. We look at providing information to members in the best possible way, and AFICS/NY is always looking for members to help and get involved; so, if you are interested in social media, IT or are a communications expert, or have some good ideas, there is always a need for your input and help.

We have all had to navigate in this difficult time of COVID-19 since 2020, and the Governing Board (whose ages vary) has become proficient in holding its Governing Board meetings online on MS Teams, which again is the technology used by the UN and from which AFICS/NY benefits. This has helped us to continue to meet and discuss issues of importance to our members relating in particular to pensions and health insurance. The Ageing Smart Committee has also held online activities, such as yoga, to help to us relax during this unprecedented time in the world.

As we look back on the past 50 years, let us also look forward to what we can accomplish together in the years to come.

Joan W. McDonald
Chair

The Association of Retired International Civil Servants in Austria (ARICSA)

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of your founding, ARICSA congratulates you for having helped retirees of the United Nations system for half a century. We, as volunteers in many AFICS organizations, have all been blessed with many opportunities to work together, protecting the rights and benefits of our members through negotiation, collaboration and increased mutual understanding. We in ARICSA look forward to many more years of cooperation to face the emerging challenges and to serve the growing number of retirees. Congratulations on your anniversary!

SOCIAL AND OTHER EVENTS COMMITTEE



The Social Committee is the glue that continues to keep us all together. Over the years, we have experienced many interesting, exciting events with colleagues, families and friends.



Our traditional biannual luncheons brought us to many fine restaurants, where we experienced many delicious, exotic cuisines while enjoying the camaraderie of colleagues. Some of the international foods we have shared together over the years are as follows: American, Chinese, Cuban, Indian, Italian, Japanese, Mexican, Middle Eastern, Myanmar, and many more. Our biannual

luncheons are always well attended and are enjoyed by all.

The Social Committee also plans our reception after the Annual Assembly, and other occasional special events and excursions throughout the year, such as boat cruises around New York City, bus trips, book signings, jazz concerts, outings to botanical gardens, holiday parties, new membership mix-and-mingle, receptions, etc. All have been highly successful. The Social Committee provides an atmosphere to reminisce over our years together and share wonderful memories as we continue to share many new experiences along the way at varied social events. So, let us continue our fine dining and good times.

In 2018 the Social Committee organized a three-night outing to Lake George in the Adirondack Mountains of New York, with a stop for lunch in Saratoga Springs on the way back. Blessed with good weather, the small group

of participants went hiking, was entertained at a luncheon cruise on Lake George, visited the Sagamore Resort, dined at The Inn at Erlowest, and enjoyed kayaking, swimming, and sunbathing at the lakeshore Bed & Breakfast. Lunch in Saratoga Springs at the refurbished landmark Adelphi Hotel on a sunny afternoon at award-winning Chef David Burke's Salt & Char was enjoyed by all.



Another well-attended outing in February 2019 was lunch at La Bonne Soupe followed by a visit to the Museum of Modern Art in Midtown Manhattan. As UN retirees, the group was granted free access and spent a relaxing afternoon appreciating the artwork. Lunch at Sachi near the UN, in August 2019,





had a good turnout. The food of the Asian fusion restaurant was familiar to our members and the service was attentive and courteous.



In August 2020 during the pandemic, in collaboration with the Ageing Smart Committee, Ms. Leigh Hallingby, a licensed New York City Tour Guide, gave our members a virtual guided tour of the Audubon Bird Mural Project on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. The webinar on Zoom was a huge success,



followed by an informative Q&A session. During the pandemic, invitations from the United Nations Staff Recreation Council Chamber Music Society for several of their



concerts broadcast on UN Web TV were posted on the AFICS Website www.un.org/other/afics by the Social Committee. In case you missed them, recordings are available on UN Web TV.



We look forward to better times in the not-too-distant future and to getting together again at some fun social events. In the meantime, do let us know if you would like to help out as a volunteer on the Social Committee by sending an email to susandesouza@hotmail.com.



Barbara Linardo and Susan deSouza,
Co-chairs

AFICS is where new members find other people who have had the same remarkably peculiar career experience and can understand better than anyone else what our life's work is worth. Its Social Committee events are wonderful for making new friendships, especially with people who served in other Organizations or duty stations.

*– O. Richard Nottidge
AFICS President 2001 - 2003*

For those who are AFICS/NY members, the most important message that I can convey is: Get involved in AFICS Committee activities; offer your acquired experience and knowledge. To those about to retire, AFICS/NY will bring you joy in teaming up with former colleagues, making new friends, irrespective of provenance, former employment level or grade.

*– Andrés Castellanos del Corral
AFICS President, 2003 - 2008*

ASOCIACION DE FUNCIONARIOS INTERNACIONALES JUBILADOS EN ESPAÑA

Congratulatory Message to AFICS at 50

On the occasion of the celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the founding of AFICS NY, the Board of Directors of AFIJUB-Spain would like to present our most enthusiastic congratulations for the successes achieved by AFICS NY, during its first half century of existence.

Since the AFICS NY headquarters in New York was established in 1970, we know that this institution has worked insistently in order to protect and defend the rights and interests of its members and all other retirees in need, in particular on taxation, pensions, health care, social and cultural activities, etc., as well as any other topic of interest to the retired international officials of the UN System, members or not of your Association.

On the other hand, the great achievements of AFICS NY, without a doubt, are due in part to the great leaders who, for five decades, have managed with great success the different matters related to the Association. Some of them of great universal importance, such as Ms. Margaret Bruce, the first woman who presided AFICS NY, or Patricia Tsien, George Saddler, Richard Nottidge, Andrés Castellanos and Linda Saputelli, each of them with a remarkable legacy for the benefit of the retiree community. And even though not Presidents, we recognize members of your Association, like Diana Boernstein and Jane Weidlund, with remarkable contributions, just to cite a few.

Indeed there is much to celebrate on the contribution of AFICS NY over half a century, including its contribution to the rest of the worldwide community of former international civil servants, with the founding of FAFICS jointly with two other Associations in 1975 and its continued support to the Federation, for the retirees to have the necessary collective voice for the protection of their rights before the Pension Board and other legislative bodies.

AFIJUB-Spain was founded in 2014 with about 50 members. In these first 5 years of existence, the Association, closely following the achievements of other associations, such as AFICS NY, has been creating spaces for advice on taxation, establishing residence in Spain, problems related to health, such as the situation created with the current pandemic, etc. After the first 5 years of existence, our Association currently has more than 300 members.

On this important occasion, we wish AFICS NY current Board of Directors and its President Mr. John P. Dietz that the next 50 years it continues to be as effective and indispensable, as it is today.

Ángel Escudero de Paz

*President, on behalf of the Board of Directors of AFIJUB
Spain*

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE



The strategic objectives of the Membership Committee are to attract new members and retain existing members in our unique community of international civil servants with shared cultural diversity, ideals and continued common links to the work of the United Nations system.

These objectives are achieved through a variety of deliverables including: (a) outreach to retirees or soon-to-be retired staff at the UN Secretariat as well as in the UN organizations; (b) social activities including member mix-and-mingles (co-sponsored with the hospitality committee); (c) attendance at pre-retirement seminars, staff days and any special events held at the UN; and (d) publication of the ever-popular Directory of Members.

In the last two years, we have had two notable achievements of which we are particularly proud. The first was our outreach in 2019 to the Pension Fund, which resulted in the Fund sending a letter, on our behalf, explaining the mission and goals of AFICS and encouraging membership. This led to a substantial increase in membership of 82 new members from a wide range of UN organizations and increased the volume of visits to the AFICS/NY website. A second accomplishment was the publication of the updated Directory of Membership on 30 April 2019, which involved reaching out to each AFICS/NY member to update their contact information and to ascertain their continued interest in being listed in the Directory.

Unfortunately, COVID-19 has placed considerable challenges on all of us. For AFICS/NY members, who particularly enjoy the social activities, it has been a rather difficult time. Some activities, such as those

done by the ageing smart committee, have been replaced by Zoom meetings, but the member mix-and-mingles are not feasible at this time. This makes it a bit more difficult to integrate existing annual members or to better target current staff due to retire. Another challenge is reaching out to members who do not have email.

The two co-chairs of the Membership Committee are Dr. Sudershan Narula and Ms. Nancy Raphael. Nancy joined AFICS in 2014 upon her retirement from a long career with UNICEF and UNAIDS within the field of human resources. Specifically, she was looking to make new friends and acquaint herself with former friends and colleagues following 11 years overseas, as well as to continue to contribute to a cause she loves with others who share her passion for making the world a better place for all. Sudershan Narula joined in 2008 to cope with her retirement as she needed a structure, a routine, a purpose, and she is a people person. Getting involved with the activities of AFICS/NY gave her the structure and community that she was seeking.

Membership in AFICS affords a wide range of activities, from participating in our social events, learning activities, seminars on ageing gracefully, volunteering on any of our six standing committees, and a wonderful opportunity to be a part of the AFICS/NY Governing Board, where you will be able to make a substantive contribution to issues of concern for all retirees.

Please look out for the “Call for Candidates”, usually sent out during the month of February every year, for six open positions on the Governing Board and submit your candidacy if you are interested.

We do hope to have the opportunity to welcome even more members in the coming months. We welcome new retirees with new ideas to both continue and improve upon what we have achieved so far. You are our future, and we are stronger together.

Dr. Sudershan Narula/Nancy Raphael
Membership Committee Co-Chairs

Note from the editors: The following four feature articles deal with issues of overriding importance for members of AFICS/NY: the first three provide in-depth history and remarks for two AFICS committees (the Health Insurance Committee and the Pension Committee) while the fourth expands on the remarks above from the Ageing Smart Committee.

HEALTH INSURANCE COMMITTEE

ASHI: A Historical Perspective

After the establishment of the United Nations on 24 October 1945, staff members were offered the Health Insurance Plan of Greater New York (HIP). In 1946, the UN offered a Hospitalization and Surgical Benefits plan with the Associated Hospital Service, New York's Blue Cross Plan. The combined premium for both plans for a single person was \$3.16 a month and for a couple with maternity benefits it was \$6.98 a month. In December 1946, the General Assembly agreed to a small subsidy, namely "that portion of the plan which exceeds one per cent of the base salary in the case of a staff member earning \$5,000 (US) or less per annum, and two per cent of the base salary in the case of a staff member earning more than \$5,000 (US)".

In the late fifties, the wife of Freddie Friedgut, who many years later after retirement became the President of AFICS from 1991-1994, faced a health problem. She had a rather interesting blood disease that got her into the textbooks but was bad for Freddie financially. He brought it to the attention of the then Director of Personnel and explained that he was paying out each week in doctor's bills more than his monthly salary. This eventually resulted in the UN adding a major medical scheme, insured by the Aetna Life Insurance Company, to supplement coverage provided by the base medical and hospital schemes. Staff members had a choice of either the HIP or the United Medical Service (later known as Blue Shield) base medical scheme, which provided physician coverage, and in both cases staff members were also covered by the Blue Cross Associated Hospital Service, and the Aetna Major Medical scheme. By 1960, the premiums for these were under \$8 a month for a single person, \$15 for two and just over \$22 for family coverage. In 1957, the General Assembly decided that the costs of health insurance should be financed on the basis of an

approximately equal sharing of the overall costs by the participating staff and the organization, subject to the provision that a larger measure of assistance would be granted to staff in the lower salary levels.

By that time, the UN had also introduced a dental scheme. The premiums in 1960 were \$1.65 for a single staff member, \$3.30 for two persons and \$6 per month for family coverage.

By 1962, if not earlier, there was provision for the payment of medical expenses for locally recruited staff at duty stations at which the Secretary-General considered there was no other coverage available. The coverage did not require the locally recruited staff to make any financial contribution but paid only 70 per cent of bills for medical, dental and drugs.

In 1967, the UN introduced the after-service health insurance (ASHI) scheme. Retirees were then covered for the first time. Initially, they paid the same premium as the staff who received in salary what they received in pension but in 1974 it was agreed that the retirees would pay only half as much. The principle was that you pay more when in active service to get a break when you retire.

By 1970, the staff had become increasingly unhappy with the service provided by the United Medical Service (Blue Shield) and it was replaced by Aetna for the base medical plan as of 1 January 1971. An important change introduced at the same time was that all female staff members, wives and female children would be eligible for maternity benefits in hospital. Before that, hospital maternity benefits were provided only to the wife of a staff member under a family contract.

In 1970, the UN also introduced the Van Breda plan for project experts living and working outside the United States. Medical expenses of family members of the project personnel were also covered under this plan. The plan reimbursed 100 per cent of hospital fees and 80 per cent of reasonable and customary physician charges up to an aggregate annual reimbursement maximum of \$15,000. The premiums for a single person were \$9.20 a month, for two persons \$21.40 and \$32.00 for family coverage. By 1972, major medical elements were added to the plan to limit out-of-pocket costs by covering 80 per cent of the 20 per cent co-pay (thereby covering 96 per cent of costs), the maximum annual reimbursement was increased to \$30,000, and coverage under the plan became more broadly available to staff and retirees who resided in countries other than the United States.

In 1984, the cost of medical services in the United States had risen so much that the General Assembly approved the recommendation of the Secretary-General, as endorsed by the International Civil Service Commission (ICSC), to raise the level of subsidy for health plans in the US from 50 per cent paid by the staff as a whole and 50 per cent by the Organization to 33.33 per cent to be paid by the staff and 66.67 per cent by the Organization. Cost-sharing for plans providing coverage outside the US continued to be on a 50-50 basis.

In 1986, the UN introduced two new health maintenance organizations (HMOs): US Health Care and Kaiser Foundation Health Plan for the Northeast, both for the same premium as HIP. HIP has had its problems but is the only one still with us.

In 1987, the UN introduced a lesser-cost programme provided by Blue Cross, their WrapAround/Plus Preferred Provider Organization, as a lower-cost alternative to the Aetna plan. Participants were encouraged to go to the doctors and pharmacies on their lists. By 1996, this plan was switched to the Blue Choice Preferred Provider Organization (PPO) plan, which was marginally more generous. By 2000, Blue Cross replaced this with their Empire DeLuxe plan. While generally similar to the Blue Choice plan, the Empire DeLuxe plan was more restrictive for out-of-network claims.

The Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC), which was established many years ago, was re-established under the Secretary-General's bulletin ST/SGB/275

in 1994 as a standing advisory body to the Joint Negotiation Committee (JNC) to deal with all matters concerning health and life insurance. The Committee, inter alia, reviews and recommends proposals relating to insurance eligibility rules, plan changes, and premium rates for the annual renewals of medical and dental insurance plans administered by UNHQ. The HLIC consists of a Chairperson designated by the JNC and six members, three nominated by the Secretary-General, and three representing the staff chosen by the staff associations. In recognition of the importance of health and life-insurance benefits for retired staff members, AFICS/NY has observer status on this Committee. Two representatives of AFICS/NY have been actively participating at HLIC meetings representing retirees since the inception of the Committee.

In 1998, the dental plan was changed from Group Health Incorporated (GHI) to Cigna. GHI was fine for those who liked to go to a GHI clinic (there was a GHI clinic opposite the Secretariat building) as there was no co-pay and everything was covered: reimbursement for out-of-network dentists was very limited. Cigna provided a broader network of dentists and included coverage of 90 per cent or 80 per cent or 70 per cent for an out-of-network dentist depending on whether it was for preventive, fillings or crowns or orthodontics services. The maximum annual benefit was \$2,000 per person per year with lifetime maximum of \$2,000 for orthodontic treatment.

By 2001 we had: a "fee-for-service" or "indemnity" plan with Aetna; a PPO plan with Empire Blue Cross, an HMO plan with HIP, a dental PPO with Cigna, and a Worldwide plan with Van Breda (available exclusively to staff and retirees who reside outside the United States). Aetna Open Choice had the most benefits and was the most expensive medical plan, mainly because there were as many retirees in the plan as active staff members.

The costs of ASHI, as shared between retirees and the Organization, have increased considerably since the inception of the programme in 1967, owing to increases in the population of retirees covered and to the increased cost of medical services worldwide. The UN has been funding ASHI costs on a pay-as-you go basis, whereby regular budgets include funds to pay for the subsidized portion of ASHI claims for the budget period without making any provision for the accrued

liability relating to future periods. This is in sharp contrast to the funding of pension benefits, where funding occurs over the work period of staff members to arrive at full funding by the time of their retirement.

Given that ASHI is a lifetime benefit, the associated unfunded accrued liability is substantial. The unfunded accrued liability at 31 December 2001 for the United Nations was estimated at \$1.44 billion.

In 2005, in response to concerns relating to increasing levels of pay-as-you-go costs and unfunded accrued liabilities, the Secretary-General presented his report on liabilities and proposed funding for after-service health benefits(A/60/450). The report indicated the full extent of unfunded liabilities for post-service liabilities in the UN and its funds and programmes, proposed measures that would ensure progress towards fully funding such liabilities, and also proposed cost-containment measures. The General Assembly recognized the end-of-service accrued-benefit liabilities reported by the Secretary-General and requested him to take the necessary steps to disclose those liabilities in the United Nations financial statements. The General Assembly, however, decided to defer its consideration of the remaining proposals made by the Secretary-General in his report, requesting that more information regarding the ASHI programme and the status of the liabilities be submitted in a report at its sixty-first session.

Since the first report in 2005, seven additional reports on managing after-service health insurance were submitted by the Secretary-General to the General Assembly proposing various options for funding accrued ASHI liabilities and reporting on cost-containment measures that have been taken. An additional report is currently scheduled for presentation at the main part of the seventy-sixth session, which will once again propose to begin funding ASHI liabilities as they accrue while staff are in active service.

Ongoing increases in the cost of medical services at rates higher than inflation, combined with a growing population of staff retiring with ASHI benefits and improved mortality rates, have resulted in significant increases in the annual cost of ASHI and the related unfunded ASHI liability which, by 31 December 2019, was reported as \$6.83 billion compared to \$1.44 bil-

lion in 2001. Containing costs has, therefore, been an important part of administering the health plans.

Since 2001, several changes were made to the UN health insurance plans to enhance benefits under the Empire Blue Cross Plan and to keep pace with medical advances and health insurance industry and product changes while also ensuring that measures were implemented to contain costs. The active participation of AFICS in HLIC meetings ensured that the interests and welfare of retirees as well as active staff were taken into consideration when changes were proposed and implemented. Of particular note were the changes made to the Aetna platform in 2009, and the implementation of the requirement for Medicare Part B coverage in 2011.

Sometime after 2001, the Aetna plan was converted to a PPO plan with a large network of doctors, hospitals and pharmacies. In 2009 Aetna presented an alternative Point of Service (POS) platform. Aetna indicated that they have several contracts with the same medical providers depending upon programme type, i.e., HMO, PPO, POS, etc. Their standard POS programme, while restricting some benefits, included arrangements to ensure that the best discount rate for their contracts across all programme types was applied to claims. Following negotiations with Aetna and within the HLIC, a hybrid PPO and POS arrangement was implemented in November 2009 that incorporated the favourable discount rates available through the POS platform without impacting plan benefits provided through the existing PPO. The implementation of the POS platform was completely transparent to participants, i.e., no plan benefit changes were made while claim costs were estimated to be reduced by about \$2 million per year owing to the application of the more favourable discount rates. This was especially relevant for AFICS members given the high percentage of retirees with Aetna coverage.

Coverage under the USA Medicare programme is available to individuals who are 65 years and older and USA citizens or legal permanent residents with five or more years of continuous residence in the United States. Medicare Part A covers hospitalization costs and is free for anyone who has paid Medicare taxes for a minimum of 40 quarters (10 years). Part B, which covers physician and other outpatient med-

ical services, is available by paying a monthly premium (\$148.50 and up for 2021, depending on annual income). The standard premium for Medicare Part B is set each year to cover one quarter of the cost of the programme, with the US Government covering the remaining 75 per cent. When retirees have both Medicare and ASHI coverage, Medicare is considered the primary provider and ASHI is secondary. Claims costs against the UN health plans are, therefore, lower when an individual also has Medicare coverage.

In the years following the inception of the ASHI programme, many retirees voluntarily joined Medicare Part B when eligible and paid the required premium, which ranged from \$12 to \$30 per month in the 1980s. Beginning in the year 2000, premiums began to increase dramatically with retirees who had voluntarily enrolled in Medicare Part B paying \$95 per month per individual by 2010.

Given the lower cost of claims charged against the UN health plans when an ASHI participant has Medicare Part B coverage, the HLIC, at the initiative of AFICS representatives, reviewed the possibility of requiring that all Medicare eligible retirees enrol in Medicare Part B and developed a proposal whereby ASHI participants are reimbursed for the Medicare Part B premium. The provision requiring Medicare B enrolment for all eligible ASHI participants and the related provision for the reimbursement of such premium was implemented effective 1 January 2011. As a result, significant cost containment was achieved without a reduction in benefits and without the financial burden of Medicare B premiums being borne by ASHI participants. At the time, the consulting actuary estimated that the initiative resulted in a reduction of ASHI liabilities by some \$258 million.

Today, we have a hybrid PPO/POS plan with Aetna, a PPO plan with Empire Blue Cross, an HMO plan with HIP, a PPO dental plan with Cigna, and, since the acquisition of VanBreda by Cigna in 2010, a Worldwide health plan with Cigna. While all these plans were initially insured plans managed by insurance carriers, all plans, other than the HIP, are now self-insured by the UN with insurance carriers primarily providing administrative and claims adjudication services. In exchange for an administrative fee, this structure provides the UN with the benefits of the network discounts and medical expertise of Aetna, Blue Cross

and CIGNA without the costs associated with insurer overheads and profit margins. Therefore, it is our collective responsibility to ensure that we all utilize the health insurance plans most efficiently and effectively, bearing in mind that we all pay increased premiums as costs of the medical plans increase.

The benefits provided under the Aetna Open Choice PPO/POS II plan and the Empire Blue Cross plan are now almost identical. The Aetna plan still has additional benefits compared to other plans but is the most expensive, mainly because there are now almost twice as many retirees in the plan as staff members. The ratio is just the opposite in Empire Blue Cross, where active staff outnumber retirees by more than two to one. Even with Medicare as primary coverage, we need more medical treatments, which are generally more costly, so plans with a preponderance of retirees will have higher premiums.

Both the Aetna Open Choice PPO/POS II plan and the Empire Blue Cross plan have excellent, extensive networks of doctors, hospitals and pharmacies. Reimbursement provisions encourage the use of in-network providers by, for example, having in-network primary care physician and specialist co-pays of \$15 and \$20 respectively as opposed to covering 80 per cent of “reasonable and customary” costs of out-of-network doctors after a deductible.

HIP is a Health Maintenance Organization where you have to go to one of their medical centres or to a physician in one of their medical groups. The centre or group acts as a gatekeeper to your medical treatment. It is very limited geographically and has been closed to new enrolments since July 2013. It is basically a New York organization but has a few groups in Florida. There are no deductibles and generally no co-pay except \$5 for drugs.

The UN Worldwide plan, administered by Cigna International Health Benefits, provides reimbursement of reasonable and customary charges of medical, hospital and dental treatment with an aggregate maximum annual reimbursement of \$250,000 per person per calendar year. The plan is available only for staff and retirees who reside outside the United States because the plan does not provide adequate coverage for the US. The limited coverage provided in the US has a yearly deductible of \$5,000 per

person per calendar year or \$15,000 per family per calendar year and requires prior approval for planned hospitalizations and selected outpatient treatments.

The Medical Insurance Plan (MIP) is a plan for locally recruited staff, retirees and their eligible dependants at designated duty stations outside of UN Headquarters. Enrolment in the MIP is automatic for staff and is voluntary for their eligible dependants. It is also voluntary for retirees who meet the eligibility criteria for after-service health insurance coverage. The present Third-party Administrator (TPA) of the plan is Cigna International Health Benefits. Cigna provides administrative services to the UN, which include processing claims, issuing letters of guarantees to medical facilities, negotiating with health care providers for preferential rates and direct payment of expenses, customer service and other related services. The MIP is designed and priced for local use and does not provide worldwide coverage with very few exceptions due to emergencies.

Specifics on coverage, pre-certification/pre-registration requirements and other provisions of all plans can be found on the UN Health Insurance web site: www.un.org/insurance.

What do we pay for all this? The premiums are the same for the whole group with contributions of active staff based on their “medical net” income and contributions of retirees based on their “normal” pension amounts from UNJSPF. Broadly, staff and retirees collectively pay 33.33 per cent and the administration pays 66.67 per cent for the combined groups.

The future

After-service health insurance is one of the most important benefits for retirees. Representatives from AFICS/NY will continue their dedicated efforts to ensure that retiree interests on health insurance matters are well preserved; to actively participate in the Health and Life Insurance Committee (HLIC); and to advocate for excellent health insurance benefits, cost containment measures as appropriate and limited impact on net pensions owing to increased health insurance premiums.

As self-insured plans, the premiums are established based on the forecasted usage of the plan. If overall

insurance costs and utilization increase, obviously the premiums increase; therefore, in order to ensure that future premium increases are kept at a minimum, it is our collective responsibility to minimize overall costs by:

- discussing the potential use of generic medicines with your physician, and using the mail order facility for 90-day supply of maintenance medications;
- using urgent-care facilities instead of emergency room visits for non-emergency medical treatments;
- using recently expanded telemedicine services, where appropriate, as an alternative to a doctor’s visit;
- using in-network providers for all types of medical services.

AFICS/NY will continue to address issues relating to health and life insurance programmes. It will also continue to work closely with the Health and Life Insurance Section (HLIS) in the Secretariat. Please ensure that both your email and physical mailing addresses as well as your current banking information are on file with the Health and Life Insurance Section. Any changes in this information should be sent directly to HLIS via email at ashi@un.org. Based on efforts made by AFICS/NY, in addition to the two staff dedicated to addressing queries from retirees, a dedicated phone line has also been set up with specific times when retirees may call on matters related to health insurance. The number, which is available on our website, is 917-367-9727. Further information on health insurance programmes is available on the UN health insurance website: www.un.org/insurance.

*Based on contributions of Richard Nottidge;
Vera Rajic, Jay Karia and Dr. Sudershan Narula*

The first UN retirees were represented by the staff association. With time, it became clear that the issues of the working staff were very different from the issues of the retirees. Working staff are more interested in salaries, conditions of work. Retirees are interested in pensions, benefits and insurance. When retirees felt their interests could not be served adequately by the staff association, AFICS was created.

– George Saddler, AFICS President 1994 - 2001

Dear AFICS New York colleagues:

On the occasion of your 50th anniversary, I send my warmest regards on behalf of all staff at the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund. Our two organizations have enjoyed a long history of working cooperatively together in the best interests of the retirees and beneficiaries and I fully expect that spirit of cooperation to continue into the future as we look to improve the services we provide. We greatly appreciate the involvement of AFICS/NY in all our modernization efforts.

Happy anniversary! I look forward to meeting you in person once the pandemic is behind us.

Rosemarie McClean

Chief Executive of Pension Administration

PENSION COMMITTEE

UNJSPF: A Brief Summary of Its Evolution

The following is a brief summary of the evolution of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF or Fund) since its inception and, in particular, over the last 50 years, when the retirees began taking a more formal role in pension activities, first through AFICS/NY (founded in 1970) and then through FAFICS (founded in 1975). It also identifies certain issues and trends that AFICS/NY will remain cognizant of as the Fund continues to evolve into the future.

The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund was essentially a mom-and-pop shop at the time of its establishment in 1949. At that time, there were no retirement benefits in payment and the Fund was only beginning to collect contributions from its first active participants. It has grown since that time to become one of the largest and arguably one of the most complex international pension funds in the world. It was ranked recently as the 30th largest US retirement fund in assets and 65th worldwide; more in assets than the Ford Motor Corporation and Bank of America retirement funds.

From no assets at its inception, the Fund has grown to a market value of \$80.8 billion as of 31 December 2020. Contributions are being collected and pension benefits are being paid to individuals working and residing in over 190 countries worldwide. Retirees of the Fund should be cognizant of some basic principles and other general information that should help to ensure peace of mind during the retirement years. First, it is important to understand the governance structure of the Fund.

Governance

The United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund was established in 1949 pursuant to General Assembly resolution 248 III of 7 December 1948. This resolution was aimed at providing retirement, death, disability and other related benefits for participants (and families of participants) of the United Nations and the other organizations admitted to membership in the Fund. As of 31 December 2020, the Fund had 24 member organizations, including the United Nations.

Governance of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund involves three levels:

- (i) United Nations General Assembly, currently composed of over 190 Member States. Any amendments to the UNJSPF Regulations and Rules as well as to the Fund's budgetary provisions must be approved by the General Assembly. General Assembly resolutions and decisions on pension matters are adopted following consideration of recommendations by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (UNJSPB);
- (ii) United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board, a tripartite body responsible for the administration of the Fund; and
- (iii) Staff Pension Committees (SPCs), also tripartite bodies, are committees that consider pension matters on behalf of the Fund's 24 member organizations.

Tripartite representation refers to equal representation, on the Board and on the SPCs, of the three following groups: (a) the General Assembly (or Governing Bodies); (b) the Executive Heads; and (c) the Participants. The Board is currently made up of 33 voting members, with 11 members from each of these three constituent groups. In addition, it has been long-standing practice to include retiree representatives on UNJSPB through the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS), essentially a federation of over 60 various AFICS offices. FAFICS has full membership rights on the Board, with the exception of voting rights, and participates fully in all the deliberations and decision-making of the Board. It should be noted that the

Board takes its decisions almost exclusively by consensus. Any reference in the present article to the retiree representatives on the Board refers interchangeably to AFICS/NY and/or to FAFICS representatives serving on the Board. It should be further noted that AFICS/NY also serves on the United Nations Staff Pension Committee.

History and underlying principles of the Fund

Since its inception, UNJSPF has been expanding its benefit provisions to cover not only a greater and ever-increasing number of individuals but also to address a wider scope of unique circumstances, some of which are directly attributed to an ageing population. Moreover, the international and multi-organizational nature of the Fund will continue to present new and increasingly demanding challenges. Not only are the overall demands increasing for more enhanced servicing capabilities, but the volume, complexity and logistical challenges in the services that must be provided to an increasingly dispersed and ageing population are certain to continue to grow well into the future. With their unique vantage point, it is therefore incumbent upon the retirees, through their representatives on the Board, to continue collaborating in the deliberations and final decisions of the UNJSPB.

Pensions were recognized from the outset as a most critical element of the conditions of service of the staff of the member organizations. In establishing the Fund, it was determined that retiring officials should be able to count on a pension that, in line with the concept of income replacement, provided a standard of living compatible with that enjoyed during the last years of service. Ten years after the Fund was established, an extensive review was carried out by the 1960 Pension Review Group. This group stressed that the Fund should continue to provide retirement benefits for the officials and his or her dependents and that the “benefits should continue to be in proportion to the years of contributory service”.

In order to ensure that pension benefits are established and continue to be maintained in proportion to the total years of contributory service and last years of income, the Fund established a defined benefit pension plan. The two basic types of pension plans are defined benefit plans and defined contribution plans.

A defined benefit plan is one in which a participant in the plan receives an established periodic benefit amount as from the date of his or her retirement. Such a benefit is guaranteed for the lifetime of the participant or, if applicable, for the joint lives of the participant and his or her spouse. The benefits are not determined or dependent upon the investment return of the plan, since the investment risk is assumed by the plan, or ultimately by the employer. In other words, if covered by such a plan, you will not outlive your pension benefit. Another important advantage of this type of arrangement is the very long-term investment horizon typical of the defined benefit plan; the longer the investment horizon, the lower the risk. In addition, and as in the case of UNJSPF, defined benefit plans may provide for cost-of-living adjustments, which are aimed at maintaining the purchasing power over the lifetime of the retiree and his or her spouse, if applicable. The provisions of the UNJSPF defined benefit plan, in particular, also take into account currency and corresponding inflation protection should a retiree and his or her spouse decide to reside in a country outside the United States.

A defined contribution plan is one in which the participant contributes to his or her individual account an amount that the employer may or may not match. There is no guaranteed benefit amount. The benefit is based on how much the individual contributes and how well the individual’s investments perform. In other words, in a defined contribution plan, the individual assumes the investment risks and the benefit ceases once the individual account balance reaches zero, regardless of the individual’s age or circumstances and notwithstanding the fact that he or she may have survivors.

Being cognizant of the fact that UNJSPF has provided its retirees with a defined benefit plan, which ensures a lifetime guaranteed pension amount while also providing protection for inflation (and currency fluctuations, if applicable), should go a long way towards providing peace of mind during the retirement years.

As more and more active participants began moving into their retirement years, the retirees started taking on more active roles in providing input and direction in the management of the Fund through participation in UNJSPB. This is a natural evolution, especially as the retirees are more intricately familiar in matters that impact them most directly. Subsequent to the extensive review carried out in 1960, there were various studies and ongoing assessments carried out by the Pension Board and by the Secretariat of the Fund. Two of the more recent and most comprehensive reviews on the benefit provisions of the Fund were carried out by working groups of the Board (2000-2002 and 2008-2010). As initially concluded by the 1960 Pension Review Group, these two reviews again stressed the underlying principles of the Fund and the need to retain its defined benefit nature.

Growth, monitoring and actions taken to maintain financial soundness

When AFICS/NY was established in 1970, the Fund had 11 member organizations. It was collecting contributions from 32,740 active participants and paying out pension benefits to 4,578 retirees and other beneficiaries. The ratio of active participants to benefits in payment was about 7.2 to 1. The annual contributions paid into the Fund was \$74.5 million and the annual payout of benefits was \$17.3 million. At that time, the value of the Fund's assets amounted to \$505.6 million. The preceding figures are all as of 30 September 1970, as that was the year-end reporting date for the Fund at that time.

As of 31 December 2020, the Fund had grown to 24 member organizations. Based on preliminary figures, it was collecting contributions from 131,583 active participants and paying out 79,975 periodic pension benefits to retirees and other beneficiaries. In other words, the Fund is currently serving a total of over 211,000 individuals compared to the total of 37,318 individuals it was serving in 1970, when AFICS/NY was first established. The ratio of active participants to benefits in payment is now about 1.6 to 1, a sign that the Fund continues to mature. The annual contributions paid into the Fund in 2019 was \$2.69 billion and the annual payout of benefits was \$2.70 billion.

As of 31 December 2020, the market value of the assets of the Fund had grown to \$80.8 billion. At that time, the Fund was invested in public equities (60.0 per cent); private equities (5.1 per cent); fixed income (26.5 per cent); real estate (6.6 per cent); real assets (0.2 per cent); and cash (1.6 per cent). During its earliest years, the Fund invested almost entirely in fixed income. As the Fund continued to mature, however, and now with an increasing need to pay out more in pension benefits than it is collecting in contributions, its assets are invested more heavily in equities.

In the years since its establishment, AFICS/NY has been providing increasing input into the management of the Fund through its representation and participation at the Board and in more recent years through its increasing collaboration in various working groups and subcommittees of the Board. Working groups have been established to address the benefit provisions of the Fund when the regular periodic actuarial valuations were revealing a serious trend of imbalances. As mandated in its Regulations and Rules, the Fund must carry out a regular actuarial valuation at least once every three years; however, in practice it has been carrying out a valuation every two years.

An actuarial valuation determines the present and future liabilities of the Fund and compares the findings to the current and projected assets of the Fund to assess whether the Fund is in balance. While a defined benefit fund should be ideally in balance, a perfect balance would indeed be most rare. When a serious trend in actuarial imbalances is revealed (i.e., deficit or surplus), the Board has consistently taken actions aimed at returning the Fund to balance.

Economy measures to address trend in actuarial deficits

The actuarial valuations in the early 1980s were revealing a serious trend in deficits; the 31 December 1984, 31 December 1986 and 31 December 1988 valuations revealed deficits of (3.01) per cent, (4.40) per cent, and (3.71) per cent of pensionable remuneration, respectively. Fortunately, the Board was very proactive in

addressing these deficits. It held ongoing discussions and negotiations amongst all the various stakeholders of the Fund, including the retiree representatives, and eventually agreed on a number of economy measures aimed at addressing the deficits. Among the most significant economy measures agreed on to address the deficits of the 1980s were: increases in the contribution rate; reduced accumulation rates for new participants; delayed cost-of-living adjustments for those opting for deferred retirement benefits; limitations on the right to restoration; and an increase in the normal retirement age for new participants. As these measures did not impact directly on the existing retirees, it was additionally decided that in the interest of equity, the retirees should also bear some of the costs in addressing the deficits at the time. It was decided therefore to include further economy measures that would impact directly on the existing retirees, namely: a 1.5 per cent reduction in the first cost-of-living adjustment due to all retirees and other beneficiaries; an annual threshold for triggering cost-of-living adjustments to be set at 3.0 per cent; and introduction of a cap on the amount payable on the US dollar track of the two-track feature of the adjustment system (first set at 120 per cent and then at 110 per cent). These economy measures were all recommended to the General Assembly and subsequently approved for implementation.

Benefit enhancements following trend in actuarial surpluses

The economy measures taken to address the deficits of the 1980s, combined with substantial and sustained gains in the investments, led to a notable improvement in the actuarial situation of the Fund. The actuarial valuations as at 31 December 1999 and 31 December 2001 revealed surpluses of 4.25 per cent and 2.92 per cent of pensionable remuneration, respectively. In light of these significant surpluses, a list of possible benefit enhancements was considered, some of which were agreed to by the Board and eventually approved for implementation by the General Assembly. Of particular note, and as strongly supported by the retiree representatives on the Board, the threshold for applying cost-of-living adjustments was lowered from 3 per cent back to 2 per cent. In addition, the Board established a working group in 2002 and another working group in 2008, to consider other possible benefits enhancements, with particular consideration to be given to further reversing some of the economy measures taken to address the deficits of the 1980s. Both of these working groups of the Board included invaluable participation of the retirees, as represented by FAFICS. The two following working group proposals for benefit enhancements were also supported by the Board and approved by the General Assembly for implementation: elimination of 1.0 percentage point of the total 1.5 per cent reduction in the first cost-of-living adjustment due and elimination of the limitations on the right for restoration;

The aforementioned lists of economy measures and benefit enhancements implemented to address the trends in deficits and surpluses are not exhaustive. To enumerate every change in the benefit provisions since the 1980s would exceed the intention of this article. Suffice it to say that the Board is vigilant in monitoring the actuarial situation of the Fund and, when merited, is prepared to take the necessary actions to ensure an actuarially balanced and financially sound fund. It is important to stress that the retiree representatives on the Board are well aware of the intricacies of those benefit provisions that impact most directly on the retirees of the Fund. This is most evident when considering the provisions relating to the pension adjustment system, including the two-track feature contained within the adjustment system. First in the working groups and then at the Board, the retiree representatives were instrumental in obtaining approval for the elimination of 1.0 percentage point of the 1.5 per cent reduction in the first cost-of-living adjustment due to the retirees (i.e., a 0.5 per cent reduction of this 1980 economy measure remains). In addition, and as specifically requested by the retiree representatives, the first working group established to review the benefit provisions of the Fund also carried out an extensive review of the two-track feature of the pension adjustment system. In its review, it identified a shortfall in the cap provision, which was having unintended adverse effects on those being paid under the two-track feature who were living in countries with volatile currencies. As a result, the working group requested the Fund secretariat to propose a solution to the Board. The proposal presented was for an adjustable minimum guarantee at 80 per cent of the US dollar track amount. This measure, which would mitigate the adverse effect of the 120/110 per cent cap provisions that had been introduced as part of the 1980 economy measures, was supported by the Board and subsequently approved by the General Assembly. While this provision does not impact on those retirees currently living in the US, it does provide added protections for those retirees who reside, or who may eventually decide to reside, outside the US.

The retiree representatives on the Board were also successful in seeking approvals for implementing other improvements in the benefit provisions, most of which related to family benefits paid to the beneficiaries (or future beneficiaries) of the retirees. In its final report, the 2008 Working Group on Plan Design delineated all such family benefit improvements, along with the year of approval by the General Assembly. That report also provides a list of all economy measures taken in the 1980s, as well as all possible benefit enhancements considered since 2000 in light of the surpluses revealed in the valuations as at 31 December 1999 and 31 December 2001. The lists include the estimated actuarial implications of all changes considered and the date each potential change was considered and whether or not it was implemented. (See “Report of the Working Group on Plan Design” on the Fund’s website www.unjspf.org under Publications/Policy Publications.)

As the actuarial surplus had been declining at the time the working group on plan design was first established in 2008, there was limited interest and justification in further pursuing the other possible benefit enhancements. The Board noted, however, that the information, analysis and list of potential changes identified in the working group’s final report should be kept in mind as a road map going forward, should the Fund experience further notable trends in actuarial imbalances.

Current actuarial situation of the Fund

The fact that the Fund and the Board both recognize the importance of closely monitoring the actuarial valuations, and are prepared to take the necessary actions as soon as practicable to address any significant trend in imbalances, bodes well for the participants, retirees and other beneficiaries of the Fund. In this connection, it should be further noted that the Board has more recently endorsed, as a policy guideline, that the actuarial valuations should be monitored with a view that considers an acceptable corridor of surpluses and deficits to be in the range of +/- 2.0 per cent of pensionable remuneration. If the results are outside this corridor, the Board will begin considering what actions might be necessary to address a trending imbalance. As demonstrated above, the Board has been very proactive in maintaining the Fund in a sound financial position. As a result, since 2003 all actuarial valuations have been within the desirable +/- 2.0 per cent corridor. In addition to being sound practice, the corridor also mitigates seemingly extemporaneous decision-making in respect to the overall plan design of the Fund. It should be further stressed that if, and when, the actuarial valuation results are trending outside the 2.0 per cent corridor, this should not dictate that imminent changes are warranted. Such results should be considered more as a signal that the Board may wish to begin considering whether corrective action might become necessary; such an imbalance would also need to be assessed in relation to other trending financial and economic data available at that time.

Another analysis that is carried out in conjunction with the regular actuarial valuation is the determination of funding ratios. This analysis, which is carried out on a plan-termination basis, assesses the position of the Fund on a current basis rather than on a projected basis as is done in the regular actuarial valuations. The funding ratios are comparisons of the current assets of the Fund to the value of the benefits accrued (i.e., liabilities) on the given valuation date. The funding ratios, which are provided as a percentage, are obtained by dividing the actuarial value of the assets of the Fund by the actuarial value of the accrued benefits. A funding ratio of 107, for example, indicates that the Fund would have 7 per cent more in assets than needed to cover its liabilities on a plan termination basis. Like the regular actuarial valuation results, the funding ratios have shown that the Fund continues to be in a strong financial position. (A fuller history of the periodic actuarial valuations can be found on the Fund’s website (unjspf.org) in the Annual Reports section under Publications).

The actuarial valuation results and the corresponding funding ratios over the last three valuations are shown below.

Actuarial valuation date	Actuarial surplus (deficit)	Funding ratio (%)
31 December 2019	0.50	107
31 December 2017	(0.05)	103
31 December 2015	0.16	101

It should be noted that the above-cited valuation results since 2015 reflect an additional and important change in the benefit provisions of the Fund. Following their regular experience reviews, the Fund's actuaries recommended, and the Board agreed, to change the assumptions used in the actuarial valuations to reflect notable increases in the average life expectancies of the participants in the Fund. These new projected assumptions were resulting in an increasing deficit. Although the valuation results continued to remain within the +/- 2.0 per cent corridor, the Board agreed that the Regulations and Rules of the Fund should be amended to reflect the reality of improving life expectancies. The Board therefore recommended, and the General Assembly approved, an increase in the normal retirement age (from 62 to 65) and in the early retirement age (from 55 to 58) for new staff whose participation in the Fund commences, or re-commences, on or after 1 January 2014.

Going forward

Besides providing a brief history of the Fund, this article recalls how the financial situation of the Fund is assessed, monitored and, when necessary, how imbalances are addressed. It also provides a glimpse into how the retiree representatives on the Board collaborate to ensure that your interests are taken into account in the decision-making process. AFICS/NY will make certain that your views continue to be represented at the Board, while also keeping in mind several essential issues that will impact most directly on your retirement benefits as the Fund continues to evolve.

The retiree representatives on the Board will continue to remain closely apprised of the Fund's pension-adjustment system, as this impacts directly on everyone receiving a periodic pension benefit from the Fund. The need to protect the purchasing power of pension benefits after award is an essential element, which for the Fund actually depends on two factors: cost of living adjustments and currency fluctuations affecting payments under the two-track feature of the pension-adjustment system. While the cost-of-living adjustments are well known and most appreciated, the two-track feature should likewise be maintained and monitored, despite not being applicable to retirees and other beneficiaries residing in the United States. This is in the interest of solidarity and, most importantly, is in keeping with the underlying principle of the Fund. In other words, pension benefits should be established and continue to be maintained in proportion to the total years of contributory service and last years of income. The importance of currency protection is evident by the fact that the issue is a standing item on the agenda of the Board and is therefore closely monitored by the retiree representatives as well as by all members of the Board, in conjunction with each regular session of the Board.

Aside from the pension-adjustment system, AFICS/NY will continue to monitor other issues of particular importance to the retirees and other beneficiaries of the Fund. More specifically, AFICS/NY will continue to monitor and assist the Fund in the annual certificate-of-entitlement process with a view to mitigate any unnecessary temporary suspension in the payment of an individual's periodic benefits. This is an important role of all AFICS offices worldwide. The retiree representatives on the Board will also remain proactive in monitoring payments from the Fund's Emergency Fund (i.e., the Emergency Fund is also a standing item on the agenda of the Board) and the various AFICS offices will continue to bring individual cases that may warrant emergency-funding assistance to the attention of the Fund. As referenced earlier, the retiree representatives on the Board will also continue to pay particular attention to family benefits that are being paid, or that may become payable, to the retirees and/or to their surviving family members. This includes, inter alia, the important need for arrangements in respect to legal guardianships, which is a growing need given the ongoing improvements in the life-expectancy rates of the retirees and other beneficiaries of the Fund. Other benefits that will continue to be followed under family benefits are: the option to purchase an annuity for spouses who marry a UNJSPF retiree after the retirement date; child benefits; divorced spousal benefits; etc. More detailed information on these and other benefits is provided on the Fund's website (unjspf.org) under Publications, often in the form of informational booklets, such as: Information for Beneficiaries; Survivor's Benefits; Child's Benefit and Secondary Dependents; Divorce; Emergency Fund; Legal Guardianship and Estate; the Two-Track, etc.

In addition to the benefit provisions and the actuarial status of the Fund, the retiree representatives will continue to focus on the overall services being provided by the Fund, especially as this will impact on all the retirees and other beneficiaries. While services, in large part, involve budgetary issues that are being followed closely and on an ongoing basis by the Budget Working Group of the Board, there are also technology enhancements that will not only save resources but should at the same time improve on client services and efficiencies. The retirees and other beneficiaries of the Fund are again well positioned to provide constructive feedback on the services being provided as well as to provide input as to what services might be needed and/or prioritized given emerging trends going forward.

It may be recalled that in 2015 the Fund transitioned from operating with an old, fragmented and vulnerable IT environment to operating with a new, modern and more flexible platform. Although the Fund faced many challenges during the early transition phase, it has been steadily and systematically improving processing thanks to its Integrated Pension Administration System (IPAS). One fundamental success of this relatively new system is evident in the processing rates recently reported by the Fund in its “Fund in Brief” brochure. (This brochure is updated and provided regularly on the UNJSPF website [www.unjspf.org] under Publications.) As of 31 August 2020, it was reported that 96.3 per cent of initial benefit entitlement cases, for which all separation documents had been submitted, were being processed within 15 business days. This is a substantial processing improvement from the early transition phase and indeed over the processing rates that were being achieved under the Fund’s former legacy system. Not only is this indicative of the success of the new system, it should be further stressed that these recent processing rates were achieved while the Fund was operating six months into the COVID-19 pandemic, which was impacting virtually all organizations worldwide. This data point, which is an encouraging sign of the services being provided, will continue to be monitored by the retiree representatives on the Board along with the other services being provided.

UNJSPF is a unique, complex international pension fund. It therefore needs long in-depth and ongoing experience that is, in part, best obtained and maintained by long associations between the retirees and the Fund. Both AFICS and FAFICS, as standing associations with long-serving members, are well positioned to maintain institutional memory and historical reference material while at the same time remaining current with the ongoing issues being considered by the Board and by the General Assembly. They are also the longest established groups that have been serving and defending the particular interests and rights of the retirees and other beneficiaries of the Fund. As demonstrated earlier, this experience was instrumental in the working groups that considered the benefit provisions of the Fund and in the negotiations at the Board, which resulted in the ensuing benefit enhancements. In addition to the two working groups that were established for a “limited term” to consider specifically the benefit provisions of the Fund, the Board more recently established a number of other subcommittees to assist it in important overall management and leadership issues. In order to provide the ensuing benefits and necessary ongoing services in such a large complex and internationally dispersed fund such as the UNJSPF, there are various important and ongoing subcommittees of the Board that provide guidance and leadership in the administration of the Fund. These ongoing sub-committees of the Board meet regularly and are vital in the overall management of the Fund. While not focusing directly on the specific benefit provisions, these ongoing subcommittees help to ensure that UNJSPF continues to operate as a well-invested, financially sound and efficiently administered pension plan. This is necessary to ensure that the Fund remains in position to continue paying all benefits accrued, in full and in a timely and accurate manner.

The retirees’ views will continue to be taken into consideration in the important work and recommendations of the following subcommittees of the Board, all of which include retiree representatives: the Fund Solvency and Assets and Liabilities Monitoring Committee, the Governance Working Group, the Budget Working Group, the Audit Committee, the Succession Planning Committee and other various groups that may be constituted to assist in the leadership and overall management of the Fund.

Conclusion

The retirees and other beneficiaries of the Fund should continue to make their views known through their representatives on the Board. While the overall governance of the Fund is currently under review, the retirees and other beneficiaries will certainly continue to provide significant and invaluable input in the management of the Fund through their representatives. AFICS/NY has been, and will continue to be, active in monitoring the financial position of the Fund and in proposing, when necessary, revisions in its benefit provisions and/or in other relevant policies. AFICS/NY will also maintain its efforts in ensuring that the Fund continues to provide efficient, focused services. Ultimately, it is in connection with all these matters that AFICS/NY will continue to assist in enhancing the Fund's capacity to respond to change, and in ensuring its sustainability so that the Fund can continue to pay and serve its ageing, increasingly dispersed and growing number of clients.

Frank De Turris

Retired, Chief of Operations, UNJSPF

The Pension Board was created as a tripartite body: Member States, Executive Heads and staff participating in the Pension Fund. There were no retirees on the Board, no one who would be eligible for a pension within five years. This became more important when retirees had grown to a significant number and found there was no formal right for them to present their views. This remains an issue for AFICS today.

– O. Richard Nottidge, AFICS President 2001 – 2003

It is critical to the functioning of AFICS and the benefit of its members that the President has excellent relationships and easy direct contact with the UN Secretariat, the Administration, the Offices of the President of the General Assembly and of the Secretary-General. Since Pension and Insurance issues are paramount to the well-being of our members, the AFICS President must be in continuous relationship with these offices and entities.

– Ed Omotoso, AFICS President, 2008 - 2010

Is Socially Responsible Investment Good for UNJSPF?

When it comes to investing, if you are anything like me (and I hope not), you are not very adept. So, when I retired, I left most of my lump-sum withdrawal with the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF or Fund). I figured that they would do a better job investing my money than I could. And largely they have, with only one or two scares along the way. For example, when the former CEO of the Pension Fund proposed that the Office of Investment Management (OIM) be fully under his authority rather than linked to the fiduciary responsibility of the Secretary-General, that set off alarm bells. It was this inflection point that led me, at the behest of fellow retirees, to seek a position on the AFICS Board. Strange as it seems, I was the first member of the AFICS Board elected on the basis of a retiree nominating petition rather than being nominated by the AFICS Nominating Committee.

That aside, we want to talk about socially responsible investing (SRI) and its impact on Pension Fund investment returns, if any. For the individual, socially responsible investing asks the question: how do I make money and feel good about doing it? For institutions, the question may be more: how do we protect the basic values, goals and objectives of the institution with our investment decisions? The United Nations has a wide range of policies, programmes and activities that it seeks to advance, from eradicating poverty in developing countries to promoting public health, gender equality, disarmament, environmental protection, education, decent housing and a host of others, all incorporated into sustainable development goals and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It would be grossly hypocritical and counterproductive if our investments worked at cross-purposes to our goals. Investing in munitions manufacturers or tobacco companies, for example, would call into question our true commitment to ending war or reducing the health risks from smoking.

The uptake by individuals and institutions of socially responsible investing (SRI) is relatively recent. The UN, however, started in this direction as far back as 1976, with the recognition that our investments shouldn't be focused just on blue-chip stocks in the G-5 countries. In its resolution 31/197 of December

1976, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to ensure "that the resources which the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund holds invested in shares of transnational corporations are invested on safe and profitable terms and, to the greatest extent practicable, in sound investments in developing countries." Its resolution 32/73 of 9 December 1977 took it a step further, requesting "the Secretary-General to redouble his efforts in consultation with the Investments Committee ... to ensure that, subject to careful observance of the requirements of safety, profitability, liquidity and convertibility ... a larger proportion of the investment of the resources of the Fund is made in developing countries."

The transition to more sustainable investing began by restricting investments in tobacco and armaments some years ago. The Office of Investment Management (OIM) became a founding signatory to the principles for responsible investment (PRI) in 2006. This was followed by investing in the first green bonds issued by the World Bank in 2008. It became the catalyst investor in low-carbon exchange-traded funds (ETFs) in 2014. In recent years, OIM has moved beyond investing in discreet assets that have activities relating to considerations of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues to integrating ESG considerations across all asset classes. Several published studies suggest that portfolios that integrate material ESG metrics into their investment decision-making process, supported by active engagement, have the potential to provide returns that are superior to those of conventional portfolios while exhibiting lower risk over the long term.

Investing is all about managing risk whether the assets be in developing countries, environmental activities or so-called blue-chip companies, which have a long-standing track record. A key question is how an institution such as the UNJSPF is organized to manage risk and to ensure long-term viability and return on the assets held.

As UN retirees and future retirees, we can take some comfort in the fact the General Assembly gave the "fiduciary responsibility for investment of the assets of the Fund," to the Secretary-General. Not alone, of

course. The Secretary-General delegates the fiduciary responsibility for the investment of Fund assets to the Representative of the Secretary-General (RSG), who is assisted by the staff of OIM, which is responsible for the day-to-day management of the Fund's investments. The RSG also has the advice of the Investments Committee, and suggestions made through the Pension Board and studies conducted by the Assets and Liability-Monitoring Committee of the Board.

Investment decisions start with the overall long-term investment objective, which is to meet or exceed a 3.5 per cent real rate of return (net of inflation, as measured by the US Consumer Price Index) in US dollar terms annualized over the long-term (15 years and longer). This is called the policy benchmark. The short-term investment objective is to meet or exceed the return of the policy benchmark over the short-term (three years).

These long and short-term objectives provide the basis for the investment policy statement (IPS), which sets forth the parameters to guide the RSG and OIM staff in managing the investments of the Fund. The IPS specifies the eligible investment universe of asset classes, investment channels, and investment instruments; the strategic asset allocation (SAA) and the policy benchmark; the risk parameters; and the investment process. A full-scale review and updating of the IPS is undertaken in consultation with the Investments Committee and other stakeholders, in light of the observations and suggestions provided by the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Board (Pension Board or UNJSPB), and taking into account the results of each asset-liability management (ALM) study, conducted once every four years. The most current IPS was updated in 2019.

The basic purpose of the ALM Study is to present the RSG with alternative strategic asset allocation scenarios, which is basically guidance on which categories of assets might best be selected for investment, taking into account the Fund's risk appetite and its long-term investment objective. Examples of current asset classes include: global equities, private equity, real estate, real assets, global fixed income, and cash and equivalents. Given the long-term perspective of its operations, which provide retirement, death, disability and other defined benefits and services to its participants, retirees

and beneficiaries, the Fund has a very low appetite for risk. This conservative and cautious outlook informs all the decisions about what to invest in.

Once a strategic asset allocation has been adopted by the RSG, based on the ALM study and with input from the Investments Committee, OIM will manage the overall investment portfolio in accordance with this strategic plan.

To implement its investment strategies, OIM may (a) invest in all types of securities and assets consistent with its eligible investment universe, including without limitation: common stock; preferred stock; convertible stock; warrants; depositary receipts; American depositary receipts; global depositary receipts; exchange-traded funds; money-market funds; commercial paper; structured notes; bank deposits; limited partnership interests; real-estate investment trusts; interests in closed and open-end collective investment funds; interests in funds of funds and (b) enter into the following types of transactions or investment structures: segregated investments accounts in the name of the Fund customized to the specific requirements of OIM; investments in single assets through one or more entities controlled by OIM; investments in single assets through one or more entities controlled by OIM in parallel with a collective investment fund or other institutional investor.

OIM will consult with and obtain the Investments Committee's advice and guidance prior to completing its first investment in any new asset class or initial use of a new instrument.

The basic point is that every investment up for consideration, whether it be in a developing country or a sustainable-development asset, has to pass through this exhaustive structural review to ensure that it meets the basic criteria established by the Fund, including:

1. Safety: ensuring adequate asset class, geographic, currency, sector and industry diversification, by careful due diligence and documentation of investment recommendations, and by constant review of the portfolio in order to position it optimally in light of economic and geopolitical trends and resulting financial market movements.

2. Profitability: requiring that each investment at the time of purchase be expected to earn a positive total return, taking into account potential risks such as market risk and credit risk, which may be mitigated but cannot be eliminated by diversification.

3. Convertibility: the ability to readily convert investments into liquid currencies. In line with the US dollar-based market valuation of the Fund, and the US dollar-based appraisal of its actuarial soundness, all investments, at the time they are made, should be readily and fully convertible into US dollars.

4. Liquidity: ready marketability of the assets in recognized sound, stable and competitive exchanges or markets.

There is no room in this process for personal-investment decision-making. It is a process that is safeguarded by having many actors involved and many levels of review, including continuous risk monitoring and management to make adjustments to the portfolio as required. Under these terms and conditions, all investments are put to the same tests. So, by themselves, investments with sustainable development components, or socially responsible investments, are no more likely than any other to have a downward impact on investment returns.

Lowell Flanders
AFICS Board Member

¹A fiduciary is a person of "trust" who has the power and obligation to act for another (often called the beneficiary) under circumstances that require total trust, good faith and honesty. When problems arise, courts closely examine transactions between people involved in fiduciary relationships, particularly the actions of the fiduciary in such cases.

²The Investments Committee provides advice on investment policy, risk control, diversification of the Fund in terms of investment vehicles and markets, best practice in the area of investments, and other investment related matters. The Investments Committee consists of nine members appointed by the Secretary-General in consultation with the Pension Board and the ACABQ and is subject to confirmation by the General Assembly.

Regarding the AFICS/NY Annual Assembly structure, I have always felt that besides covering the most important up-to-date information on what was done and needed to be done, we should add an ingredient of culture to the necessary official presentations updating the audience on our foremost interests, the status of pensions, health and insurance plans.

– Andrés Castellanos del Corral, AFICS President, 2003 - 2008

For those of us closely involved with the issues that most affect retirees – pensions and ASHI – this [permission to address the Fifth Committee] was a clear signal that retirees had finally arrived and had succeeded in making their voices heard in a key UN governing body. It was at the same time a clear sign that retirees, whose numbers every year more closely approach those of serving staff, would have an increasingly vital role to play in the shape and management of their own futures.

– Linda Saputelli, AFICS President 2010 - 2016

HEALTHY AGEING AND COPING WITH CHANGE

The World Health Organization (WHO) defines healthy ageing as “the process of developing and maintaining the functional ability that enables well-being in older age” and further notes that the five key domains of functional ability, all of which are influenced by environmental factors, are to: “meet one’s basic needs; learn, grow, make decisions; be mobile; build and maintain relationships; and contribute to society”.

As we grow older, we experience an increasing number of major life changes, including retirement, children leaving home, the loss of loved ones, physical and health challenges, and even a loss of independence. How we handle and grow from these changes is often the key to healthy ageing.

On 14 December 2020, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed 2021 to 2030 as the United Nations Decade of Healthy Ageing. We are witnessing populations around the world ageing at a faster pace than in the past and this demographic transition will have an impact on almost all aspects of society.

HEALTHY AGEING

Diet. Eat and drink healthy. Make healthy choices such as choosing fruits, vegetables, whole grains, nuts, seeds, lean meats, low-fat dairy products, and water.

Exercise. Move more, sit less throughout the day. This helps to prevent, delay, and manage chronic diseases; improve balance and stamina; reduces risk of falls; and improves brain health. Aim for 30 minutes of walking, brisk if possible. Even walking in small spaces or on the spot can bring benefits, as can walking around your home when on a call.

Regular checkups. They will help you to successfully manage chronic health conditions.

Screening for early diagnosis when treatment is more effective:

- **Breast cancer:** annual mammograms are recommended for females between 40 and 75;
- **Prostate cancer:** annual rectal exams and PSA are recommended for males above the age of 50;
- **Colon cancer:** annual stool test adults between the ages of 50 and 75 (with a younger starting age in high-risk groups) colonoscopy every 10 years if no increased risk of colon cancer;
- **Lipid disorders and diabetes:** – a yearly blood test for men above the age of 35 and women above the age of 45;
- **Vision changes, cataract, and glaucoma:** annual ophthalmic examinations.

Vaccinations – for prevention.

As we get older, our immune systems tend to weaken over time, putting us at higher risk for certain diseases. Therefore, the following vaccinations have been recommended for those of us living in the United States by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); they are also recommended by some other industrialized countries while in others WHO leaves it to the countries themselves to decide depending upon their burden of disease.

- **Flu vaccine:** Fluzone and Fluvad vaccines for stronger immune response in seniors;
- **Shingles vaccine (Shingrix):** for those 50 years and older: protects against shingles and its complications;
- **Pneumococcal polysaccharide vaccine (PPSV23),** against serious pneumococcal disease for those over 65;

-
- **COVID-19 Vaccine:** elderly populations are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19 and experience higher risks of severe complications and death. As per the clinical trials, Pfizer with efficacy of 95 per cent and Moderna with efficacy of 94 per cent, approved for emergency use, were 100% effective at preventing severe disease. In clinical trials, the one-dose Johnson and Johnson vaccine was 72 per cent protective in the United States, 66 per cent protective in South America, and 57 per cent protective in South Africa; however, the vaccine was shown to be 85 per cent protective against severe disease with no difference in three regions in the study. The vaccines are also safe and are associated with few serious side effects based on recent safety surveillance data of 22 million people by the CDC. More than 300 million doses of the vaccine have been administered around the world and seem to be effective at sparing patients from death and severe infections. I hope that you have all received the COVID-19 vaccine.

Be aware of changes in the brain

Our brain changes as we age, and it is normal occasionally to forget recent events such as where the keys were last placed or the name of the person you've just met. But dementia is not necessarily a part of ageing.

Mental Health

As we age, there will be periods of both joy and stress. It is important to build our resilience and find healthy ways to cope with challenges. Resilience is common in our age group. Virtually all of us have known adversity and loss and may have a "this too shall pass" attitude. Resilience can be supported through greater social connectivity, increased physical activity, and enhanced compassion. Technology can play an important role in achieving these.

- **Cultivate relationships:** especially with the people who matter, as it keeps the mind active, and along with exercise, it has the most impact on our health;
- **Get enough sleep:** the body must rest to rejuvenate. Developing a schedule or bedtime routine to get about seven hours of sleep is critical to successful healthy ageing. If pressing thoughts interfere with falling asleep, write them down and try to forget about them until morning;
- **Use your time productively:** make time for activities you enjoy – scheduling ensures that they are done. Volunteering can be a powerful tool to engage both mind and soul;
- **Never stop learning:** as the saying goes, use it or lose it!
- **Stay optimistic, have a sense of humour:** read what you enjoy;
- **Embrace Ageing:** as no one can avoid it or run from it. Focus on what you can do instead of any limitations you may have.

COPING WITH CHANGE

Coping with daily challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic

There is a lot for us to navigate during a seemingly endless pandemic, which can be extremely stressful. There are masks to wear, distance to keep, and then there is loss. It is normal to feel sad, stressed, confused, scared or angry during this crisis. It is okay to experience these feelings; however, the key is how we handle them, so that they do not get a hold on us.

Here are some tools for us to cope with these challenges if you are not already using them.

- Have a structure for daily routine and try to stick to it!
- Add mindful movement, to your exercise routine, such as yoga or tai chi, meditation to relax;
- Make time to unwind. Try to do activities that you enjoy;
- Connect with the people whom you trust – by text, email, phone and video chats, and be emotionally vulnerable and open with someone, showing affection to them and receiving it in return;
- Consider limiting news sources to just a couple of times a day and from a source that you trust;
- Take care of your brain by mental exercises: with added time at home due to the COVID-19 pandemic, now is an excellent time to engage in activities that will stimulate the brain. Write your memoirs, keep a daily diary;

-
- Have a plan where to go and how to seek help for physical and mental health needs if required;
 - Get help if you are struggling to cope; in addition to those listed above, here are more ways below.

Coping with grief in isolation

Many of us are grieving and may continue to grieve in isolation during this pandemic as more than 500,000 lives have been lost to Covid-19 in the United States with 2,560,995 deaths worldwide. Many more loved ones may have been lost to other causes during the pandemic. Many may have been unable to be with the loved ones when they die or to mourn someone's death in person with friends and family. Grieving in isolation while coping with the stress and anxiety of COVID-19 pandemic can be especially overwhelming.

When coping with grief, remember that:

- There is no right or wrong way to grieve: some distract themselves with work or hobbies, while others take time and space to be alone;
- There is no universal timeline for grief;
- Grief can trigger a range of emotions;
- Connect with family and friends, create memories or rituals, and reach out to a support group – it could help;
- Do reach out to a professional if you are feeling overwhelming depression – taking steps to care for your mental health is a sign of strength, not of weakness.

The factors that increase the risk of depression in older adults are: being female, single, lacking social support, and experiencing stressful life events. Furthermore, nobody can deny that the death of a loved one is an appallingly stressful life event. Some warning signs of depression are despondence, changes in appetite, and problems concentrating or sleeping.

I personally follow my own advice on healthy ageing: I have not missed a day of exercise in 2020, have undergone all the screening tests and taken all the recommended vaccinations, including the one to prevent COVID-19. I also use all the tools to cope with the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, as I live alone since I lost my dear husband 10 years ago.

But to cope with my personal tragedy, I was not alone. I had family and friends during the initial grieving period, and my husband was given a sendoff that he deserved. I was angry, in denial and incredibly sad for a long time, but not depressed. I went back to work, continued to get a good night's sleep, stayed focused, relied on my social support network as needed. I never lost my sense of humour and writing about my loss also helped me. Then I got involved with the activities of AFICS/NY.

The year 2020 has been a punishing year; let us hope that COVID-19 will be finally conquered in 2021. Following the steps and practices outlined above can help ensure healthy ageing, no matter the circumstances.

Dr. Sudershan Narula

Former UN Medical Director

The biggest challenge was the one that was forced on us, to cope with the COVID-19 situation and manage to maintain an effective organization protecting the interests of retirees. With the help of the UN, we were able to establish a virtual office very quickly and have had virtual meetings, and we managed to do the best we can in very trying circumstances.

– John Dietz, AFICS President 2016 - present

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE HISTORY OF THE AFICS LENDING LIBRARY



In the early years of AFICS a number of retirees who had written and published books sent copies of their works to be reviewed in the *AFICS Quarterly Bulletin*. Once reviewed, the books were never referred to again. As a result, copies accumulated on the shelves. When in 2004 the Organization denied retirees access to the Dag Hammarskjöld Library, the then President, Andres Castellanos, came up with the idea of establishing a special library in AFICS for the benefit of its members. Conceivably, its mission would be to provide them with a new facility to borrow books and other formats of materials primarily written by members of the UN family, as well as materials on UN topics and/or works originating from AFICS. Members of the UN family, staff members and former staff members would be encouraged to contribute to the collection in order to ensure a unique category of holdings. To that end he proposed that the AFICS Library be headed by an experienced former librarian and member of AFICS.

On 16 June 2005, the lending library was launched on the anniversary of the first meeting of the AFICS Board 35 years earlier, to be organized and headed by Dawne Gautier, former librarian of DESA and using the previous works received as the basis for the collection. Since then, the initial 77 items have grown to over

250. Titles range from novels and memoirs to more serious subjects analyzing world problems viewed from the perspectives of long-time international civil servants. Novels/poetry include *L'Hôtel Splendid* by Roger Geaniton, *More Tales of Grandma Ofra* by Ofre Core and *Laces of the Mind*, poetry by Olga Dayan. In the area of biography, the Library has Kofi Annan's *Interventions: A Life in War and Peace*, Christopher Hackett's *The Life of a Diplomat: Representing a Small Island State at the United Nations* and *Elena Mederos: Una Mujer con Perfil para la Historia* by Maria Luisa Guerrero. In a more serious vein is *Glosario sobre el Medio Ambiente* by Juan Luis González Linares and *Timor-Leste: The History and Development of Asia's Newest Nation* by Abraham Joseph and Takako Hamaguchi. Works by AFICS include *Remembering the United Nations: Memorable Experiences Recalled by Former UN Staff Members* and *Dag Hammarskjöld Remembered: A Collection of Personal Memories* prepared in collaboration with the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. There are also a number of DVDs such as Simone Duarte's *Sergio Vieira de Mello: en Route to Baghdad*.

This unique collection, based solely on donations, exemplifies the generosity and appreciation by donors for their inclusion in the AFICS library. As a result, the collection has tripled in size, covering a wide range of subjects and interests of members of the UN family.

The Library is open on the Association's premises in DC1-580 on the first Wednesday of each month from 11 a.m.- 4 p.m., for AFICS/NY members in the Tristate area. Items may be borrowed and returned at that time and kept for a month. A deposit of \$10 is reimbursed once the item is returned. To make a donation, contact Dawne Gautier at afics@un.org or via her email address dawnegtr@yahoo.com.

Members are invited to take advantage of this valuable, special collection that offers insights reflecting the musings of our colleagues.



A bibliography of the Library's contents can be found on the AFICS website, www.un.org/other/afics. **Dawne Gautier**
Librarian

RECENT DONATIONS TO THE AFICS/NY LIBRARY

We would like to thank the following for donating copies of their books to the Library:

Christopher Hackett for *The Life of a Diplomat: Representing a Small Island State at the United Nations*.

Robertson Work for three books entitled, *Earthling Love*; *The Critical Decade 2020-2029*; and *The Compassionate Civilization*.

We would also like to thank **Madan Arora** for his online publication *The Universal Alphabet Book*, which is available at www.universalalphabetbook.weebly.com.

The Life of a Diplomat by Dr. Christopher Hackett



The Life of a Diplomat: Representing a Small Island State at the United Nations (2019) focuses on Dr. Christopher Hackett's life and professional career working at and around the United Nations for close to forty years. It outlines the functioning of the United Nations system, and the importance of multilateralism to small island States. Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in endorsing the book, said that "it has insights for everyone interested in international affairs and diplomacy, multilateralism, the functioning of the United Nations and the global development system, irrespective which country they are from".

The first two sections provide a stimulating account of the impact of family, church and school on the Ambassador's early life and academic preparation for his career in the United Nations Secretariat and UNDP. He reflects on a vital UN activity that is often overshadowed

by issues on the political agenda of the Organization, namely economic and social development projects. For instance, he worked as a programme officer in the Africa Branch of the Office of Technical Cooperation, where many of those project activities played a significant role in the alleviation of poverty in a number of African developing countries. In his book, Dr. Hackett vividly underlines the importance of the Economic and Social Council, one of the principal organs of the United Nations, which he served in his capacity as an economic affairs officer, preparing normative reports for the Council and for the General Assembly as well as providing support to the UN inter-agency system. His last assignment in the area of economic and social development was as Chief of the Caribbean Division in UNDP, where he served for four years and managed a number of technical cooperation projects in Caribbean countries. He also details his service in two UN Peacekeeping Missions, the UN Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) where he served as the Chief Administrative Officer, and as Regional Electoral Coordinator in the UN Angola Elections Verification Mission (UNAVEM11), which was implementing the UN General Assembly mandate to prepare for, organize and observe national elections in that country.

In section three of the book, based on his experience as Permanent Representative of Barbados to the United Nations, he provides a detailed analysis of the role that small island States like Barbados could play in a system where the big power syndrome belies the principle of the sovereign equality of States and rule of one nation one vote in the United Nations, at least in the General Assembly. He offers some concrete examples of multilateral diplomacy and strategies that the representatives of small countries employ in pursuit of the priority interests of their countries.

Dr. Hackett's book in its own right deserves a place on the list of manuals for aspiring diplomats and others, particularly those from Small Island Developing States, in the practice of negotiations in the multilateral environment.

*Information provided by
Dr. Christopher Hackett*

Serving the United Nations as Staff Members and in Retirement

By *Shing-Yi (S. Y.) Huang*



Serving the United Nations is the title of a book that was co-edited and published in 2007 by Patricia Koo Tsien and myself. We were both veteran members of AFICS/NY. The Preface was contributed by Andrés Castellanos del Corral, who was president of AFICS/NY at that time. As the book was published with the endorsement and support of the AFICS Governing Board, I deem it opportune to recall this publishing event as a way to help celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Association.

The book is subtitled *A Collection of Memoirs of Chinese Former International Civil Servants*. It contains 30 memoirs of Chinese who served in all branches of the United Nations, most from the United Nations Secretariat, but also including WHO, IAEA, GATT and UNICEF. Many early contributors to the United Nations have memoirs or remembrances in this volume. For example, in the political field, memoirs of Assistant-

Secretary-General Victor Hoo, who played a crucial role in the UN decisions on the question of the partition of Palestine; Director Feng-Yang Chai, the first Secretary of the Security Council; and Fu-Tchin Liu, a pioneering officer of the UN peace-keeping operations, are included. The origins of WHO are described by Dr. Szeming Sze.

The publication of our book was a voluntary joint venture undertaken by Patricia K. Tsien and me during our retirement years. We had been colleagues at UN Headquarters in New York and had served in the Secretariat around the same time for a period of a little more than 30 years. Patricia joined the UN in 1947 and retired as a senior official in the Department of Political Affairs, Trusteeship, and Decolonization. She was also well known as the founding President of the Ad Hoc Group on Equal Rights for Women in the Secretariat and for her leading role in establishing equality of women in the provisions of the UN Staff Regulations and Rules and Pension Fund Regulations regarding staff benefits and entitlements. After retirement in 1979, she was active in AFICS for many years, serving as President and Board Member. She passed away in 2015. Her family used to joke that she served in the Secretariat for more than 30 years, and then was active in AFICS for 25 plus years, resulting in more

than 50 years of commitment to the mission and service of the UN, which was her second family.

As for myself, I joined the Secretariat in 1952 through a highly competitive examination for Chinese translators. After serving 10 years as a translator in the Department of Conference Services, I was transferred by the then Office of Personnel Services to its Rules and Procedures Section. I served in that Office until 1983, when I retired as an Assistant Director for Special Assignments, mainly in charge of staff-management relations. I have spent my retirement life for the past 34 years in a premier retirement community named Rossmoor, near San Francisco. I have remained committed to volunteer services for humanitarian and community affairs.

Our joint venture for the publication of this book in English had its origin way back in the early 2000s, when both Patricia and I, as UN retirees, were invited to serve on the Editorial Board for a research project undertaken by the Centre for United Nations Studies in Beijing, China. The project was on the subject of the Chinese in the United Nations. With our assistance, it resulted in the publication of a two-volume book in Chinese, bearing the same title as the project. It contains the memoirs of a group of 87 Chinese former staff members of the United Nations and several specialized agencies during the pe-



Patricia K. Tsien

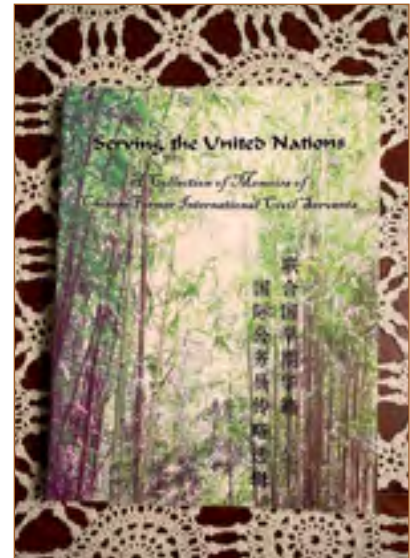
riod of 1945-2003. Its publication was reported in a book review article in the AFICS'Quarterly Bulletin of July 2004.

Following the publication of the Chinese book, we proceeded to use it as a basis to try to produce a corresponding edition in English in order to meet the needs of non-Chinese readers. For that purpose, we undertook to search and gather English versions of the memoirs contained in the Chinese book. Some were already available, while most would require translation. Because of constraints of time and resources, we settled for an abridged edition in English, limited in coverage to only a selection of 30 such memoirs. Even so, it has achieved its basic objective of providing a unique historic record, in the English language, of the work experiences of a group of international civil servants from the same country, China.

Former AFICS President Andrés Castellanos del Corral recalls, in the Preface to the book, the Association's previous efforts in sponsoring publication of a similar book titled *Remembering the United Nations to record "memorable experiences recalled by former UN staff members"* and refers to the assistance provided by the Association in the gathering of staff service records information for the use of the original Chinese book. He considers the English edition, *Serving the United Nations: a collection of Memoirs of Chinese Former International Civil Servants*" (available in the AFICS Library) as offering a glimpse of the wide range of experiences of Chinese former international civil servants and expresses the hope that the stories in the book would instill a sense of pride and solidarity among their fellow international civil servants.

The publication of the book would not have been possible without the support of Executive Editor Mary Lynn Hanley for her meticulous editing work, as she has always done as a longtime and faithful Editor of AFICS/NY Quarterly Bulletins, and the help of Dr. Ying-Ying T. Yuan, the daughter of Patricia, who played a pivotal role in coordinating the publication. The book has a special cover page designed by my friend Professor Raymond Liu. It shows a motif of bamboo plants, symbolizing the virtues of loyalty and integrity expected of public officials according to Chinese legends. The book carries a dedication "to our colleagues and friends who devoted their lifelong work to the

International Civil Service." Along with that good wish, I hope that the book will inspire readers to record their memorable experiences as former staff members of the UN organizations, not only for themselves, but for their compatriots as well.



THE CHARITIES FOUNDATION

The Charities Foundation of AFICS/NY was established in 1997 through the commitment of George F. Saddler and the late Paul McCusker to provide assistance and help to needy and worthy UN system retirees to allow them to cope with costly major medical expenses, natural disasters and unforeseen emergencies. In order to satisfy United States IRS requirements for contributions made by US taxpayers to be deductible from their income taxes, a provision was made to allow for contributions to humanitarian causes.

Despite this additional category, the primary purpose of the Foundation has always been to assist AFICS/NY members and other qualified former international civil servants, their dependents and survivors who face critical, unusual or emergency personal hardships of a temporary nature that cannot be met from other available resources. Qualified former international civil servants are those whose period of service with an international organization would have qualified them to receive a periodic pension benefit from the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), and “dependents and survivors” include current or former spouses or domestic partners, and dependent children.

The Assistance Review Committee (ARC) was established to consider all applications and has the authority to approve grants up to \$4,000. This ceiling was increased to \$6,000 by the Board of Directors at the annual meeting in 2019. Grants in excess of the ceiling require the approval of the Board of Directors. The ARC works closely with the UNJSPF Emergency Fund and reviews any cases that do not fall within their guidelines. Conversely, the ARC has forwarded to the Emergency Fund some cases that required larger amounts.

Direct grants, usually between \$1,000 and \$4,000, have been given to a number of colleagues to help them to move to different locations, because they faced higher costs than they had anticipated, or because buildings they lived in were being torn down to make way for condominiums.

Since inception, grants have been given to settle credit card fraud and for overdrawn bank accounts. In some cases, colleagues were also put in touch with other colleagues who could provide legal advice and help. In the same vein, funds were provided for higher-than-expected legal costs.

Grants were also given to help with medical expenses, such as surgery, expensive medication such as asthma and cancer drugs and dental work.

Funds were granted to colleagues to cover short-term critical cash-flow situations, either from delays in receiving pensions, resolution of ASHI situations or, more recently in the Covid-19 pandemic, a reduction in rental income because of decisions under local state law mandating the suspension of collecting rents.

In a number of instances, funds and advice as well as practical help were provided to former colleagues who faced unanticipated problems relating to post-retirement careers or who required training to enhance their technical skills.

Expressions of appreciation vary. One colleague noted, “I do appreciate your kindness/support. Frankly, the approved money will give us a break, peace of mind over the next few months”.

Since its inception, the Charities Foundation of AFICS/NY has provided direct grants to former colleagues in a total amount of approximately \$140,000. In addition, it has awarded nearly \$50,000 to humanitarian causes.

The Foundation was established with donations from among AFICS/NY members. It was supplemented by a donation from the G-4 Family Coalition New York and more recently by a generous bequest from a former colleague. Contributions to the Foundation are tax-deductible, to the extent possible under US law.

Anthony Fouracre
President



**ASSOCIATION OF
FORMER INTERNATIONAL
CIVIL SERVANTS**

OFFICE HOURS

**TUESDAY - FRIDAY
10:00 AM - 4:00 PM**



PARTNERSHIPS AND SERVICES

AFICS AND UNFCU: A LONGSTANDING PARTNERSHIP BUILT ON SERVICE

CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR

**50th
Anniversary
AFICS/NY**

—
Thank you for our
enduring partnership.



-serving the people who serve the world®

Over the years, AFICS/NY and the United Nations Federal Credit Union (UNFCU) have shared a common goal of delivering exceptional service to UN retirees. Both organizations have a shared belief in the effective power of partnerships.

UNFCU is a member-owned financial institution serving the United Nations community. Thirteen UN staff members founded UNFCU in 1947. They wanted to provide financial peace of mind to staff moving to the US, so they could stay focused on the work of the UN.

“UNFCU remains dedicated to providing the UN community with financial peace of mind,” said John Lewis, president/CEO of UNFCU. “We work closely with AFICS/NY to provide resources that can help retirees with their personal financial management. Retirees are an integral part of the UNFCU family. Their perspectives have proven invaluable in helping us effectively serve the people who serve the world.”

Contributing to the success of the AFICS/NY and UNFCU partnership is a collaborative spirit. Meetings between the management and project teams of both organizations keep the lines of communication open. Additionally, UNFCU regularly conducts annual roundtables with AFICS/NY leadership. Feedback collected at these forums led UNFCU to develop a dedicated webpage for retirees on www.unfcu.org. Similarly, AFICS/NY makes UNFCU news readily available on its website. On the operational front, UNFCU has supported the general administrative needs of the Association. Sponsorship of AFICS/NY’s Annual General Meetings is enabling more retirees to participate at these informative events.

UNFCU and AFICS/NY have also worked together to develop educational content and host educational seminars for retirees. During the pandemic, UNFCU delivered virtual presentations and webinars on protecting against fraud and the benefits of its digital banking.

“AFICS/NY members are eager to learn more about the latest mobile and digital banking features, especially as a result of the pandemic,” said Diane DePass, senior branch

manager at the UNFCU General Assembly Building branch. “Enhanced digital tools give retirees control of their finances from the security of their homes.”

“UN staff members are delighted to know that once they retire from the UN system, they can maintain their UNFCU membership. This is even after relocating to their home country or another US state,” said Darlene Rich, a member-service supervisor at UNFCU’s Two UN Plaza branch for 34 years. “Our aim is for retirees to enjoy their families, second careers, leisure, or volunteerism while we facilitate their banking.”

“Members’ personal stories, especially about their pioneering work, enable us to connect even more

closely with the United Nations,” said Carlos Noriega, assistant vice president of Branch Administration at UNFCU. “With shared values and tremendous inspiration, we look forward to celebrating more milestones with AFICS-NY in the years ahead.”

Elisabeth Philippe

Senior Manager, Business Development and Media Relations Marketing, Global Affairs, UNFCU

Diane DePass

Senior Branch Manager, UN General Assembly Branch

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY OF SUPPORT: THE G-4 FAMILY COALITION



Anniversaries force us to remember long-forgotten pieces of our lives. Among the fragments of my 30 years at the United Nations lies a list of names of staff, most of whom are now retired, some deceased, from the United Nations and UNICEF, who in the late 1980s put their names and money forward for a good cause

that no one who joined the UN after the mid-1990s had ever even heard about. I was not familiar with it, either, when in the late 1980’s, I was approached by someone in the Staff Counsellor’s office to discuss the “Sunset Clause”, which was about to expire. This piece of US immigration legislation allowed retired G-4 visa holders who had worked with international institutions based in the United States, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Development Bank and the International Telecommunications Satellite Organization, to apply for US residency on retirement from their respective organizations. It was due to expire on 1 January 1993, and if this had happened, it would have meant that all international civil servants on G-4 visas would have had to return to their home of origin on retiring from the UN. For many, this would not have been a problem; but others, who had spent most of their adult lives living and working in the United States, would lose the opportunity to adjust their status and remain in the country that had become their adopted home.

For most internationally recruited staff who serve the UN for 30-plus years, the United States has become home: they own property here, they may have married American citizens or they may have

children who were born here and know no other home. It therefore became very important to staff of international organizations to have this legislation passed. In 1991, staff associations of the international institutions mentioned above, led by the World Bank and supported by their respective managements, got together to re-establish and incorporate the G-4 Family Coalition, which would push to get this legislation extended before its expiration date.

It was a mammoth task, since each organization had to raise funds to pay for the legal fees of the lawyers we would hire to fight the case for us. The law firm of Wilmer, Cutler and Pickering, a highly regarded legal firm based in Washington DC, was hired by the Coalition; and each staff association set about trying to raise interest and funds from among its membership. We were lucky on several fronts. First, this issue resonated with many staff members, both those about to retire and those who saw it was a worthy case. We quickly put together a group of interested staff to lead the efforts initially led by then Under-Secretary-General Michel Doo Kingue, who raised the issue among his peers and got their support. In the trenches, the New York group got support from the Staff Unions of UN, UNICEF and UNDP and held a packed meeting in the General Assembly Hall to explain why funding was needed and time was of the essence. Within weeks, we had raised a substantial sum of money from membership dues and donations and were able to ask the Administration for matching funds, which were secured with the support of then head of Human Resources Management, Kofi Annan. We were able to contribute from the UN some \$40,000.

The struggle was long and hard fought but we were again fortunate to have had the support of Congressman Barney Frank, who helped to push the legislation through the House of Representatives, while the late Senator Edward Kennedy and Senator Alan Simpson worked on the Senate. Add to our good fortune the wonderful Joe Sills, a former Spokesperson for the Secretary-General and then a Director in the Department of Public Information with a great deal of contact on Capitol Hill, having worked there prior to joining the UN. He became the UN presence on the Coalition Board and I was his alternate. What a privilege it was to serve with him. He was a southern gentleman with a wry sense of humour, a commitment to the UN and the staff who served it, a willingness to help a worthy

cause and the eloquence, contacts and charm to get things done. He became our spokesman and worked tirelessly to get things to move, as it took quite a while to get enough support for our bill to be considered by the US House and Senate. After watching 1992 and 1993 go by with little or no movement on our legislation, 1994 dawned with us keeping our fingers crossed that our request to the former US Immigration and Naturalization Service to extend the deadline for voluntary departure for eligible retirees would be heeded until the bill was passed. Key to the legislation passing was getting both the House and the Senate to pass them in the same year.

July 1993 brought good news for the G-4 Coalition. The US Senate had passed bill No. S. 1197, the Immigration and Nationality Technical Corrections Act of 1993. This bill contained a provision that would allow all G-4 visa holders to be eligible for permanent residence status on their retirement. Many people immediately took advantage of the new law, and since that time it continues to offer G-4 visa holders an option at the end of their tenure with their respective organizations.

As the Coalition wrapped up its work, the balance of funds remaining after payment of legal fees was returned to the New York chapter of the Coalition. For years, the remaining members of the New York chapter, Fernando Astete, Frank J. Eppert and Gladys Terry (see photograph), our Treasurer who looked after the books, and I tried to get the Staff Union interested in funding a project that would be worthy of the remaining funds and would at the same time honour the legacy left by the many G-4 staff members who had contributed to the original fund. Although there was initial interest, nothing concrete was done.

As 2012 approached and we realized that the last members of our group, Frank Eppert and I, were both about to retire, we thought that we should ensure that the money could benefit G-4 visa holders in some significant way. With the advice of Fernando Astete, we eventually decided to close the account, now worth some \$45,000, and give the funds to AFICS/ NY to support our Charities Foundation, which gives assistance to retirees affected by natural disasters or other unfortunate circumstances, including retired G-4 visa holders at Headquarters. We gave the funds in memory of Joe Sills, who passed away the week before we made the presentation. We also contributed



a plaque, which we hope will remain in posterity, in honour of those who contributed their time, energy and funds to leaving this legacy that many who continue to retire in the future will enjoy.

So, to those of you close to retirement or just retired, remember that you are able to enjoy the choice of staying in the US after retirement only because of the efforts of a large number of G-4 visa staff whose contributions, large and small, led to our being able to

influence US immigration legislation. I hope one day to be able to place all the letters and correspondence in the UN archives so that the untiring work of the G-4 Family Coalition will remain alive in our memory and be an inspiration for collective action on staff issues, long after we are gone.

Gail Bindley-Taylor
AFICS/NY Governing Board Member

OMBUDSMAN AND MEDIATION SERVICES FOR RETIREES

The Office of the United Nations Ombudsman and Mediation Service (UNOMS) has three pillars: The United Nations Ombudsman, serving the staff and retirees of the Secretariat; the Ombudsman for United Nations Funds and Programmes, serving staff and retirees from UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS and UN-WOMEN; and the Ombudsman for the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, also serving staff and retirees. For those of you who do not come from any of these organizations, you can find information on ombudsman and mediation services on the website of your former organization.

I was the first ombudsman appointed for the funds and programmes in 2002 and continue in retirement (an AFICS/NY life member) to help out as a consultant ombudsman and mediator at the Secretariat and at the funds and programmes. My colleagues and I have worked with quite a few retirees over the years who have not been able to resolve their issues – some of which are very longstanding – and who seek an informal resolution. We have assisted former staff members with questions ranging from entitlements to changes in various policies to challenges facing former spouses of staff members and, of course, issues to do with pensions.

The services of the United Nations ombudsmen are free to staff and retirees. The ombudsmen adhere

very strictly to four major principles: confidentiality, impartiality, informality, and independence. An ombudsman will never disclose anything to anybody shared confidentially without your express permission. While ombudsmen cannot be your advocate – we are not lawyers – we remain impartial and try through informal means to resolve a problem for which a formal process may not be the best approach. Whatever your concern, you can be sure that an ombudsman will listen to you and help you to examine options for action.

Look out for a presentation from the New York-based ombudsmen to AFICS/NY members later in the year. In the meantime, here are some links to the offices located in New York:

Office of the United Nations Ombudsman:
www.un.org/en/ombudsman/

Office of the Ombudsman for UN Funds and Programmes: <https://fpombudsman.org/>

James Lee
Distinguished Emeritus Ombudsman, IOA

AFICS AND THE SDGS – SDG 16 IN PARTICULAR



Before the Covid-19 pandemic struck, some observers were inclined to argue that the United Nations was a thing of the past. They questioned its relevance and the wisdom of expenditures on its upkeep or on development programmes that they claim should be better utilized and managed by private sector initiatives. Many dismissed it, gleefully, as powerless and ineffective, an anachronism no better than a costly talk shop. Twelve months later, while the pandemic still lingers on, we need to prompt public opinion not only to revisit but also to reconsider this misperception of the Organization. Remarkably, in a few months, depending on your residence, people focused attention on their government as a source of reassurance, guidance and help. With the latest stimulus package now on record, there are only few out there prepared to doubt the utility and importance of the “helping hand” of the State. Although most are fully aware of critical errors of judgement on hitherto unknown or strange and unfamiliar issues or epidemics, most people were prepared to acquiesce to rules and regulations that limited their options and right to do as they pleased. Likewise, the value of entities such as the United Nations, indeed the World Health Organization (WHO) in particular, came into public view, after years of disbelief. It is plausible to argue that after stressful months of fighting the pandemic, as well as hurricanes in several parts of the world,

SDG16: Promote Just, Peaceful and Inclusive Societies:

Peace, stability, human rights and effective governance based on the rule of law are important conduits for sustainable development. The Sustainable Development Goals aim to... reduce all forms of violence, and work with governments and communities to find lasting solutions to conflict and insecurity. Strengthening the rule of law and promoting human rights are key to this process.

the case for cooperation within the UN system may be more solidly embedded in our collective psyche. There may be fewer doubters than there were in the nineties or the first decade of this century.

To us, the “oldies” of AFICS, it is familiar territory, which brings a certain feeling of having been vindicated. Indeed, the oldest among us were “present at the creation”; alive when the UN was founded in 1945 and the UN Secretariat also established on foundations laid by the League of Nations, after WWI. One of its earliest moves, though not quite a departure, in public sector management, was a form of social protection. It called for the creation of the United Nations Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF). Its novelty consisted not so much in protection for public employees but rather in affording this social protection across the world, to public servants hailing from few, initially, now from the vast majority of Member States. All these former staff members represent widely diverse cultures and values systems. Coming to some agreement on basic “dos” and “don’ts” is certainly more taxing than voting on a budget in many a Member State.

In 50 years of AFICS, its members from New York have seen the process of reaching out, explaining, articulating, arguing, negotiating and hoping for resolutions. Delays are seldom pleasing. Lengthy

talks and consultations are rather taxing, especially when the outcomes are sub-optimal at best. Still such results are preferable to the alternatives we've seen during the past decades, from the 1990s on especially. Exploring these alternatives is SDG16, which aims to "significantly reduce all forms of violence". Goal 16 is doubly important because it includes in its purview violent conflicts on all levels. What the still ongoing pandemic brought into sharp relief are the effects of isolation, unemployment, deprivation and uncertainty combined in many places with an uncommon spike of violence on many levels: in households and in neighbourhoods, in urban centres and countries. Why, suddenly, this spike has called for police intervention when things got out of hand, dividing civil society, is hard to internalize unless we also accept that violence is contagious. In our globalized world, violence metastasizes from the national to the international and the sub-national levels. To avoid the devastation and chaos we have known during past decades, we need to address the causes that generate such conflicts. We

need to try to foster a culture of inclusion, engage in trust, debate, negotiation and consultation on all levels: sub-national, national, regional and international.

Somehow, we need to put an end to wars and hero worship; to cease equating force with bravery, violence with hegemony and domination, at home and abroad, in households, in communities or relations between nations. Proclivity to violence, conflict and war is closely associated with patriarchy. The United Nations Charter tried to put an end to War; SDG16 is there to remind us that male entitlement, male privilege and male chauvinism in fact are obsolete and must go sooner than later. War in the world at large and resort to force in the household are indivisible. One generates the other; it is time to put an end to both.

Demetrios Argyriades

Secretary, AFICS/NY Governing Board



THE UN AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Diana Boernstein, who passed away in 2020, retired from the United Nations in 1995 after 35 years of service. She began her UN career in the Department of Public Information as a producer of documentary films, traveling widely to research and film on development issues. Later, in the Office of Human Resources, she was Chief of Administrative Review, representing the Secretary-General in appellate and disciplinary proceedings, then Chief of the Rules Section, providing legal advice to administrators throughout the UN common system. Upon her retirement, she became a lifetime member of AFICS. She served on its Governing Board, was a member of the Committee on Ageing and Assistance and for many years was Chair of the Legal Committee. In this capacity, she advocated for the rights of former spouses of staff members, who were often left without adequate means. Her efforts led to changes to the Pension Fund Regulations that enabled former spouses to claim benefits. This article, first published in 2005, recounts her mission on their behalf.

It is hard to believe that for its first 50 years, the United Nations, the origin of so many fine principles, turned a blind eye to the predicament of divorced or abandoned spouses of its own staff members. Most spouses had been brought to the duty station by the Organization on visas that precluded their own employment, and many had accompanied a husband from country to country, setting up a home, bringing up children and making it possible for him to pursue a career. If the marriage foundered, the UN refused to divulge to courts any information about the UN staff member's salary and emoluments, for reasons of confidentiality. This meant that courts would not even entertain a petition for divorce or child support. By the mid-1990s, most headquarters duty stations, as well as those of the World Bank and the IMF, were encircled by a ring of destitute or near-destitute ex-spouses who had nowhere to turn for help, who had lost any eligibility they may have had for social welfare benefits in their own countries, and who had surrendered their own potential careers to assist their husbands with theirs in the UN.

The change began in 1994, with the issuance of administrative instruction ST/AI/399, which provided that the UN would cooperate, even without the consent of the staff member, to reveal salary and benefits information to "appropriate authorities" in family support cases. It was drafted by me, an AFICS Board member, and at the time also Chief of Rules, and I defended it before various rather hostile UN bodies. When it was issued, there was an initial rush to courts by spouses who had not previously had access because of the confidentiality provisions. Once they got a court order of support, however, and tried to get

the UN to implement it with salary deductions, they ran into a brick wall. The Convention on the Privileges and Immunities of the United Nations was construed by the Legal Office to protect staff salaries against legal processes, and there was no way of collecting on their judgment. Then in 1999, in a surprise move, Secretary-General Kofi Annan announced, on International Women's Day in front of an audience of celebrities and dignitaries, that henceforth the UN would commence income deductions from salaries (garnishment) in family support cases. Thus began a new situation for ex-spouses.

These two changes made it possible for former spouses to collect a reasonable share from staff members' salaries, just like anyone in the private sector. But an even harder challenge lay ahead: pensions. The Pension Fund enforced an even stricter confidentiality than the Secretariat, so those unfortunate enough to split up late in their careers – a far from uncommon occurrence – ran into the same problems of access to courts and collection of support as the spouses of serving staff. The issue of providing some sort of pension benefit to former wives, or a surviving spouse's benefit if the beneficiary had died, had first been raised in the UN Pension Board in 1978, but in successive years had been either postponed or rejected entirely. Changing the Pension Fund Statute is immensely complicated, requiring approval by the Pension Board as well as by the Fifth Committee, both bodies quite averse to change. The 50 or more ladies, all ex-spouses, who met monthly at the UN Family Rights Committee, had no access to either the Pension Board or the Fifth Committee. It seemed a hopeless situation.

To the rescue came George Saddler, the President of AFICS and of the Federation of Associations of Former International Civil Servants (FAFICS). The latter participates in sessions of the UN Pension Board and can submit documents and make proposals. George and I drafted reports on the subject of UN pension benefits for former spouses and surviving spouses, and FAFICS presented these reports and other documents persuasively and energetically to the UN Pension Board. FAFICS also sponsored the initial proposals to change the UN Pension Fund Regulations. Once the changes had been approved and incorporated into a resolution, George and I, as well as some of the members of the UN Family Rights Committee, lobbied government representatives to the Fifth Committee to urge adoption of the proposed resolution. In 1998, the Board adopted changes to the UN Pension Fund Regulations, granting a survivor's benefit, under certain conditions, to the former spouses of beneficiaries who had separated from UN service on or after 1 April 1999.

This was a beginning, but it did not help those whose former husbands were still alive. Day after day, George and I visited, lobbied and pleaded with government representatives to the Fifth Committee, trying to persuade them that the cause was just and that the United Nations should be the pathfinder in providing basic rights and entitlements to families of staff. Many government diplomatic foreign services, including that of the United States, the comparator civil service for determining UN salary scales and benefits, had adopted such benefits years previously. The World Bank and the IMF, which have a similar regulatory pension framework, had taken initiatives of their own and established a "facility" out of which court-ordered support could be paid without surrendering the principle of immunity.

In December 2000, the UN Pension Board, in an historic step, adopted a resolution, subsequently approved by the General Assembly, to allow garnishment of pensions upon a court order (Article 45, Non-assignability of Rights). The Board also approved a limited benefit (twice the minimum surviving spouse's benefit [about \$8,000], to be paid out of general funds) for divorced former spouses of staff who had separated before 1 April 1999. Because of the doctrine of acquired rights, and since all changes to the law must be prospective and not retroactive, the new rights could apply only to the spouses of those who had separated after 1 April 1999. This meant that some of the neediest of the former spouses were left out.

The version that was passed was historic but certainly not ideal. In 2004 there was pressure by some of the European Associations to again amend the UN Pension Fund Regulations to make them more restrictive. George Saddler and I attended a meeting in Geneva to discuss the problems that had been raised with respect to pension benefits for ex-spouses. FAFICS is now committed to pursuing improvements and refinements to the Pension Fund Statute and hopes to eliminate some of the conditions that still deprive some ex-spouses from benefits. The subject will be considered at the next UN Pension Board Meeting, to be held in 2006 in Nairobi, Kenya.

There is still considerable work to be done to bring a measure of equity and justice to ex-spouses who give up the possibility of a working career to assist a spouse in pursuing a UN career.

Diana Boernstein

The name AFICS was chosen deliberately. It is the association of former international civil servants, not just of retired staff members or UN pensioners. They did this to include those who helped create the organization while on secondment from their government, who did not retire from the UN and therefore could not receive a pension. AFICS includes all these categories as well as spouses and beneficiaries.

– George Saddler, AFICS President 1994 - 2001

BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF FORMER UNITED NATIONS CIVIL SERVANTS: An Introduction

The British Association of Former International Civil servants (BAFUNCS) was founded in 1977 as an association for all those who have worked for the United Nations system who live in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, who intend to live there, or who wish to maintain links with the United Kingdom.

The Association aims: to encourage and help members to keep in touch with former colleagues through social, cultural and leisure activities; to ensure that members are kept aware of changes in pensions and health insurance matters; to help members and their families moving to the United Kingdom on their retirement; to extend welfare support and advice to its members and other former employees of the United Nations and their spouses in need; and to represent members' interests in their relations with the United Kingdom Government Authorities.

As a member of FAFICS, BAFUNCS is linked to its sister associations around the world and is concerned with protecting and improving retirement conditions. It cooperates with other organizations engaged in mobilizing public support for the United Nations and support for the elderly.

BAFUNCS also implements a number of programmes in support of its members and to promote a wider understanding of the UN system. In addition to the Annual Reunion and AGM, these include providing advice on pensions, tax and after-service health insurance (ASHI), member support and welfare, the BAFUNCS Benevolent Fund, a charity registered with the Charity Commission, which runs independently of the main Association and external partnerships.

The Association also supports the United Nations Career Records Project (UNCRP), a longstanding partnership with the Bodleian Library of Oxford University, which encourages former United Nations system staff to reflect on their careers and to contribute to an archive of documents and recollections for the use of students and researchers.

An important part of our mission is to provide opportunities for our members to meet informally and enjoy social activities together in their local region. The membership is divided into ten geographical regions, including one which embraces all our overseas members. Each region organizes its own activities – such as local meetings, lunches, trips to historic houses and gardens, and other activities, which are open to all BAFUNCS members.

We look forward to welcoming new members and those who may be contemplating retiring to the UK through the contact page on our website: bafuncs.org

Richard Sydenham
Acting Secretary

**AFICS/NY RETIREES IN
ACTION: STORIES FROM
FAR AND WIDE**

Ode to beloved New York!

by Maria P. Almeida

I mourn for the City

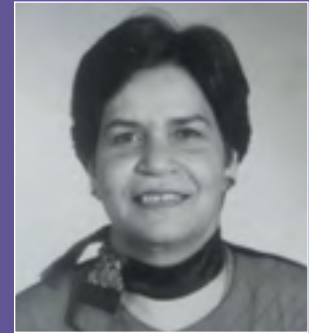
Known by names many,
The Big Apple, the City that never sleeps!
City full of love and surprise, Twin Towers, 9/11; COVID-19
Tragically crumbling T T – sudden piling virus corona bodies,
Is my City which now never sleeps,

Daily from UN floor 33, I watched, lived and loved.
The rhythm and pulse of this City lives in me still,
Heedless of time, day into night slips,
Without fuss or ceremony, unbeknown to any,
New Yorker strides in secure gait in the streets.

I know this City, in morning walks and run-early, by the river East,
The City of actors, writers, moviemakers et al.,
Find their inspirations blossom that long ago unfulfilled
Happy to find home in the crowded talent-filled society,
Of varied intellectuals in art, theatre, craft and music
Made a home never to return,
For a New Yorker is unique, with medley of unheard names of time,
Amidst din and familiar sounds of firefighters, ambulances,
New Yorker walks on streets, with purposeful aim to achieve
And it all makes New Yorker, BE, to live in a wonder City.
He crosses its avenues – nooks and corners with ease and poise,
He bumps into the homeless, the lost arriving stranger
Open handed he GIVES, smiles, SURE, is the word on his lips,
New Yorker is UP FRONT, further exclaims “YOU GET WHAT YOU SEE!”
To help is his agenda.

Grand Central, bursting with life, Radio City Hall where the
famous Charlie Chaplin, Frank Sinatra made their name and stay,
Kings and Princes, Heads of State and Government,
In their high-rise dwellings made their home to achieve,
New Yorker is at home anywhere, free, ready to learn and share.

Take subway ride and find sitting next to a chap in blue jeans – tee-shirt,
In comes smart Uni girl! slaps her iPad on lap says:
“I am writing a book – tell me what makes you happy!”
Soon dawns, the blue jeans man is a multimillionaire of Wall Street,
She gleefully hopes to have in her book a foreword from him.
And this is my New York City that never sleeps!



Florida Chapter: Thriving!

by *Madan M. Arora*



On 1st January 2000, I retired from UNICEF after 43 and a half years of service (longest in UNICEF and second longest in the whole of the UN). As part of my briefing papers for retirement, I had received information regarding AFICS/NY. This looked promising and I decided to become a member of AFICS/NY even before retirement.

I retired from UNICEF, Copenhagen, Denmark but decided to settle in Orlando, Florida, USA, where my children had been living. By the way, we had to separate ourselves from our children at their young age when I was posted to China in 1988.

After arriving in Orlando, I regularly received the quarterly Bulletins of AFICS/NY. They used to indicate the news about the various events that took place in NY. I started writing to AFICS/NY and enquired about starting a chapter in Florida. In those days, the management of AFICS/NY was not very active. Many of my communications remained unanswered. However, I

owe a million thanks to Ms. Mary Lynn Hanley, who took the trouble of answering one of my several earlier communications addressed to AFICS/NY. I got the addresses of all the members settled in Florida. Then at my own expense, I wrote a hard copy of letters to each member settled in Florida on 12 September 2006 advising them that I was trying to launch the FL Chapter of AFICS. It took me almost six years to get the local chapter started here on 9 December 2006.

Since 9 December 2006, we have been meeting regularly every quarter. Every year, we chalk out our list of dates and event highlights and try to follow this calendar. Educational seminars regarding health, financial planning, estate planning, yoga, meditation, etc., are planned as per the recommendations and needs of the members. Once a retiree is a member of AFICS/NY, no additional membership fees are required for the FL Chapter.

The FL Chapter keeps me busy organizing the events regularly and staying in touch with AFICS/NY and other members in FL. Besides the FL Chapter of AFICS, I have also created a group for seniors called HSCF New Age Group. I organize a social gathering for this group every month and we also have educational seminars periodically. These two activities give me lots of satisfaction and keep me occupied – they say that

keeping active is good for the brain and one is less likely to get diseases such as Alzheimer's.

I would like to suggest that AFICS/NY reintroduce the distribution of hard copies of the quarterly Bulletin. Many of the older retirees are not computer literate and they miss all the news. To attract new retirees, all the necessary information should be provided to them as part of their retirement package. A follow-up letter should also go to them after a few months into their retirement. Generally, it takes a while until one feels settled after retiring.

I have managed to run the FL Chapter at zero cost to the members and without any subsidy from AFICS/NY – and I hope to continue doing so until my last breath. Wishing millions of happy returns to AFICS/NY on its 50th Anniversary!

Lasting UN Friendships

by *Ajit Banerjee*



Working with the United Nations for over three decades was a challenging and rewarding experience. As I look back on the friendships that I made with colleagues from many countries and regions, I am happy that they continue. They have enriched my life and provided mutual understanding through knowing other people, regardless of race or colour or of religious and political backgrounds. Our friendships encouraged each one of us to create a better world where we worked in harmony under one flag, one charter and one organization: the United Nations.

The fact that the United Nations has survived since 1948 shows us the importance of interpersonal skills when we become members of an international organization. It has been shown that as much as 85 per cent of our success in life is determined by social skills and the ability to interact positively and effectively with others. If people are not able to get along and

resolve conflicts, the organization as a whole will be less productive. I have friends of diverse origins. These friendships make me feel that I am part of a universal family, regardless of where we are all from. Strong friendships have a positive effect on our overall health, both physically and mentally. We talk to one another regularly, share news about ourselves and meet whenever we can. Our interactions give us time to jog our memories and to recall all the positive hours and days we spent together. Our children have become friends and are in touch, too, and we hope that they will carry on our friendships to the next generation.

The world has changed drastically, yet we always have positive things to talk about. If we have setbacks in our health or other concerns, we know we have a friend who will listen. That in itself is reassuring, especially as we can no longer travel often; fortunately, technology has helped to keep us connected.

Good friendships do indeed make people both healthier and happier, even during difficult times such as the COVID-19 pandemic, which was a global disaster and caused many people to be lonely and depressed. We are thankful for an organization like the United Nations for giving us an opportunity to enjoy our friendships to this day.

UN Career and Beyond

by *Marcia Brewster*



I was 24 years old and the only foreigner when I began working at the Central Bank of Thailand in Bangkok. I had planned to go to Thailand for one year but stayed for 10. My work at the Bank was followed by a number of research positions for Thai Government agencies. Then I was recruited for the ESCAP Agriculture Division thanks to my writing skills. Thailand was exciting in the 1970s – a lot of political unrest, the war winding down and refugees pouring across the borders.

In 1976, I was recruited by the ESCAP Natural Resources Division. The Chief was a water resources specialist, and that is where I learned that water is an entry point for development. The UN Water Conference, held in 1977 in Argentina, used much of the research we were doing at ESCAP in the Mar Del Plata Action Plan, later the framework for water management. In New York, I became the institutional memory in DESA, helping to create UN-Water in the early-2000s, and continued working in areas of water resources and sustainable development.

In the early 1980s, I was transferred to the Water Resources Branch (WRB) at the Department of Technical Cooperation, where I headed Regular Programme work, technical publications, meetings and international conferences all over the world – Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Pacific. It was the beginning of the first Water and Sanitation Decade (1981-1990) and we were working to achieve consensus on technical and policy aspects of water management and on more controversial issues, such as transboundary water courses. I was designated DESA Representative on the Interagency Committee on Women and Water, prominent during the Decade. My interest in the relationship between gender, water and sanitation continued throughout my career. This exciting time was complicated by the birth of my twin sons in 1986, but we survived pretty well, partly because my husband agreed to stay at home with the boys and partly because we moved back to Bangkok in the early 1990s. We had a fabulous time traveling around Thailand and Asia with young boys. It was a very special period of my life.

At the UN Conference on Environment and Development (Rio 1992), sustainable development and water resources rose to the top of the UN agenda. The Division for Sustainable Development and the Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD) were created and, after returning to NY in 1993,

I was responsible for the water and sanitation agenda at CSD and the World Summit in Johannesburg in 2002. In the early 2000s, before the Second Water Decade (2005-2015), I became Task Manager of the Interagency Task Force on Gender and Water. I was also overseeing all the public outreach for the Decade. UN-Water was created around this time to coordinate activities of 30+ UN entities and many other partners (www.unwater.org).

Gender and water were also highlighted in the MDGs and SDGs. After I retired in 2006, I had some great consultancies for FAO, UNDP, UNESCO, the World Bank, the World Water Council and many other agencies. I continued to travel the world to advocate for the importance of gender, water and sanitation to development, health and women's empowerment.

As the only woman professional early on in WRB at ESCAP and DESA, there were a few times where I had to use my diplomatic skills not to be compromised! The situation never got completely out of hand, though, and I was rescued by friends/colleagues more than once. Over the years, my key skills were writing, editing, organizing meetings, and public speaking. Now my UN-related advocacy is voluntary, through UNA-USA. I look forward to combining UNA substantive programmes with AFICS activities.

Helping the World with Mediation

Michael F. Cassandra

Have you ever been to mediation before? I have now asked that question hundreds of times since my retirement in 2009. I have asked that question to people sitting across the table from each other with anger and frustration in their faces. They tell me stories of grievance and complaint about the person opposite them. How they have been cheated, lied to, made foolish, humiliated, and shamed by that other person. They have told themselves that story dozens of times already and then told anyone willing to listen. And now they have a chance to tell that story to the person who harmed them. But wait, the other side now has a chance to tell their side of the story. Will they be able to hear each other? The job of the mediator is to do everything possible to help each person understand, not necessarily agree with, the other.

Every mediator working in court settings or private settings, helping divorcing couples or aiding in devising co-parenting arrangements, helping parents navigate the special education needs of their child, has dozens of heart-breaking and uplifting stories to tell. It is eminently human interaction work on an intimate level, the micro level of negotiations, I like to say.

I worked for 27 years at the UN in disarmament affairs. It was at the macro level of negotiations. The participants were the representatives of the Member States of the



Conference on Disarmament in Geneva and the full membership of the General Assembly in New York. The desired outcome was to increase cooperation and collaboration to enhance and maintain international security for all nations with the least amount of destructive and harmful weapons, especially weapons of mass destruction. When I started during the preparations for the second special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament in 1982, I was promised a job for a lifetime. Successes are few and far between and take years and years of steady effort on the part of many actors, governmental and non-governmental, civil society and uncivil society, as the joke went...

Just before retirement, I met a long-time colleague, also soon to be retired, who told me that she knew, unlike me, exactly what she would be doing upon retirement: mediating. "What does that mean?" I asked. She told me who to talk to, and I have been with the New York Peace Institute located in Manhattan and Brooklyn ever since. It can be tough work listening

to people at their wit's end, frustrated about getting a fair deal. It can be rewarding work when two people suddenly understand something about the other that they didn't know before, and want to work with them to make things better for both. Moving forward, we mediators say, leaving the past misunderstandings behind.

This kind of direct human relations work has been a boon to my morale and sense of worth during my retirement. Mediation has opened up the field of alternative dispute resolution to me, its history, the contemporary movement, and many good-hearted, intelligent and wise people who are trying to make this world a better place, one dispute at a time.

Making a Difference in the World

by *Maria-Luisa Chavez*

After a 32-year career at the UN and as a second-generation roving UN child, growing up in different duty stations with peacekeeping missions, retiring from the UN was cutting the umbilical cord and it was not easy. I did not know what to expect, especially since all of us were living in a global UN family bubble, with respect for diversity in a multicultural and multinational environment.

As I retired, I knew that we were leaving the UN, but the UN would never leave us! The biggest dilemma: We belonged everywhere and nowhere!

Throughout my career and as a retiree, I promoted and strengthened partnerships with civil society and empowered youth to effectively use their voices in advocacy, to be the voice of change.



I was appointed to the Board of Trustees of the UN International School regarding their student conferences. (I had been former faculty and alum, as well as advisor during my tenure as Chief of Education Outreach Section/DPI.)



I am presently a member of the Advisory Board of HIGGS (Higher Incubator Giving Growth and Sustainability), based in Athens, Greece, promoting capacity building for non-governmental organizations (NGOs). I am also advisor to two NGOs, the Smile of the Child in Greece and the Fundación Cultural Carol Baur in Mexico (NGO Representative at the UN) in outreach to youth of civil society.

Currently, I live between New York and Greece, and during my months in Greece, I also volunteer when needed with the refugees in northern Greece.

As retirees, I believe that we can continue facilitating a greater dialogue by assisting members of civil society to give voice to their views and concerns and generate awareness on the work of the UN. With our experience and continued passion for our Organization, we can continue to make a difference. There have been so many unforgettable highlights in my career that inspired me to be

instrumental in making this world a better place.

My guiding light, Madiba, entered my life when I was a student studying his writings and following all the news about this prisoner and all the debates at the UN against apartheid. He was my pillar of justice, my pillar of the UN Charter and my example of how we could make a difference in making this world a better place. My dream of meeting my idol became a reality when I had the great honour of doing so when he came to sign the Olympic Truce in Athens in 2003, where I was posted as Director of UNIC.

AFICS is our voice and we need to support it and make it stronger. We can have a stronger AFICS by increasing its outreach to all retirees through social media, and by increasing its membership.

Congratulations to AFICS on its 50th anniversary. Congratulations to the 50th Anniversary Planning Committee Chair and all the Committee members for organizing this anniversary during the pandemic!

We owe it to inspirational leaders like Madiba to continue his legacy and continue to make a difference. We may have retired officially from the UN but we are still very much part of it! We are not out of sight!

Life after the UN – Jump In!

by *Mac Chiulli*



My husband and I fit the definition of “workaholic” pretty well during our working lives, and for more than 40 years we made work a priority. As such, we were both a bit apprehensive about the thought of retirement. My husband, as a European, had a more positive attitude about what it would hold for us, given the prevailing culture he was familiar with; but I was downright fearful.

We are living proof that no one should worry about what retirement will be like – especially those who live in as rich a city as New York. Besides the bevy of cultural and social activities available, there are plentiful opportunities to volunteer and fill some of the many needs among New Yorkers, whatever your interests.

Between us, we have taught English and basic finance skills to middle- and high-school kids, volunteered in soup kitchens and pantries and helped with a variety of arts projects, ranging from dancing along the High Line to escorting visitors through a moonscape. We

meet visitors to NYC and show them around with Big Apple Greeter, and my husband recently served as a judge in a moot court setting at NY Law School. My involvement with AFICS/NY has kept me in touch with many former colleagues, which I enjoy very much.

That said, the real pleasure for us in retirement has been travel, which we were starved of while working. It’s as though school is out and we’re on permanent summer holiday! We’ve traveled as much as we could manage and afford, and we have had one amazing trip after another during the past six years.



Two standout trips were an expedition to Antarctica, where we jumped off the ship while crossing the Antarctic Circle, and one to Belize, where we worked with 20 other volunteers to build a house from earthen blocks for a fisherman and his family, who

had been living in a shack with no windows. The first trip was nothing but wondrous scenery and lots of learning about the ecosystem and the economics of Antarctic exploration and preservation; the second was nothing but very hard,



extremely rewarding work and the satisfaction of seeing the almost finished product by the end of the trip. We arrived back in NYC the week before the shutdown last March, and we were somewhat glad to spend some quiet time in the apartment for a few weeks while we recovered! That feeling wore off quickly, and now we can’t wait to continue this adventure in retirement and see what’s in store for the coming years.

To all who are reading this: Get out and get involved in any way that you can – you might start with AFICS/NY – and enjoy the rewards of the retirement that you have so fully earned. Bon voyage!

Fisheries and Agriculture: My Life

by *Otunba Bamidele F. Dada*



Happy 50th anniversary to AFICS, an association that I hold dear, celebrating at the time I celebrated my 80th birthday and already my 81st birthday!

I recall the richness of life granted to those of us who have worked as national and international civil servants. In my own long career, the experience that I gained was also of great value in my career after retirement. My own professional interests lie in the field of fisheries and agriculture and I have been able to make significant national and international contributions.

I was appointed Director of the Fishery Policy and Planning Division, Fisheries Department, at FAO headquarters in Rome in 1984. Prior to that, I had held various posts of increasing responsibility with the fisheries administration of the Nigerian Ministry of Agriculture since 1963 and was promoted to the position of the Federal Director of Fisheries in 1977, with elevation to the Permanent Secretary level in 1983. During this time, I represented the Federal Government of Nigeria at many international conferences as well as bilateral and multilateral negotiations and was

a Member of the Nigerian Delegation to the Third United Nations Conference on the Law of the Sea.

As Director in the FAO Fisheries Department, I successfully organized the World Conference on Fisheries Management and Development in 1984, whose Programmes of Action yielded unprecedented opportunities for member countries to reap the full benefits of offshore living resources. The Department's role was widely acclaimed in the conduct of the International Conference on Responsible Fishing organized by FAO in Cancún, Mexico, in 1992, which culminated in the adoption of the Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries, which constituted the cornerstone of the then Fisheries Department Programmes.

In January 1995, I was appointed Assistant Director-General/FAO Regional Representative for Africa based in Accra, Ghana. In my new position, I held responsibility for the overall planning of FAO activities in the region and was actively involved in the implementation of the FAO Decentralization Policy. The main objective was to assist African countries in the fight against hunger, malnutrition and poverty through the adoption of more productive agricultural policies for food security and the sustainable management of the continent's natural resources. My landmark achievements at the FAO Regional Office, Accra, included its

expansion by more than 300 per cent. I retired from FAO in 2002.

Just settling down in retirement in 2003, I was appointed Honourable Minister of State for Agriculture, Rural Development and Water Resources by President Olusegun Obasanjo and served in this position until the end of his administration in 2007. As a member of the Economic Management Team, I helped introduce various reforms, particularly in the agricultural sector. I served as Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Fisheries and Aquaculture Development. The proactive policies and programmes had enlisted Nigeria in the League of Nations with faster growth (8 per cent) in agriculture.

Apart from my national and international civil service career, I have been involved in private sector commercial activities in retirement, as Chairman of Pacesetter Farms Limited and currently as Chairman, Owolabi Agro-Industries Limited.

My membership in AFICS/NY has been most rewarding. I have participated in some of the activities, especially the summer cruise. I have witnessed that some of the challenges facing retirees, particularly with the payment of benefits, were promptly attended to, which is a notable achievement of AFICS.

In conclusion, I give gratitude to God for His Grace to serve and succeed as Eminent Agriculturalist, Technocrat and International Diplomat.

How to Stop Running

by *Fred Eckhard*



I retired voluntarily in the middle of the Oil-for-Food mess to give Kofi a chance to regroup and defend himself. I felt he needed a fresh face and, besides, I was 62 and tired. Despite being tired, I found that the main problem I had after stepping down was to learn to stop running. It took me more than 10 years. I found myself at the age of 70 running to catch a Manhattan bus rather than waiting five minutes for the next one. At that point I said to myself, slow down.

For that first decade, retirement was a kind of a long-distance run. I started by writing a book about Kofi to counter the slanderous image of him being painted by the conservative media. I interviewed over 100 people who knew him best. It was published in Geneva in French.

While I was doing that, I taught one semester a year at Hangzhou University in China for five years from 2006 to 2010. The University of Renmin in Beijing published my book in Chinese. In 2007, after Kofi finished his second term,

he asked me to advise him on communications for the Kofi Annan Foundation, which he was setting up in Geneva. In 2008, when he was asked by the African Union to mediate what was fast becoming a civil war in Kenya, he asked me to join him on the press side.

I saw that the Kenyan experience was an exercise in the Responsibility to Protect. I included it in an expanded version of my book which was eventually published in English in New York.

All this time, my wife and I were living on the northwest coast of France. We bought our retirement home from Gilberte, who in 2000 started an association to help girls in poverty in Burkina Faso to finish their secondary education. I accompanied her and her husband on their annual visits to Burkina Faso in 2009 and 2010 and started seriously fundraising for them. Kofi and Nane gave us a substantial donation. With the extra money we raised, I proposed that we start financing higher education. Gilberte said she was too old for that but urged me to do it on my own.

In 2011, I created the Burkina Women's Education Fund www.bwefund.com, soliciting contributions from friends, family and former UN colleagues. I asked my son to start a parallel association in the States; he calls it Chance for Change. Each year

we collected more money and each year we were able to help more young women from poverty backgrounds to transform their lives. In 2018, I reached out to UN friends in Geneva. Michael Möller, then UN Director-General, was especially helpful. Nane Annan agreed to be Honorary President; the Kofi Annan Foundation is our official address. The three associations raised over \$50,000 in 2020 to support 31 young women this school year.

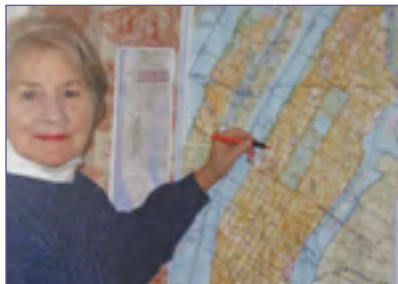
So, I've stopped running – except to Burkina Faso. I love the people there, they are so energetic, so optimistic. Give them just a little and they do a lot with it. I visit once a year, as Gilberte did. Since 2010, every girl helped by Gilberte who passed the baccalaureate exam has received funding from us to go on to the next step – university, nursing school, teacher training.

It's what gives my life meaning.

Some latest news is that we financed a Master Degree in accounting for Diane in Ouagadougou (see photograph) and she is now in a government training programme to be a financial supervisor. That's a job for life!

Life after Retirement

by DeDe Emerson



After taking a tax course with H&R Block in the late 1990s and receiving special training from Robert Smith – an AFICS Governing Board member and AARP tax counsellor – on the treatment of UN income and US taxes, I was able to do many tax returns for other UN retirees.

We wrote to voters in New York’s 19th Congressional District, asking them to support Antonio Delgado for U.S. Congress. We sent 11,000 postcards, and he won! This year, our group sent 20,000 postcards to Arizona’s 6th Congressional District to get out the vote, and those efforts helped to flip Arizona blue.

By the time I retired from the UN in 1993, I had already been a member of AFICS for 4 years. I served on the AFICS Governing Board from 1996-2015, and as Vice President around 2000. I became a member of the Board of the Charities Foundation in 1998, serving as Chair from 2009-2014 and as Chair of the Assistance Review Committee from 2003-2005. I still serve on the Board of the Charities Foundation.

I have written two books during my retirement. *A Different Kind of Streetwalker...: Manhattan by Foot, One Block at a Time* (2009) is about walking all the streets of Manhattan from 2005-2008. My autobiography, *And, for My Next Act...: From Bebop to the United Nations and Beyond* (2016) contains many stories of my 30 years with the UN. Both are available on [amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). I hope to start my next book, a fun ditty on cats, in early 2021.

I have also done a lot of traveling since retiring, which has brought the total of countries I have visited to 97, most recently a visit to Cuba in 2013.

In 1999, I was asked by the AFICS Charities Foundation to perform in their fundraiser, as it was known that I had performed in a previous life as a modern jazz pianist. That concert went so well that many others followed, including at the Ossining Public Library with Laura Lavelle and Frank Hartfelt, at the Chappaqua Library with Laura Lavelle, and in my hometown in northern Minnesota with a jazz ensemble in 2000. All of it was very fulfilling. I still play every day for myself, and I am a contributing member of the Jazz Conversations group at the Greenburgh Library, where I recently gave talks on Dave Brubeck and Nat King Cole, two of my early influences in modern jazz.



Since January 2017, I have been a political activist with a group in Croton, NY. In the beginning, we sent postcards to members of Congress on a range of issues; but in the leadup to the 2018 midterm elections, we decided to focus on getting out the vote.



My latest effort, which I have just begun, is a project in my hometown in northern Minnesota about the history of the town, with a syllabus developed for teachers of 6th grade students. I am hoping it will be ready for the 2021 fall school schedule, and that I can sit in the back of a 6th grade class one day and enjoy the history talk.

Inspiration Then and Now

by *Leona Forman*



Born in Tientsin, China, in 1940 to Russian Jewish parents, I was bilingual in Mandarin and Russian, my mother tongue. In 1953, we left China as refugees and found safe haven in Brazil. I was 13. After high school, my early hopes for a diplomatic career were foiled by laws preventing foreign-born citizens from serving in the Brazilian foreign service. I studied journalism and worked as a reporter and correspondent until I joined the UN Department of Public Information as an Information Officer for the 1981 UN Conference on New and Renewable Sources of Energy in Nairobi. I retired in 2000, after the Millennium Summit.

Suggesting an idea that would make the Summit even more special was the highlight of my career and my proudest contribution. It took a year of lobbying to convince my superiors that my idea had merit. I believed it presented international civil servants, led by Secretary-General Kofi Annan, with a unique opportunity to make the international legal framework a blueprint for a better world. Invited by the Secretary-General, Heads of

State and Government could add their signatures to any convention of which the UN is depository, thus expressing their support and rededication to the International Rule of Law.

I thought a public signing at the door of the General Assembly Hall, in full view of the international press and NGOs, would highlight the role of the UN in encouraging global participation in treaties central to the spirit and goals of the Charter. Secretary-General Kofi Annan agreed. Eighty-four delegations (including 59 Heads of State) participated in the highly publicized four-day ceremony. They signed and/or deposited instruments of ratification or accession to 40 multilateral agreements. It was such a success that the same opportunity has been offered at every General Assembly since, for two decades!

Heading the UN Information Office in Johannesburg, South Africa, in 1994, when the country held its first democratic election, was memorable. The UN sent over 3,000 international observers to witness the people of South Africa elect Nelson Mandela as their President. To meet Mr. Mandela was a special bonus.

Serving as Spokeswoman for Diogo Freitas do Amaral, President of the 50th anniversary session of the United Nations General Assembly, in 1995, furthered my understanding

of the crucial role of mediation that the President plays in negotiations between the UN and Member States and among the latter.

For five years I was Chief of the DPI NGO Section, providing international NGOs with direct access to information produced in formal governmental discussions in UN bodies. This helped generate public support in Member States for the General Assembly and for UN international conferences, even if NGOs were working in parallel gatherings. I fought the good fight to bring NGOs to a location in the Secretariat building after years of exile across First Avenue. Working with NGOs inspired the next 20 years of my life. Wanting to give back to the country that took us in, I founded BrazilFoundation, which bridges donors in the US with non-profit projects in Brazil. A total of \$50 million has been raised and grants made to 600 non-profits. Today, BrazilFoundation is a leader in Brazilian philanthropy. I am a member of the Board of Directors and pleased that Rebecca Reichmann Tavares, a former UN international civil servant, is now the Foundation's President and CEO.

Shepard Forman and I have been married for 53 years; we are parents of Alexandra (52) and Jacob (49). In 2018, 13-year-old Lara Forman (now 16) was adopted by Alexandra. They brought us the joy of grandparenthood!

A Lifetime of Service to the UN

by *Ruby Garvey and James Lee*



Ruby was one of the first colleagues that I met when I started working for UNDP in 1985. She patiently guided me through everything that was new to me and different from my life in academia. Ruby took immense pride in her work and I learned a lot about the workings of the Governing Council from her. We've remained steadfast friends over the years – more than 30 to date! As we spoke on a big birthday recently, Ruby told me that she was finally going to hang up her hat and is thinking of going back home to Grenada to be with family and friends. Here are some excerpts from our conversation.

Jim: When did you start working for the UN, Ruby, and why did you want to work for the Organization?

Ruby: Well, this is how it went. My first job was with a cable and wireless communications firm in Grenada, which I liked. I learned about the UN activities in Grenada and heard about the activities of FAO, UNICEF and UNESCO in my country. When I came to the USA, I began working with the UN system and grew aware of other organizations; finally, I found a

position with UNDP. I really liked what they were doing and wanted to be part of it.

Jim: What have you enjoyed most about your time with the UN and the other affiliated organizations that you have worked for?

Ruby: I've enjoyed working with people from all over the world. It was very interesting to be a part of the UNDP Governing Council and Executive Board secretariats and witness things happening in real time. My education and employment at home in Grenada were very strict and sometimes I wondered what they were preparing me for, but I later realized that they were preparing me for life. Well, I thank Grenada for that education, it was a very practical introduction to my responsibilities in helping to prepare documentation for the governing bodies of UNDP. I suppose that some of the colleagues who prepared the final drafts dreaded submitting them to my eagle eyes but I saw my role as helping them to understand that submissions to governing bodies in the UN must meet the highest standards and be produced in a timely fashion. I was the very proud recipient of a plaque from then Administrator William Draper in recognition of my dedicated service to world development.

Jim: Tell me again about what happened when you first retired.

Ruby: When I retired (for the first time), I was soon asked if I could

help out. I have "helped out" for over 25 years. My relatives back home thought that I would soon join them but here we are after all these years and only now am I planning on going back for good. Of course, I've made a lot of visits back home over the years, especially for Christmas, but something always brought me back here – I was very happy to continue contributing to international development in my retirement thanks to my knowledge of the UN.

Jim: I know that you're a lifetime member of AFICS/NY. Would you recommend membership to other retirees?

Ruby: Of course! It's a very smart thing to do. Quite recently, I was sifting through papers deciding what to discard when I discovered the receipt for my lifetime membership in AFICS: the cost was \$250 at the time. I know that AFICS plays an important role in ensuring that retiree benefits are secure. I have also enjoyed the get-togethers, where you can meet old friends and colleagues whom you might not otherwise get a chance to see. And you know, it helps to keep you active mentally, physically and socially – there's nothing more important than that for a full life in retirement. Remember that you have great skills and experience and that YOU CAN HELP! I've just said that I'm hanging up my hat but, you know, my colleagues don't want to see me go. How wonderful is that?

SDGs: Enhanced Understanding

by *Nicholas N. Gouede*



When I reflect on my time at the United Nations, I am reminded of the experienced manner in which international relations were appraised in the Organization, the invaluable insights and countless lessons that have benefited me well beyond work in the UN system. My keen interest in development and international economic cooperation came in 1981 when I was a Dag Hammarskjöld Fellow, and later in 2001 when I joined UNDP and was actively involved in the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which committed nations to a new global partnership to reduce extreme poverty. The Declaration set out a series of eight time-bound targets – with a deadline of 2015 – that became known as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

I retired from the UN in 2016 with the experience, knowledge base and practical skills necessary to move on in life and with a global perspective to address the sustainable development goals (SDGs) that markedly transcend national boundaries—not to mention with an unmatched network of UNDP communications and public affairs

officers and Columbia University Journalism School alumni around the world.

So, I came up with the idea of putting together a collection of my best writings during my UN years. Titled “The U.N. Beat: A Selection of Writings on Sustainable Development”, this journalistic report contains a wide range of press releases, feature stories, policy briefs and research papers on socioeconomic growth and sustainable development. The articles range widely in scope and focus from the MDGs to the SDGs: alleviating poverty and fostering international economic cooperation and development; advocating for democratic governance and a free and independent press; promoting environmental protection and tackling climate change; addressing reproductive-health issues, child survival and development, and women’s empowerment; and reporting on the growing role of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development www.ngnyc-communications.com.

It has been an exhilarating experience working with like-minded individuals in the UN family to advance the SDGs. In cooperation with the Speakers’ Bureau of the UN Department of Global Communications, I volunteered to join a dynamic group of UN experts to brief a wide range of audiences on the important work of the world body. The briefings on the SDGs included

high-school students from Green Brook Middle School, NJ, and most recently, Saint Anthony’s High School, a Roman Catholic college preparatory school located in South Huntington, New York.

A variety of comments by former UN colleagues, classmates from the Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism (Columbia J-School), and friends indicate that the articles in this report offer critical insights into sub-Saharan Africa’s development challenges and opportunities. These articles, some say, can definitely be used as creative writing resources for journalism and international affairs students and stimulate a dialogue among journalists, communication professionals, academics and development experts at a time of rapid changes in the dynamics of the implementation of the SDGs by 2030.

I am grateful for this and, in these increasingly complex times, I’m thrilled to join AFICS members to tell my story on how I am actively supporting the SDGs. I truly believe that this offers a great opportunity for our inspiring community to come together in support of the global goals and to maximize our impact in the process.

My Appreciation of ASHI

by *Carl Gray*



As we advance in age during our retirement years, we become more fragile and vulnerable to a variety of health and medical issues. It is therefore good to know that we have the support of our health insurance companies. In this regard I would like to pay tribute to the UN's After Service Health Insurance (ASHI) system.

My story is the following: A few days after Thanksgiving Day in 2019, I went to an urgent care facility because I was not feeling well. The receptionist took one look at me, saw that I was struggling to breathe and sent me into a back room to be examined by several medical professionals. After a few minutes they called an ambulance to take me to a local hospital. That began a more than year-long journey through three hospitals and a rehabilitation facility in Rockland and Westchester counties in New York State.

I was diagnosed first with pneumonia and then with other serious health issues related to my heart, kidneys, blood pressure and blood glucose levels. After hospitalization and rehab, I was placed in the care of six medical specialists and a nutritionist. This came as a complete shock and surprise to me, as I had never been seriously ill in my entire life before these events.

I was grateful for the support given by ASHI. They had to intervene directly to verify the legitimacy of my insurance claims with one of the hospitals. I saw some hospital and related bills for hundreds of thousands of dollars. (There was one for over \$217,000.) The cost to me, so far, has been manageable, in the region of only a few hundred dollars, mostly co-payments for medications and doctor visits. I believe this was all due to ASHI's superb and expert management of our health insurance system.

I do not know what the future brings, but in early 2021, I seem to have survived my medical emergencies. I hope to resume teaching economics as an adjunct instructor at a local community college. Many of my lectures to eager and interested students have included unique stories and examples from my career as an Economic Affairs Officer in the United Nations Secretariat.

Greetings from a Mohican

by *Robert Kaminker*



On 10 January this year, 2021, I marked the 75th anniversary of my first day as a UN staff member, having joined in London on the first day of the first General Assembly. My life membership in AFICS dates back to the beginning of the Association. The very few Mohicans, of which I am one, who are still around are also part of the 50 years of AFICS. Although my UN career posted me away from headquarters for many of my 36 years of service (1946 to 1982), and my retirement has taken me to my home country, France, I have stayed aware of AFICS and followed its publications and activities. And I have always visited the office when passing through New York. Only once have I been unable to contact anyone: the UN had been evacuated as I spent a week in New York, arriving the day

before 9/11! As a member of AFICS not living in the New York area, I would like to remind the Board of AFICS that many of its members are like me, and too little attention is paid to some of our problems. As a member also of AAFI-AFICS Geneva, I have had help from them for some of the problems experienced during this COVID episode; however, not everyone has double membership.

I wish AFICS a long life of service to its members, and I am happy to see that its Board is composed more and more of retirees unknown to me, who are therefore more recent retirees.



Family at the Centre

by *Louise Laheurte*



In 2006, I went along with a friend to an AFICS/NY luncheon, without knowing anything about the Association at the time. My tablemate happened to be Richard Nottidge – a longtime AFICS pillar, as I would soon find out. We struck up a pleasant conversation, during which he extolled the benefits of joining AFICS/NY, so much so that by the end I was convinced it would be a good idea to join. I even agreed there and then to volunteer for its Charities Foundation. Within days, I paid my lifetime membership dues and dealt with my first charities case. And within months, I also ran for a seat on the AFICS/NY Governing Board.

I served on the Governing Board for nine full years, most of that time as its secretary. This helped me get a better grasp of UN pension and after-service health insurance issues – obviously of prime importance to all of us UN retirees, but of no previous relevance to my work experience or, I must admit, interest. I recall initially puzzling

over many a Board discussion on those issues, not making much sense of my own scribbled notes. As a former press officer, I could report fairly well on just about any topic, or so I thought. But pension and insurance often sounded much more complicated than the political debates and issues I had covered or dealt with at the UN. One never stops learning, as the saying goes, and Board colleagues would congenially fill me in whenever necessary.

While no longer on the AFICS/NY Governing Board, I am still with the Charities Foundation's Assistance Review Committee, of which I was co-chair until recently. I have also been on the Foundation's Board of Directors, including as vice-president for a few years. That we can provide some emergency relief to fellow retirees in need has always been gratifying to me. I have on occasion lent a hand to the office and a couple of other committees as well. In whatever activity, whether social, administrative or other, it is the camaraderie and team spirit that I have appreciated the most among my AFICS colleagues.

I had a fulfilling 36-year career at the UN, holding many successive functions in five departments, from UNHQ tour guide at age 20 to Deputy Director for Peace Operations at 50. When I took early retirement in 2002, it was to

place family back at the very centre of my life, where it has remained anchored ever since. I have also since pursued lifelong interests in the arts, culture and travel, and enjoyed more leisure time with old UN and non-UN friends, as well as counseling at my graduate alma mater and doing occasional UN consultancy work. In most recent years, quite besides constraints due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all-consuming family circumstances have kept me away from most AFICS-related activity; but I expect to resume at least some in the coming months.

With such a busy life already, why bother with AFICS/NY? On reflection, the reason for my continued involvement boils down to the following. As one of mixed origin and international upbringing, I have always been drawn to people of widely diverse backgrounds but with similar outlook, as world citizens striving for a better life for all. It therefore came as no surprise that I ended up working for the UN. And this has led me to AFICS/NY, as both a UN advocacy organization and a dedicated support group for former UN staff, for which I am quite thankful.

My UN Experience in Film

by *Phyllis Lee*



Turning 60 was a bit of a shock for me, as I'm sure it was for many of you. The event – i.e., the retirement/birthday – happened to fall in the middle of an ECOSOC session and my old colleagues in the UN system were all busy with agency heads in town. So, most of those who attended the farewell event were younger colleagues who didn't have much of a shared history with me. Over my 34 years at the UN, I had been to many retirement parties, and now I was at mine. How did that happen? I missed my elders, my mentors, and their commitment to the ideals of the UN. The UN – the organization that helped my parents in the displaced persons camp in US-occupied Germany after World War II, and the one I had given so many years of my life to as an insufficient thank you. My mother was trained by UNRRA and worked for that organization before coming to New York. My godmother, originally from Czechoslovakia, worked for UNICEF and was the brainchild behind the greeting cards. And here I was suddenly in

an unreal scenario – no longer the only female face in the meeting and the youngest, I was now packing up to leave. Retirement? Golden years? Rocking chair and knitting? I was training for my fourth NYC marathon, and it just... didn't add up. But I remembered how I felt about any 60-year-old when I was under 40, and I forced myself to communicate a kindly sense of indulgence towards those who looked at me... that way. One day, I thought, they will understand...

Today, I am directing and producing an independent documentary film that builds upon my work at the UN, particularly at OCHA, as well as the 15 years of teaching as an adjunct professor at night. As I think about this new chapter, I recall the words of Sergio Vieira de Mello, whom I accompanied into a press conference: "Remember, Phyllis, use your head but speak from your heart." The film, now in post-production, focuses on the experience of being stateless, not wanted by any country, following terrible trauma and loss. And it looks at how people grow beyond their tragedy to embrace faith in life and find purpose. You can access it here: www.afterthefinalno.com.

Melody for Dialogue among Civilizations

by *Mehri Madarshahi*



This is a prevailing thought and worries most of us when we retire or leave our jobs at the United Nations: how to continue living without routinely going to our offices, having lunches and coffee breaks with our colleagues and meet new and old friends from some 190+ countries? Upon signing all those papers for separation, we mostly leave our hearts and minds behind. For days, we nostalgically come back to the building trying to find our colleagues and friends who might be going to the cafeteria, to meetings or to the library. Let's face it, at the age that we are sent to retirement, we are not old but we are not young enough to learn a new profession. It is, indeed, a period for which we should have had plans long before leaving our regular jobs but most of us haven't done so.

Soon, after I left the UN – where I spent 26 years of my youth and adult life – I had a head full of ambitions and ideas. I knew that the rich experience that this organization has afforded me was incomparably better than that of any national government. I decided to use this precious knowledge and experience in building a new

life, believing that there is life after retirement. For that, I decided to leave the familiar New York City and move to France, where my husband was employed at UNESCO. Among other functions, he was also dealing with the implementation of General Assembly resolution 53/22, in which the General Assembly proclaimed 2012 the United Nations Year of Dialogue among Civilizations. I accompanied him to one of his meetings which took place in Morocco, where I observed that a full first day meeting was spent on defining what is “dialogue” and how to define “civilization”. I thought of an answer. That night I invited seven musicians from seven countries with different musical instruments whom had never met before. They were attending the Fez Festival and created a jam musical session. I proved that dialogue among civilizations can be achieved through the harmony of music. The final statement of the meeting made a reference to this important finding and its participants left with a feeling that they had achieved what they came for. This was the beginning of the Melody for Dialogue Among Civilisations Association, which I established in 2004 in Paris, and today, after 16 years, it is still engaged in bringing messages of peace and harmony through music and creating environmental awareness to various continents. The Association and I as its president have obtained a number of awards, including the Aspen Institute Award for Diplomacy and the UNESCO 60th anniversary medal.

Since 2009, the Association has been engaged in promoting environmental advocacy and awareness and I received pledges of one million trees during a Geneva Forum – the first of which was planted in the Parc des Eaux-Vives in Geneva, in the presence of the Mayor of Geneva and the Director-General of CERN. This initiative was followed by five major conferences (Geneva, Hangzhou, Havana, Lagos, New York, Paris) on water and green earth accompanied by mega-multicultural concerts gaining international praise. Today, in addition to Paris, the Association has branches in Geneva and New York with 580 musicians from 75 countries. Its conference and research activities are entrusted to two new companies, namely Global Cultural Networks in Hong Kong and Shenzhen continuing its environmental awareness and advocacy programmes. We focus on advocating for a sustainable urban environment, the circular economy and implementation of the SDGs, as well as aspects related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its relationship to climate change, including technological innovations and creative solutions. All these efforts have also been recognized and encouraged by my appointments as Honorary and Visiting Professor by several respectable universities in China.

After all, there is life after retirement! It can be very fulfilling indeed.

Volunteering and Being with Family

by *Barbara Masciangelo*



I was recruited in 1980 as a Proofreader in the English Unit of the Copy Preparation and Proofreading Section. At the time, this was part of the Department of Conference Services, which included interpretation, translation and editorial services in addition to services for meetings. In 1981, I moved to the Treaty Series Unit in the same Section, where we worked exclusively on the *United Nations Treaty Series*, in which all registered treaties and international agreements are published, with English and French translations, as mandated by Article 102 of the UN Charter. By 1996, this Unit had been moved to the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs so that registration, filing and recording, and publishing of treaties were under the same umbrella.

My UN career had so many memorable moments – the Millennium Summit in 2000 was one such moment – but the best aspect by any measure was the staff. Like many

of us, I worked alongside some fabulous human beings from all over the world. We toiled in service to the world, and it meant a great deal to all of us.

Soon after my separation from service in 2008, I looked after my sister-in-law in her last days and welcomed my first grandson into this world. Since then, I have volunteered in a hospice setting and worked with children in See Hear Feel Film, a visual literacy programme for third-grade students. In an opportunity that came my way through AFICS, I served a six-month stint at the Sirleaf Market Women's Fund, which advocates for the health, self-sufficiency and dignity of market women in Liberia; while there, I was privileged to know and work with the late Peg Snyder, founding director of UNIFEM (now UN-Women).

I have also spent time in Cuba and in India; and I have had some wonderful family times in Italy, relating stories of Rome's long history to my older grandson and throwing euros into the *Fontana di Trevi*, making more wishes than I can remember, with my younger grandson.

I am forever grateful for my years at the United Nations. Every time I pass the Secretariat or the General Assembly building on the UN campus, I feel a surge of pride,

tempered by an understanding of the enormous challenges ahead for the Organization, and indeed for the world. I am also grateful to be a lifetime member of AFICS, a wonderful organization that provides a focus for those of us who are ending our UN careers, while serving as a bridge to UN clubs and activities. Well done on 50 years, and cheers to the next 50!

Walking the road to gender equality

by *Viola Morgan*



The UN Fourth World Conference on Women, held in September 1995 in Beijing, China, was a landmark for the international community in promoting gender equality and women's advancement.

What sits prominently in my memories of the UN is the collaboration among different UN partners and UNDP bureaus during preparations. It was one of the most exciting and productive partnerships I witnessed during my service at the UN. UNDP named gender focal points in the bureaus and in country offices. Although we recognized the social, cultural, economic and political country differences, we worked seamlessly around the agenda for equality and human rights, enthused and empowered by the determination to leverage the strength and resources of the UN to make a difference.

Gender issues were a hard sell due to culture, structural inequalities and biases. I was among the first UNDP staff members to actively support gender and women's

initiatives and contributed to designing the necessary tools, such as civil society gender budgeting, and learning, consultation and briefing (LCB) on gender mainstreaming, which became an important tool across the organization. We evolved from Gender and Development to Gender in Development. We embraced the Millennium Development Goals.

Prior to the conference we organized panel discussions which illuminated the myriad issues countries were facing – from health to absence of women in decision-making and the economy. The Africa Bureau, where I headed gender programmes for over a decade, highlighted women's leadership in governance and decision-making. African countries also highlighted the girl child and peace building.

The collaboration and camaraderie were awesome! The Beijing Express for the exchange of conflict prevention approaches brought experts from various regions to share experiences. We also organized a panel discussion on Women and Governance in partnership with ECA and the then OAU, now the African Union. Assistant Secretary-General and UNDP Africa Bureau Director Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, later elected President of Liberia, chaired a standing-room-only Women and Governance panel, the only panel organized by a Bureau. This led to a publication on

Profiles of Women in Leadership and a flagship programme.

I believe one of the greatest assets of the United Nations is that it can bring people together to make the world a better place. As we embrace the SDGs and live through the COVID pandemic, the attainment of human rights through gender equality and women's advancement is as important as ever, but there is much unfinished business. I am happy to pass the baton to younger UN staff, who can enjoy the same partnership and goodwill that spurred me on in one of the most meaningful jobs of my UN tenure. On this 50th anniversary of AFICS, I realize that I continue to inject my passion for women's advancement and gender equality into all the work I do in retirement.

While great strides have been made, we must continue to challenge the status quo and work to transform societies to fulfil the promise of decades ago, when we served as young, vigilant foot soldiers for human rights and gender equality. The work continues...

Once a Librarian ...

by *Rosemary Noona*



I began my career at the United Nations in 1972 in the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs. My job entailed editorial work for the United Nations Treaty Series. In 1986, I enrolled in the Masters in Library Science evening programme at Columbia University and found my true profession. After graduating in 1988, I moved to the UN library. My love for books, research and international affairs was fulfilled in the library, where I held a variety of jobs over the years, eventually becoming the legal librarian for the last 10 years of my career. During this part of my career, I also had the privilege of participating in three electoral missions: Namibia, Angola and South Africa. All three were experiences that I will never forget. I retired from the UN in January 2009. I have to say that a large part of my retirement has been spent

on mundane things such as home projects, cooking, gardening and genealogy. I am also a member of our town's Historical Society, an active member of one of its civic groups, Elmwood Park Involved Citizens, and am active with my high school alumni. In 2018, my high school class of '67 successfully led a campaign in town, entirely funded by donations from our class, to add memorial street signs for our veterans who were killed in action during wartime.



But my true passion is travelling, and I have found a way to combine my love of travel with continuing education in my profession, librarianship. I am a member of the American Association of Law Libraries (AALL) and the International Association of Law Libraries (IALL). The AALL conference

is held in a different US city each year and provides opportunities to keep abreast of new developments in library technology and to network with librarians with whom I had relationships when I worked. IALL, on the other hand, meets in a different country each year and focuses on the legal system and legal issues of that jurisdiction. I particularly enjoy the IALL conferences, not only because of the venues, such as Argentina, Russia, Turkey and various other European locations, but also because I have met a lot of international law librarians and have made many new friends. Of course, the pandemic has put a halt to my travel for now. But when the world gets back to normal, I will be back to travelling and seeing the world.

Finally, I wish to congratulate AFICS on its 50th anniversary and to thank the Board members, past and present, for their efforts to keep the UN retirees informed on important issues and up to date on UN developments, and for providing events so that we may keep in touch with our former colleagues. I look forward to the resumption of AFICS social activities!!

Sariaya Learning Centre for Development

by *Isolda S. Oca*



After retiring from the NGO Section of the UN Department of Public Information in 2010, I returned to the Philippines and founded an NGO in Sariaya, Quezon, south of Manila. My grandmother's ancestral house had burned down in the 1960s, and I decided to rebuild it, inaugurating the Sariaya Learning Centre for Development (SLCD) there on 21 January 2012. The facility contains the Max Bernard Solis Library (named after my grandfather) as well as UN publications and a multipurpose area which is also a theatre space. It is air-conditioned, soundproof and seats 100 persons. Please visit SLCD's website, sariyacentre.org, for pictures and more details.

SLCD's initial activities were tutorials and summer classes. Students who could afford the minimal fee paid, while those who could not pay received scholarships.

To highlight the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), SLCD had two projects related to the empowerment of women. The first was an exhibit by two local artists, Girlie Alcalá and Marissa Tan, in 2012. Then in 2013, in

cooperation with the Technical Education and Skills Development Authority of the Philippines (TESDA) and the Franciscan nuns of St. Joseph Academy, SLCD embarked on a project in the Sarap Buhay Community in Baranggay Tumbaga, where women were trained to produce twine from coconut husks. Coco Nucifera Pacific brought the raw material, collected the finished product and paid the women for their work.

Teatro Sariaya is an SLCD programme that uses theatre as an educational tool. Its first production, in 2012, was "Isang Pamaskong Awit", based on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. It was translated into Pilipino by Tereso Tullao, Jr. and adapted into Sariaya Tagalog by Eric Dedace; and it was performed at both the SLCD facility in Sariaya and the Activity Center of SM Lucena, a supermall in a neighbouring town. Teatro Sariaya's next production, performed at the same two venues in 2016, was "Ang Munting Prinsipe: The Musical". Based on Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince*, it was translated into Pilipino by Lilia Antonio, with original lyrics for 15 songs written by Antonio Reyes, and adapted into Sariaya Tagalog by Eric Dedace. The music was composed by music students from St. Scholastica's College (my alma mater) and De La Salle University.

One donor bought a whole night of "Isang Pamaskong Awit" and asked the Manuel Quezon Elementary

School to select 100 students to watch the play. I asked the teachers to get feedback from their students, and it was all positive. It was the first time that these students had watched a play in their lives!

A UN Exhibit on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) was held at SLCD in December 2017. During the launch, Teresa Debuque, National Information Officer at UNIC Manila, gave a presentation on how the local community could help in achieving the SDGs. There was a question-and-answer session after the presentation.

One item in my bucket list was to bring the United Nations Singers to the Philippines, as I had been a member of this group since 1983. They came in February 2014 and gave 10 performances, in Manila, Sariaya, Tagaytay, at PGH cancer institute and other schools and malls. The UN Information Centre (UNIC) in Manila assisted us by providing space for our meetings.

SLCD was approved for association with the UN Department of Public Information's Committee on NGOs in 2017. This association constitutes a commitment of SLCD to disseminate information and raise public awareness about the purposes and activities of the United Nations and issues of global concern.

Being Gay in the UN... What's It Like?

by *Sam Oglesby*



I joined the United Nations Development Programme in 1973. It was the dream job I had always wanted. Travel, living in fascinating countries, and helping to make the world a better place. I couldn't have asked for more.

The only glitch in this perfect picture was my sexual orientation. I relegated my sexuality to a private realm, the "closet", but eventually my persona would emerge. How would I deal with this "abnormal" orientation? Or more precisely, how would I be dealt with by the United Nations and my colleagues?

My first three assignments – in Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia – were "safe" posts. Large offices where I was a junior staff member. With safety in numbers playing to my advantage, I could work hard during the day at the office, then go out and enjoy my personal life.

One straw in the wind, however, was my farewell party in UNDP Bangkok, when a speech was given

that ended with a humorous play on words in Thai saying I never flirted with women. The assembled staff roared with laughter at the punch line, and although I smiled appropriately, I felt my face turning red with shame.

Subsequent assignments in Myanmar and Indonesia were rewarding gigs. Especially Indonesia, where I met the man who would become my life partner of 38 years and eventually my husband.

My next assignment as Deputy Resident Representative in Bhutan was a promotion and should have been cause for celebration, but it was where my career took a downturn. In a small country office, I was now a high-profile, 46-year-old bachelor with a male partner. It was the wrong place at the wrong time. The assignment was ended prematurely, and I was eventually transferred to UNDP headquarters for my final UNDP posting. My career and any further advancement were effectively dead in the water.

It is good to see that gay people in the UN are no longer as alone and helpless as they were when I first joined the organization. UNGLOBE (United Nations Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees) is active and supportive in giving gay staff members voice and greater hope for equality. My case is now before the Secretary-General and the General Assembly to approve

pension benefits for my husband should I pre-decease him. Let's hope that the UN will do the right thing in this case, remembering that the UN Declaration on Human Rights states that "all people have the right to marry and to equal rights as to marriage."



Supporting SDG5: Gender Equality

by *Darlene Prescott*



Gender equality—the longest-lasting societal challenge on the planet—is my targeted SDG, not entirely because I am a woman but more so because female gender discrimination and indeed oppression and abuse of women have been around since the dawn of time. In some areas, girls continue to suffer horrific genital mutilation, are married off to older men, and by law, women are not allowed to control their bodies. Women continue to be paid less than men for the same work. And there have always been fewer opportunities for women and girls. During the COVID-19 pandemic, violence against women and the murder of women are increasing from already high levels. Furthermore, this age-old cultural pathology affects half the world population, over half in the U.S. Now, that is a problem that needs to be solved!

I was proud to work for the UN for 28 years, an organization that works towards gender equality. For my part, as a lawyer, I have

published several legal articles on the subject, both while serving with the Office of Legal Affairs and after retirement. I wrote the articles to draw attention to various aspects of gender inequality.

After retirement and return to the Houston area, I worked pro bono to help rescued human trafficking victims obtain their T visas—which would allow them to remain in the US and work towards citizenship. Most of the cases involved vulnerable Central American young women being forced to work as prostitutes in local cantinas. Human trafficking, behind drug and arms dealing, ranks third in international criminal profits. This means that crippling sexual slavery has claimed, and continues to claim, in 2021, multitudes of young female lives.

As a board member of the Houston Chapter of UNA-USA, I initiated an effort to encourage the Houston Mayor's office to consider the symbolic measure of Houston becoming a CEDAW City—a city for the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women – and helped to organize and participate in the annual celebration of International Women's Day, held at Houston City Hall.

I have to add that while a high-profile celebration brings attention to women's rights, I would hope

that the US would finally ratify and implement CEDAW. The convention has been sitting in the US Senate Foreign Relations committee for some time. Over the years, I have written to various political figures, most recently to President Biden and Vice-President Harris, encouraging the ratification of the Convention. More support from the public would certainly make it more difficult for politicians to ignore CEDAW. I understand that corporations and conservative religious groups – powerful forces in today's America – have voiced opposition to the treaty. Profits and male-centered belief systems, or any other reasons, could never provide a legitimate basis to restrict the fulfillment of human rights for women and girls.

Once we attain full gender equality, I believe that we will achieve a more productive global society and a much happier world!

Busier Than Ever in Retirement

by Swadesh Rana



With the very best wishes for a 100th anniversary in 2070, heartiest congratulations are doubly owed now to the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS) on its 50th. First, for its traditional role in advocacy and protection of its entitlements as well as welfare of its

current 3,000 members. And as of 21 December 2020, also for its institutional resilience by committing to provide updates, information, and guidance about COVID-19 from various sources for the public at large. In doing so, AFICS has once again adapted fast to the changing non-military threats to global survival of which COVID-19 remains unprecedented for its devastating impact within and across national frontiers.

Working at the United Nations is humbling, uplifting and rewarding. One has many better educated, more knowledgeable, higher-placed colleagues to work with.

Also, howsoever tough may be the personal situation, it would seem almost negligible in comparison with the nature, number and gravity of difficult issues facing the world. And one acquires incomparable insights, skills and expertise as an international civil servant.

During 20 years of working at the UN Secretariat and in the field, I acquired expertise for data-based policy and results-oriented political analysis, precise drafting, quiet consensus-building and due attention for anyone with a different viewpoint, which came in very handy in my post-retirement activities since 2000.

Highlighted below is my post-retirement profile.

- Senior Political Adviser and Project Director of Maritime Security for Oceans Beyond Piracy with a focus on South Asia;
- Senior Consultant on Practical Disarmament Measures for the Foreign Offices of Switzerland, Germany and Kenya;
- Guest instructor for the Office of Global Intelligence in Argentina;
- Designed and taught semester-based courses for graduate/undergraduate students at the universities of New York, Columbia and Johns Hopkins;
- Panelist/ speaker on current affairs at Princeton, Yale, and North Carolina universities;
- Published over two dozen articles, including four in 2020: “COVID-19 and World Health System” (*UN Chronicle*); “Victims or Game-changers: Women and Climate Change” (Women in International Security, Washington DC); “Regionalism or Internationalism: Choices for the US Department of State” (Women’s Foreign Policy Group, Washington DC); and “Centrepiece of India’s Maritime Security: the Indian Ocean” (*The South Asian Times*).
- Mentor for the Women’s Foreign Policy Group and New York University’s annual mentoring program for graduate students from five universities in the Tri-State area and Washington DC;
- Guest speaker and panelist for The Writers and Journalists Foundation;
- Included in Hindi/Urdu weekly international Zoom “mushaira” with poets from Australia, India, Norway, Sri Lanka, United Kingdom and USA;
- Published a debut novella in Hindi/Urdu language entitled *Kotheywali*, which continues to receive critical literary acclaim and gets excerpted;
- Enjoy gardening around my corner house in Long Island, where I live with my husband of 50 years, and visits by my two sons, their wives, and my three grandchildren;
- Do daily yoga and meditation at home.

Why I Mediate

by *Phil Reynolds*



Wherever two or three are gathered – there is conflict. It's the human condition. Like fire, conflict is neither good nor bad – it all depends on how it is used. Fire can be used to warm our feet or to burn down a house. Similarly, conflict can be used as an excuse to escalate tensions or as an opportunity to work out a negotiated solution to a problem.

There are many styles of dealing with conflict. Some folks simply avoid it. This can be effective if one has no direct interest but it doesn't resolve the conflict. Others compete to have their way in a conflict. They can often have their way in a survival situation, but in other situations their win can make enemies of the losers. Accommodation may save you from aggravating a police officer over a ticket, but it doesn't get your needs met.

There are two styles which feature in mediation. Compromising (50/50 per cent split) is a good approach when collaboration is simply not possible. As you can imagine, collaboration is the ideal way of resolving conflicts, especially where long-term relationships are involved – e.g., couples, parents, neighbours, colleagues.

There are several practical ways of dealing with conflicts. By far

the best is for the parties to have a face-to-face civil conversation and to agree on a solution. The worst way of resolving a conflict is aggression, which often gets you in trouble or in jail. Other options include: (a) seeking a judgment from a court, where an official third party decides on your case for you; (b) a settlement between your lawyers in or out of court, which can be expensive; (c) arbitration, where the parties choose an arbitrator, who will decide on their case for them; and (d) mediation, where a neutral mediator empowers the parties and assists them to work out their own solution. This can lead to win-win solutions, which tend to stand the test of time, and is what I like to do.

Here's what mediation looks like: A diminutive man (let's call him Ajrun) complained about excessive noise from his upstairs neighbour, a large man (let's call him John). Ajrun was scared to confront John directly so simply pounded the ceiling when the noise was too loud. This aggravated John. In the introductory part of the mediation session, Ajrun and John realized that the noise was caused by John's overactive grandchildren. Ajrun said he also loved his own overactive grandchildren. The proud grandfathers exchanged pictures and the mood changed: they agreed to no noise after 10:00 p.m. and would phone each other if there were any exceptions. On their way out, Ajrun invited John and his family to tea. By working through mediation, both parties "won".

I have practiced mediation for over 20 years – most recently with the Anne Arundel Conflict Resolution

Center in Annapolis. Fifty hours of basic Mediation Training and courses for specific types of mediation started me off, but I learn something new from each mediation session. We are not always successful, but the satisfaction of helping two parties to move from open, often loud, hostility to an agreed plan is its own reward. That's why I, along with about 40 volunteer mediators at the Center, keep coming back and enabling the Center to offer most of its services free. I mediate between separated parents who share the upbringing of their children; prisoners and family and friends who will help them resettle in the community; schools and special needs students; neighbours – your tree fell in my yard; parties in courtroom situations and others. It has become my primary volunteer occupation and it has been very fulfilling.

I started as a volunteer mediator while I was still working at the United Nations in New York, but now I see it as a perfect retirement job, keeping me active and engaged. The two-hour sessions are intense and emotional but mediators don't usually need to do research for a session since the less they know about the parties, the less they are tempted to become involved – a taboo for neutral mediators. The only residual responsibilities are to plan for any necessary subsequent sessions. I can happily proceed with other retirement activities.

In short, being a mediator provides a way of giving back to the community while providing a truly fulfilling experience. That's why I mediate.

How I Became a Yoga Therapist

by *Paula Saddler*



When I retired from the UN at the age of 61, relatively healthy and with a pension, I had no long-term plan for how to spend the rest of my life. I wanted to do something meaningful, not just have fun. I had always focused on financial security, and now that worry was gone. So, what was I to do? As many retirees have done before me, I kept working! I formed a consulting company. I had a few clients in the UN system, and I helped them to achieve their organizational goals.

The work was rewarding but exhausting. I spent many long hours hunched over a computer. Even before I retired, my doctor had warned me that I needed to start exercising or I would become a hunchback. Now, I joined the local YMHA, and first I tried working on the weight machines. That was awful. I hated the clanking noise, and I was too timid to engage a personal trainer to help me. Next, I tried a group Pilates class; but after I did leg stretches with my head held up, my neck screamed at me. Pilates was out. Then I saw that they offered yoga classes, and I tried one.

I plunked my mat down on the floor and followed the teacher's

instructions. She was wonderful... and, as they say, the rest is history. After each yoga class, my body really felt better. I could not explain it, but I knew that something good was happening to me.

When my teacher left the YMHA, I followed her to the neighborhood gym, where I took classes with her four times a week for the next four years. I also met a wonderful group of ladies who, like me, wanted to stay healthy. I continued to feel better and stronger, and I was able to work on my posture to prevent more rounding of my spine. I started to ask myself what kind of work could keep me active and moving. One day when I was on vacation with two of my friends, we decided to do a yoga practice, and I led it based on memory. That was the moment when I realized that I wanted to teach yoga.

My plan was to become a viniyoga teacher, with a focus on working with seniors. I believed this would keep me healthy and happy and allow me to contribute to others' well-being. My inspiration came from Sri T. Krishnamacharya, the founder of viniyoga, who at the age of 101 was still practicing and teaching.

In 2016 I enrolled in teacher training with the American Viniyoga Institute at Yogaville in Virginia. I made it through an intense two-year program with the help of massage therapists, who soothed my aching muscles after six straight days of three-hour yoga

practice, followed by a day of rest. I learned that to work with seniors, I had to learn to apply yoga to pain and dysfunction in their structural, mental and emotional bodies. That meant another two years of onsite training for 2 weeks, 3 times a year. I spent 150 hours practicing my skills on clients, and I completed yoga therapy training in May 2020. Our last session was entirely online due to the pandemic.

Two of my classmates and I were ready to offer our services to the senior population. I am a lifetime member of AFICS, so I spoke with Mac Chiulli, Chair of the AFICS Committee on Ageing. She encouraged me to propose a yoga programme to the Governing Board, and they accepted my proposal.

Since June 2020 Shoba Mani, Liz Huntington and I have given two webinars for AFICS members: "Managing Anxiety with Yoga" and "Using Yoga to Strengthen the Immune System". We have also led three practice sessions: "Calming Election Jitters with Yoga", "Being Present" and "Reset Yourself". We had positive responses to all our presentations so far, and there are more to come. Please contact us at hy@healingyoga.live or visit our website: www.healingyoga.mailchimpsites.com.

Using My Voice

by Joan T. Seymour



It has been twenty years since I retired and, to my surprise, the time has really flown. Like others, I had travel high on my list. I traveled to Bayreuth, Germany, to attend Wagner's operas and to Wexford, Ireland, for less familiar ones. I made two visits to the Holy Land and to Australia to meet new-found relatives. Then there were studies. I earned a Certificate in Organizational Dynamics and one in Multi-cultural Studies. I had planned to use these as the basis of a consultancy on successful retirement, to help others find their way in this new stage of life; but I gave that up during the recession of 2008. Twice, for short periods, I returned to the UN Division for the Advancement of Women, where I helped with a study on Women, Peace and Security in response to Security Council resolution 1325 (2000).

I wanted to get out of my comfort zone, so I decided to take up voice-over acting; I landed a few jobs, then moved on to using my voice elsewhere. I turned to

Learning Ally, (formerly Recording for the Blind & Dyslexic), where among the books I recorded were a couple of Harry Potter novels. As there were few readers fluent in French, I was assigned all the French textbooks, which helped me to maintain my accent in that language. I was happy to know that my voice was helping students to learn a language that I love so much!

But my main volunteer activity has been using my voice for singing. I joined a camerata at my church, then the New York Festival Singers, in which I sang Beethoven's "Ode to Joy" for New Year's Eve at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine. While our group no longer sings at the Cathedral, we continue the tradition at the Church of St. Paul the Apostle. For me, that is the best way to usher in the coming year; and we finish early enough for me to join friends in toasting the New Year.

Some years ago, I became a hospice volunteer through the Visiting Nurse Service of New York. We spend two-hour shifts visiting with patients and their loved ones and answering any of their concerns. This led me to join a group called Threshold Choir, which sings at the bedsides of those at the end of life. Music has been shown to have a profound effect on the mind, and hearing is the last sense to disappear, so patients

can hear you even if comatose. We sing in groups of three or four at the hospice, and more recently at patients' homes. Initially I had difficulty learning the songs, most of which are written specifically for this purpose, without the benefit of written words and music; and as we sing unaccompanied, I worried about remembering the words and the harmony. To my surprise, one day I found myself singing one of the songs, and it all fell into place.

As singers, we get satisfaction from the response of the patients to our voices, and we are pleased to give relatives a chance to relax and express their emotions. We usually ask to be invited in to sing. If relatives are not sure they want us to do so, we sing just outside the room, and then we often find ourselves invited in. Threshold Choir also offers a Song Bath twice a year, performing some of the repertoire to small numbers of attendees.

Poetry, Collage and Activism

by *Monica Jean Siegel*



Here's what's happening while marking the 50th anniversary of AFICS and my nine years into retirement.

I am always grateful for AFICS messages, invitations, voting, and periodic Bulletins. Thank you AFICS for holding our prior years of service with esteem and following the concerns of retirees at UNJSPF and ASHI. I sought assistance from AFICS recently to help to promote the eventual publication of a book of poetry written by a former United Nations colleague. AFICS responded with its Directory as well as assurance that the book would receive an announcement once it becomes available for sale. Making illustrations for a collection of love poems was one of my main activities in retirement. The illustrations received copyright certification from the United States Library of Congress in 2016. At a premature end of life, *Carta de Amor* was entrusted by the poet to close family members and companions for the possibility of delivery to the world, to an unnamed lover, and it

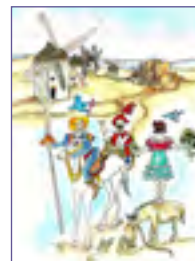
was also intended to reach others who in their time of despair might find comfort and encouragement by reading the poems. A creative team has laboured since the poet's demise in 2012 to bring the illustrated bilingual book into publication.

At the centrepiece of all living in retirement is adequate self-care. I keep up a daily yoga practice with stretching, core strengthening, and energy circulation exercises with balanced nutrition across all meals. I created many flyers for local social events and tutored 7th and 8th grade English for one private student.

My travel experiences were various: Sedona, Arizona; Portland, Oregon; Buffalo, NY; Naples, Florida; Scotland; Greece; and Israel. During travel to Greece with a group of artists, I was part of a collage workshop instructed on Skopelos Island, in the Aegean Sea. The collage instructor maintains a studio in Cambridge, Massachusetts and she offers online collage classes to people who know her work.

In this time of social isolation imposed by the pandemic, I joined her community of collage artists who attend a weekly class online and often send through the United States Postal Service handmade collage postcards for mutual encouragement and, in some cases,

as a form of social activism calling for voter participation or for other causes such as women's rights, Black Lives Matter, climate action and nature preservation, keeping in mind the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I am fortunate to share with you a few scenes from the illustrations and wish everyone resilience during retirement, many years of living in good health and, if possible, of making compassionate contributions to society. Poetic use of memory and creativity in retirement: three scenes from *Carta de Amor*



AFICS/NY Board Experience and Beyond

by *Christine Smith-Lemarchand*



After retiring in 2000, I joined AFICS/NY as a life member. O. Richard Nottidge, whom I had known since the day I joined the UN, advised me to take a year to get organized and then join a committee, even the Board. I first joined the NGO and Information Committee and then was elected to the Board in 2003, where I served for 16 years, a strong supporter of AFICS/NY goals. In 2019, I moved out of New York City and did not run for re-election, also thinking the Board needed some new blood.

I looked forward to the monthly Tuesday morning Board meetings, enjoying the diversity and benefiting from the enriching experience of colleagues from UNDP, UNFPA and different areas of the Secretariat, where I had worked for over 30 years. Our varied topics at times led to some very animated discussions that could be a challenge to record during my five years as Secretary of the Board. The expertise of several Board members was most helpful in defending the interests of UN retirees and we often benefited from the presence of high-ranking officials of the Secretariat invited to explain the position of the administration.

The stories of some long-time members, particularly of extraordinary women, fascinated me. I recall vividly Margaret Bruce, an endless advocate for the UN and a champion of human and civil rights who had worked with Eleanor Roosevelt on the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Patricia Tsien, who devoted herself to the work of decolonization and was the founding President of the Ad Hoc Group on Equal Rights for Women.

It was not always work. We enjoyed convivial times such as Christmas luncheons, shared news about former colleagues and family or travel pictures and formed some new friendships.

I served on several committees: Membership, Nominating, Ageing Smart (member, Chair and Co-Chair). My proudest moments were helping to elect the first General Service member to the Board; preparing the Directory of AFICS/NY Members in the early 1990s, with the assistance of the hard-working members of the Membership Committee; and, in 1986, with Barbara Burns, organizing a workshop on Estate Planning, the first of a series of now very successful Committee on Ageing workshops. I am still a member of the Ageing Smart Committee and of the Charities Foundation.

After retiring, I also volunteered at the Rusk Institute of Rehabilitation as a Horticultural Therapist twice

a week for 13 years, became a grandmother and enjoyed visiting my daughters and grandchildren. My husband and I spent time in France with my family, revisiting familiar places and discovering new ones in Europe and the USA. I took advantage of the rich cultural life of NYC, visited museums, attended lectures and discovered new parts of New York City.

In 2018, after the death of my husband, I moved permanently to East Hampton. Despite the constraints of COVID-19 I have been able to keep up some of my activities: gardening, walks on the beach, reading, watching movies and TV, wood puzzles and crosswords, knitting for the parish, and writing about my life in France for my grandchildren. I stay in touch virtually with family and friends but am dying to hug my daughters and grandchildren and go to France for a family gathering. I try to stay as fit as possible. I miss lunch and dinners with friends, concerts and plays on location and sometimes find it difficult to be alone all day long. Now that I am finally vaccinated, I look forward to nicer days to welcome family and friends on my deck for drinks, following the CDC recommendations. COVID-19 taught me that I am lucky to be alive and I should make the best out of the years I have left, including my work with AFICS/NY.

Working for Human Rights and Justice

by *Elsa Stamatopoulou*



It's a great leap to leave the UN after 31 years, as I did. Vienna, Geneva, New York. The UN was my first "real" job after law school and graduate school. It shaped, in many ways, my way of seeing and being in the world, deciphering hope amidst the politics and disasters, the contradictions and interests, the suffering and struggles of people around the world. I had the good luck to work in the field of human rights, and Indigenous Peoples rights, for 28 of those years. I saw so many people regaining strength to continue their social justice struggles. They had felt heard and respected by the UN, its human rights standards and policies. Although the UN is too small to deal with all of the world's problems, I saw, with my own eyes, that it fosters hope and courage among people to continue their efforts. For this the UN deserves our support, devotion and the best of ourselves as UN workers. We are in the service of humanity and of a sustainable planet. Being an international civil servant at the UN and accompanying people's struggles for peace, human rights and

justice has been an incomparable privilege and a humbling task. In retrospect, I would have chosen to be with the UN again and again, no doubt about it. How can I forget what I learned from the Latin Americans fighting dictatorships, from Africans fighting apartheid, or from the Indigenous Peoples of the world?

When I left the UN, one year before retirement at 59 (retiring at 60 was the rule for people who had entered the UN when I did), I did feel too energetic to just stop working. During my UN years, I had kept alive my research interests in international law, publishing articles from time to time and even a book, *Cultural Rights in International Law* (Martinus Nijhof, 2007), that became possible thanks to a sabbatical leave approved for me by my supervisor, the extraordinary and inspiring Mary Robinson, then High Commissioner for Human Rights. Indigenous women leaders I was working with during my time as Chief of the Secretariat of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) felt it would be a good idea if I moved to an academic institution to teach Indigenous Peoples' rights and promote relevant research and awareness in the academic world.

So, in 2011, I started my work at Columbia University's Institute for the Study of Human Rights and, in 2012, established the Indigenous Peoples' Rights Program. We

started from the premise that a major university, such as Columbia, has an important role to play in promoting awareness and knowledge of Indigenous Peoples' issues and rights. The programme fosters learning, research, symposia and publications in Indigenous Peoples rights, as well as the presence of Indigenous advocates and researchers at Columbia www.humanrightscolumbia.org/indigenous. At the annual sessions of the UNPFII in New York that I continue to attend without fail, I now see, apart from the diplomats, UN colleagues and Indigenous friends from all over the world, my own students and others who have graduated from training courses that we organize at Columbia. It's good to see, step by step, one person at a time, the UN circle becoming bigger, spreading the vision of a better world that was dreamt by those who came out of war, racism and destruction.

The UN represents the potential of humanity's better self. I am proud to have served.

SDGs: Innovation and Advocacy

by *David Stillman*



I enjoyed a 30-year career in the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, from 1974 to 2004. I specialized in international development assistance, ranging from project management to policy advice and coordination in relation to interagency affairs, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the Second Committee of the General Assembly. Based in New York, I travelled to Geneva and elsewhere and had a two-year assignment with UNDP in Pakistan.

At a time when private-sector issues were increasingly being seen in the work of the UN, and the UN Global Compact was being established, an opportunity arose to create an ECOSOC initiative called the Public-Private Alliance for Rural Development. Encouraged by Division Director Sarbuland Khan and with involvement from the ambassadors of the Dominican Republic, Haiti and Madagascar, this initiative took shape with participation by representatives from Land O'Lakes Company, IFAD, FAO, Rotary clubs, and

other organizations. The intent from the start was to encourage collaboration among different entities and to move from policies into practice in country settings.

After I retired from the UN, the Public-Private Alliance became certified in the USA as a public charity (501 C 3) and was named the Public-Private Alliance Foundation (PPAF). Country-specific collaborations began in Madagascar and then in the Dominican Republic, but with the horrendous 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the focus shifted to what PPAF could do to help to rebuild. The great dependence of Haitian families on charcoal for cooking and the resultant environmental and health damage – in particular deforestation and respiratory disease – signalled the importance of promoting alternative fuels and stoves.

PPAF has focused on research and development in Haiti, and information and advocacy at UN events and in other venues. PPAF experiments with and brings attention to clean cooking options. The Inter-American Development Bank and the United Nations Environment Programme provided help on cookstoves fuelled by alcohol from sugar cane. More recently, PPAF has turned to fuel-free solar cookers and biodigesters for biogas and garden fertilizer. PPAF and collaborators have established a college-level course

at a university and after-school classes at a training centre for low-income youth. The team has helped an adolescent girls' network and most recently a community centre in the hometown of one of the principal collaborators.

PPAF is volunteer based and leads a consortium of up to a dozen other organizations for innovation and advocacy tied to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with attention especially to those on clean energy, climate, environment, gender equality and health.

Find out more about the PPAF project in Haiti, most recently in its 16th report on the GlobalGiving crowdfunding site at:

www.globalgiving.org/projects/tracking-clean-cookstoves-and-fuel-in-haiti/reports/#menu.



Serving AFICS in retirement

by *Saji Thomas*



I am constantly grateful for my United Nations service, within the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management, first with the Publishing Section on September 1994, then helping Staff members in computer Technology support, and finally desktop publishing and copy-preparing for books in digital format. I took early retirement in April 2019 after completing almost 25 years. In 1996, a highlight of my service was the opportunity to serve in two UN Peacekeeping Missions: UNIVEM-III and MONUA.

After my studies in Kerala, India, and a printing technology diploma from Madras, India, I worked in Bombay, Kuwait, Madras, Toronto and New York. While working in Kuwait, my family lost everything owing to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and became refugees and fled the country by road to Amman, Jordan. So, I know well the importance of the Organization's mission to aid those affected by conflict.

Currently, I help others to achieve financial independence and set retirement goals to secure their future. I also promote the United Nations Academic Impact in India (UNAI) through seminars, workshops and projects guided by the UNAI 10 principles and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In my community, I'm active in the Diocese of North America and Europe of St. Thomas Evangelical Church of India, New York, as Public Relations Officer.

During my service at the United Nations, I was elected Council Member of the 42nd and 45th New York Staff Union and elected to serve as Treasurer of the 45th Council. I have also served on several Staff Committees, including the Audit Committee, Garage Administration, Health and Welfare, and the Albano Building reconstruction, as Staff Union Representative.

With all these life and job experiences, I can strongly promote and support AFICS goals and its members, and I hope to be a helping hand for our International Civil Service retirees. With this in mind, I became an AFICS life member in 2021.

Books, Sports and Volunteerism

by A. Vertulie Vincent



During my 25 years at the United Nations, I served four Secretaries-General; for 23 of those years, I worked in the Office of the Secretary-General.

Even before my last day as an international civil servant, on 31 October 2013, I was already participating in AFICS activities. From my first boat ride lunch, on 13 October 2013, I took pleasure in all the gatherings which I had the opportunity to attend. Spending time with former colleagues and friends always brings me great joy.

Since my retirement, in addition to becoming more deeply involved in my church and my community, I have published two books, co-authored one and collaborated in the editing of two. I currently have another book in the making. *Les salons de Denise* (2015) is a biographical novel paying tribute to my mother. *Princesse Tulie* (with Edy Laraque, 2017), is a

love story that also recounts my attachment to my roots. *Les filles du port* (2018) is a societal novel depicting violence against girls and women while presenting an ideal world that can empower them. My next book, now underway, is *Here and there: A Tigress Journey from Athletics to Writing*, a memoir which I hope will be an inspiration for young women in the pursuit of their goals.

I was nominated as the first President of the Haitian Ministry of Blessed Sacrament Church, formerly HACO (Haitian American Community of Valley Stream), an association that promotes Haitian culture and mentors Haitians in our community.

I have been a volunteer for three not-for-profit organizations that provide health awareness and health education for Haitians in the United States and in Haiti, as well as food distribution for the less fortunate. In July 2017, I travelled to Haiti together with some other members of one of the organizations to assist in a mobile clinic.

In 2016, I co-founded "Haiti en livres/Haiti through Books/New York", a cultural association that brings together Haitian writers, especially young writers, and introduces them to the public. This association hopes to bring knowledge of the country's history,

culture, poetry, philosophy and art to communities outside of Haiti.

Despite the pandemic, "Haiti en livres/Haiti through Books/New York" was able to bring together 10 historians for a virtual roundtable about Haitian history. Their presentations will be compiled in a book titled, *500 Years of History: Where are we today?*

I was one of the honorees of the 2020 Woman of Distinction Award conferred by New York State Assemblywoman Michaelle C. Solages, who represents the 22nd Assembly District.

As a believer in sports for development and peace, together with a former colleague at the United Nations whose daughter is part of one of the U.S. football teams, I am coordinating a project to support a girls' football camp in Haiti.

As I had predicted, retirement has been the best stage of my life! Being able to voluntarily serve others in my community is the most joyful experience!

Looking Back and Looking Forward

by Veronique W.

I always enjoyed working, going to the office, being on the UN premises and after I retired, almost 10 years ago, I missed all this. I was therefore ecstatic when I was offered the position of Administrative Assistant at AFICS/NY, where I spent four deeply enriching years. I loved answering the retirees' questions and helping them as much as I could; I loved performing the office tasks.; I loved interacting with the retirees who came in person to our office.

What impressed me the most during my AFICS/NY tenure is the tireless dedication of the AFICS/NY officers, who were volunteering their time and expertise to provide support and advice to the retirees on legal, pension, health insurance or other general topics. The same volunteers also brought the retirees together in social gatherings such as beautifully organized cruise lunches, yoga classes and other events. It was a privilege and a great learning experience to interact with this diverse team.

I therefore would like to extend my gratitude and congratulations to AFICS/NY on its 50th anniversary. AFICS/NY is more than ever indispensable to the retirees. Long live AFICS/NY!

Retirees' Home Away from Home

by *Somar Wijayadasa*



My association with AFICS began in 1995, when I went to discuss an employment matter with George Saddler, then President of AFICS.

George had just obtained office space for AFICS in the DC-1 building, and he was engrossed in organizing and equipping it. Nevertheless, he took time to solve my problem, and he also guided me to become the first Representative of UNAIDS at the UN.

He also told me about the history, evolution and significance of AFICS and his ambitious plan to make it the “focal point” for UN retirees, where they could get together and find solutions to whatever problems they might encounter during their retirement. That day, I enrolled as a lifetime member.

Upon my retirement in 2000, George enlisted me as a member of the AFICS Governing Board, and eventually I served as the Vice-Chairman of the Membership Committee, Secretary of the NGO Relations and Information

Committee, Correspondent for Connecticut, Rapporteur of the FAFICS Council, and member of the Charities Foundation.

The Charities Foundation’s Assistance Review Committee faces the daunting task of deciding whether a request for financial emergency funds for surgeries, medical and funeral expenses, replacement of lost dowries, rebuilding of burned houses, etc., is a bona fide or spurious claim.

True to its Mission Statement, AFICS promotes the well-being of UN retirees and keeps them au courant with their pensions, health insurance and many other issues.

For those of us who came from far-flung corners of the globe, spent decades working at the UN and now live in this country, an opportunity to attend AFICS’ numerous social events always feels like coming home for a joyous family reunion.

After leaving the warm and amicable UN scene, I worked pro bono on the Boards of Directors of several non-profit organizations in Stamford, and as a member of the Stamford Mayor’s Multicultural Council. I also write articles, primarily on peace, the arms race, nuclear disarmament, HIV/AIDS and other UN-related issues.

Continuing to Serve People and Planet

by *Robertson Work*



After retiring from UNDP in July 2006, I decided to focus my activities on promoting innovative leadership for sustainable development. I became a consultant and over several years provided strategic planning and facilitator training for several organizations, including the East-West Center, UNDESA, UN Habitat, and UNDP. In 2007, I happily remarried as my wife of thirty-five years had passed away from cancer in 2003.

In 2008, I became NYU Wagner Graduate School of Public Service adjunct professor of innovative leadership for sustainable development and enjoyed teaching each year for the following 10 years. In 2010, I began 10 years of giving talks on “the critical decade” of responding to climate chaos and other crises at UN global conferences and non-governmental organizations and academic events in six countries. In 2011, as a Fulbright Senior Specialist, I travelled to Kathmandu and helped to design a master’s degree curriculum on training and development.

In 2013, I launched my blogsite, sharing my vision of an emerging “compassionate civilization.” In 2017, my first book was published, *A Compassionate Civilization: The Urgency of Sustainable Development and Mindful Activism – Reflections and Recommendations*. I then decided once again to shift my focus, from being a professor and consultant to being a nonfiction author and ecosystem/justice activist. By November 2020, I published three more books, a memoir, *Serving People & Planet*, a book of poetry, *Earthling Love*, and a collection of my conference talks given in 2010 – 2019, *The Critical Decade 2020 – 2029: Calls for Ecological, Compassionate Leadership*. My four books are available from Amazon and through local bookshops.

I am now a happy grandpa of a 13-year-old boy and a 10-year-old girl, and I am living with my wife in western North Carolina near the grandchildren and the Blue Ridge Mountains.

What a mystery this life is. I am filled with gratitude and will continue serving people and planet. I am working on new books of essays, decentralized governance papers, and a few others, and supporting climate change mitigation and social justice policies. Onward!

My author page:

www.amazon.com/Robertson-Work/e/B075612GBF

Website:

www.robertsonwork.com/

Blog site:

www.compassionatecivilization.blogspot.com/

Protecting the Rights of Older Persons

by *Frances Zainoeddin*



I joined AFICS upon my retirement in 2001 but did not become actively involved until I met up with Lola Costa Esnard at an AFICS luncheon and she persuaded me to join the AFICS NGO Committee. We worked to ensure AFICS collaboration with other NGOs on issues addressed by the United Nations – human rights, health, ageing, status of women, social development, peace and security, environment, etc. These were the issues, after all, that many of our members had been involved in during their careers at the UN.

Lola, I and our small team, followed, in particular, the work of the Open-ended Working Group on Ageing (OEWGA), which was established by the General Assembly in 2010 to consider the feasibility of an international legal instrument, a convention, to protect and promote the rights of older persons. The efforts were led by Argentina and a number of Latin American countries. The then President of AFICS, Andrés

Castellanos del Corral, had written to the Secretary-General and to the President of the General Assembly expressing AFICS support for such a convention. Regrettably, the OEWGA is still deliberating and has not yet decided to move forward with drafting a convention. It is convening its 11th session this year, 29 March – 1 April, 2021. How slowly the wheels turn. Not entirely surprising for the United Nations.

Currently, I am a representative to the United Nations for the International Federation on Ageing, and I am the Vice-Chair of the NGO Committee on Ageing-NY, which comprises many NGOs involved in ageing issues. Our main activities focus on advocating for a convention to protect the rights of older persons. We work with many NGOs around the world to achieve this goal. We partner with the Department of Economic and Social every year to celebrate the International Day of Older Persons on 1 October. I also represent Soroptimist International at the United Nations, focusing on the empowerment of women and girls through education. Listening to the Member States' discussions on issues aimed at improving the lives of all people, of all ages, everywhere, I often feel that NGOs are more supportive of and responsive to the work of the United Nations than Member States. I used to complain about noisy NGOs taking up cafeteria space, but I have become one of them!

I joined the NGO community to keep my brain cells active – I find that I am as busy as ever, spending far too much time in front of my computer, but working with amazing people from around the world dedicated to improving the lives of those who are often left behind. We strongly believe that Governments must take a life-course approach in their legislation, policies and programmes – from cradle to grave. We are dedicated to combatting and ending ageism. Amazingly enough, my experience at the United Nations has been particularly useful for my NGO colleagues with respect to understanding UN policies and programmes, legislative procedures, and of course, UN-ese!

It has been 50 years since I first joined the UN, and I remain a committed supporter of its goals and ideals. I find myself often defending the staff and the work of the organizations of the United Nations system, which continue to do amazing work despite constant budget cuts. There have been major achievements, but there are still many persistent problems as well as many new challenges for the UN to address. The UN Secretariat in New York, where I worked for 31 years, still represents, for me, a place that respects human rights, promotes inclusion and strives for economic and social justice for all people, of all ages, everywhere.

IN MEMORIAM



Kofi Annan

1938-2018

Secretary-General of the United Nations 1997-2006

One of Kofi Annan's last acts as Secretary-General was utterly typical of him: He crossed the street from UNHQ to the AFICS office to deliver his membership form in person.

Kofi had joined WHO in 1962 as a P-1 and was the first, and so far, only Secretary-General to have spent almost his entire career as a UN staff member. He never ceased to think of himself as that. He impressed everyone with his quiet competence and his ability to work on friendly terms with all kinds of people.

Normally that would not have sufficed to make him Secretary-General, but in 1996 the Clinton administration had decided, largely for reasons of domestic politics, to deny Boutros Boutros-Ghali a second term. Boutros was the first African to hold the office, and the US knew he could only be replaced, politically, by someone from the same continent. Annan, from Ghana, was the senior African in the Secretariat and had impressed the Americans with his cooperative, pragmatic approach as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. Many expected, therefore, that he would be a low-key leader – “more secretary than general”. This proved wrong. He saw that the post-cold-war world offered great opportunities to the UN.

The 1990s were a period of relative harmony among the great powers, while globalization meant that States were no longer the only important actors in the international system. A good communicator could reach a global audience beyond the ranks of governments.

Annan seized the chance with both hands, focusing on the approaching millennium as a moment to bring the peoples of the world together to tackle urgent global

tasks. He persuaded the General Assembly to ask him for suggestions, which he provided in his report, *We the Peoples*.

The report contained many recommendations, eight of which were targets to aim at during the following 15 years, starting with a commitment to halve the proportion of the world's people living on less than one dollar a day. These recommendations were officially adopted as the Millennium Development Goals. One of them, to have “halted, and begun to reverse, the spread of HIV/AIDS, the scourge of malaria and other major diseases”, received Annan's special attention. He was horrified by the ravages of HIV/AIDS among the African population and frustrated by African leaders' failure to speak about it openly. In 2001 he confronted them at a summit in Abuja, and called for a “war chest”, which became the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. He also persuaded the heads of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies to make anti-retroviral drugs available in poor countries at affordable prices. Without this, many thousands of people alive today, notably in Africa, would have died.

Annan came to office with an albatross round his neck: the failure of UN peacekeeping forces, on his watch as Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, to prevent genocide in Rwanda in 1994, and at Srebrenica in Bosnia in 1995. These disasters were largely the fault of troop-contributing countries, but he was never able to live them down. He did, however, produce a frank report on Srebrenica, at the request of the General Assembly, and accepted the findings of an independent commission on Rwanda that he himself set up and which came down hard on the Secretariat, including himself. He also commissioned a report on UN peacekeeping in general, from a panel

headed by Algerian diplomat Lakhdar Brahimi. As a result, peacekeeping forces now generally have a much more robust mandate to protect civilians.

But Annan knew that peacekeeping forces would never be equipped to fight all-out wars. He therefore sought to confront Member States, especially those on the Security Council, with their “responsibility to protect” civilians from genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes and crimes against humanity, even when committed by States within their own borders. This doctrine was adopted by all Member States at the 2005 World Summit.

At the end of Annan’s first term, the 9/11 terrorist attacks changed the international climate. Partly to forestall excessive responses, the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded him, and the United Nations, the 2001 Peace Prize. Meanwhile a US-led coalition, with Security Council support, invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the Taliban regime, which had refused to extradite Osama bin Laden. This led to a new Afghan government in whose creation Brahimi, as Annan’s special representative, played a key role.

The US then turned its attention to Iraq, seeing the new atmosphere as propitious for a military solution to the long-running problem of Saddam Hussein’s failure to cooperate with UN weapons inspectors. The US and its allies could not, however, convince the international community, including other Security Council members, that this had any connection with the 9/11 attacks; or that the inspectors, armed with a strengthened mandate under Swedish expert Hans Blix, should not be given more time.

Annan’s pleas to stick to a multilateral approach were disregarded, and in March 2003 the invasion went ahead without Security Council authorization. This, as Annan said, was “not in conformity with the Charter”. (He later used the word “illegal”.) But he was anxious to show that the UN could still be useful, notably to the Iraqi people. In May, he agreed to send Sergio Vieira de Mello, perhaps the UN’s ablest administrator, to head a new UN mission in Baghdad.

Outside the heavily fortified US “green zone”, this mission was accessible to ordinary Iraqis but, alas, also

to those determined to resist violently any international presence that might seem to legitimize the occupation. On August 19, 2003, it was blown up by a suicide bomber driving a truck full of explosives. Sergio himself perished, with 21 other UN staffers – a bitter blow for Kofi, who could not escape the knowledge that he had sent close friends and colleagues, including some of the Organization’s best and brightest, to their deaths.

Bitter, too, were the attacks that rained down on him from American journalists and politicians seeking to distract attention from the results of the invasion by focusing on evidence of corruption in the Oil-for-Food programme, intended to palliate the effect of sanctions on innocent Iraqi civilians, which the UN had administered from 1996 to 2003.

Annan was exonerated by the inquiry chaired by Paul Volcker, former head of the US Federal Reserve. But there were many attacks on him in the press, and at least one US Senator called for his resignation. He survived to serve out his term, but weakened and more dependent on US support.

Still, he left office with his international prestige largely intact. Soon afterwards the African Union asked him to lead a peace-making panel in Kenya, where he averted a serious threat of ethnic violence; and in 2012, the UN and the League of Arab States again had recourse to his diplomatic talents, appointing him as mediator in the Syrian civil war. His six-point plan was accepted by the main parties to the conflict, but he could not get it implemented – largely thanks, once again, to divisions among the P5.

After his retirement, Kofi and his beloved wife Nane moved back to Geneva, where they had met when both worked for UNHCR. To his very last month, he travelled the world indefatigably, promoting the causes closest to his heart: sustainable peace and development. RIP.

Edward Mortimer



Boutros Boutros-Ghali

1922-2016

Secretary-General of the United Nations 1992-1996

A memory

Boutros Boutros-Ghali liked to say he had come to the United Nations at a moment when the end of the cold war had not yet led to a new international world order. He believed that in this as yet nascent system of international relations, the United Nations could and should become the centre of a multipolar set of international relations, with a strong role and responsibility for the Secretary-General.

This understanding of the historical moment for the United Nations, and the responsibility he had in leading the Secretariat at this time, shaped the five years of his tenure.

One of Boutros-Ghali's first actions was to call for a Security Council summit. There he presented his ideas on the role of the United Nations that would become, in 1992, the seminal text: *An Agenda for Peace*. In this proposal, he defended the role of the Secretary-General in the prevention of conflict, through his approach to preventive diplomacy, discussed the concepts of peacekeeping and peacemaking, with the former evolving into the multidisciplinary missions we have today, and the latter highlighting the duty of the international community to take on an active role in difficult situations. Mainly, *An Agenda for Peace* brought to the United Nations the concept, and eventually the practice, of peacebuilding, and helping parties to a conflict to work out the causes of the conflict and invest in ensuring that the ending of hostilities would translate into lasting peace, through reform of institutions, and investments in development.

Shaping the international peace agenda was followed by his approach to the coordination of humanitarian action, both within and outside the United Nations,

through the establishment of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs—now the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs.

In the development realm, Boutros-Ghali believed that the end of the superpower conflict of the cold war had also left a vacuum of ideas. Starting with the 1992 Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, the United Nations sought to redefine the consensus around the meaning and practice of development cooperation, through international conferences on population and development, women and development, social development, the urban agenda and the LDC agenda.

The intergovernmental agreements in these conferences and summits led to Boutros-Ghali setting out, in the relatively little-known *An Agenda for Development*, the bases of current work on sustainability, partnerships with the private sector and civil society, and the links between development and democratization.

In *An Agenda for Democratization*, Boutros-Ghali defined the third pillar of the work of the United Nations, starting with the Vienna International Conference on Human Rights—that led to the creation of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. In his continuing belief in the reform of the governance institutions of the multilateral system, including the Security Council, Boutros-Ghali saw the role of the United Nations as based on peace, development and democracy, and foresaw many of the features of the current focus of the United Nations.

Boutros-Ghali's vision of a strong United Nations, at the centre of a truly multipolar world, was not to be realized. He had remarked once that following the end

of the Second World War, the institutions of NATO and the Warsaw Pact took 10 years, to 1955, to be established, leading to the formation of the cold war system. He argued that the end of the cold war would see a similar period of formation before the post-cold war dispensation was fixed, and that institutions, including the United Nations, would evolve as a reflection of international relations.

As a leader, Boutros-Ghali was intellectually demanding, and his analyses of political developments in various countries were an education for all who worked with him. I will always remember sitting in meetings and the Secretary-General turning round to ask “and this was covered in resolution...” looking at me with an expectant eye. Triumphantly, I would say, “947 Secretary-General”. Boutros-Ghali responded: “in paragraph???” and I would hazard a “6, Secretary-General”, only to hear him say “8, thank you Mr. Wahba”. It was truly an education!

It wasn't easy to meet his high standards, but one always understood that his demands stemmed from his ambition for the United Nations, and his deep belief in the values of the Charter. That these ambitions were not fully realized is a reflection of the times, and the evolution of international relations. But he remains one of the great Secretaries-General who believed in the United Nations and in the capacities and potential of his colleagues in the Secretariat.

Mourad Wahba



Javier Pérez de Cuéllar

1920-2020

Secretary-General of the United Nations 1992-1996

Last year, on 4 March 2020, when I learned of former Secretary-General Pérez de Cuéllar's passing, my memories of almost 30 years of regular contact with this man, who was my boss and with whom I had lived through so much, collided with feelings of emptiness and sadness that I had rarely experienced. He was a truly decent man.

Don Javier (I called him that in private; SG or Sir, in work-related settings) had already been the Secretary-General for a little more than one year when I joined the Organization in September 1983. I had no hints that a few years later, I would be given the privilege of becoming part of the Spokesperson team responsible for all information and communication work directly associated with the 38th floor.

To work in that capacity, alongside some of the most dedicated and capable professionals, meant long hours, non-stop commitment to reacting to the news cycle of the day and a keen understanding of UN politics, for which I wasn't prepared and knew very little about. It helped a lot though, that the man at the top was always cool, calm and collected and had no intention to act differently no matter how challenging and desperate the circumstances may seem.

I fully agree with those who say that Don Javier was the right person at the time to have been selected to lead the UN throughout this period. His years as a diplomat on behalf of Peru, his country of birth, and his vast experience as a negotiator and senior UN official before his appointment as Secretary-General, made him uniquely qualified for the tumultuous times that he would face starting in January 1982.

But it was after he left the UN, with the dramatic events of that night of 31 December 1991, when the El Salvador Peace Accords were signed, that my relationship with

Don Javier strengthened and expanded and I got to know the man and his human side from a deeply personal perspective. The stories that he shared with me and the details about some of the most critical moments of his life and career, shaped my understanding of our international organization and helped me to a great extent with my future activities, including with Boutros Boutros-Ghali and Kofi Annan, both of whom I had the privilege to serve from my position as a member of the UN Spokesman's Office.

It did not take too long, as expected from a man of such background, for hundreds of work-related opportunities to materialize in the form of invitations to write books, deliver lectures and conferences, join government, private sector and civil society entities as well as many other interesting ventures that would have taken every minute of Don Javier's time in the years to come. The former Secretary-General was highly selective in his choices, however, and accepted or approved only a few. Besides, his top priority was to complete his memoir. It was a formidable task that he and a very dedicated team finally accomplished in 1997.

It was during those years when Don Javier visited New York frequently (sometimes for a long, extended stay) that frequent encounters with him became part of my routine. The memoir-related work demanded his constant attention and placed considerable demands upon his schedule.

But on those instances when he needed "a break" or to spend time with a familiar face, he would call and we would meet for lunch or dinner or for an early evening/pre-dinner drink or simply for a chat. Sometimes, if it was near the place where he was staying, we would walk to the restaurant and he would marvel at the amount of people in the street who recognized and greeted him so warmly. He would respond in kind

and on occasion, especially if the exchanges were in Spanish, would overcome his natural shyness and engage with his interlocutor.

Once we reached our destination and menus were done with, and with drinks in our hands, Don Javier would expound enthusiastically on his theory (not so far-fetched) that television was responsible for all that street recognition. He would explain the particulars (and give examples) as to why the medium allowed the masses to instantly bestow celebrity status on anyone who frequently appears in front of the screen. I argued that it was not just anybody. He had been Secretary-General for 10 years and as such, at the forefront of some of the most important stories on the planet, such as the Islas Malvinas/Falkland Islands war; the Gulf war; the Middle East hostages; the independence of Namibia; Afghanistan, Angola and Mozambique, Cambodia, Cyprus, Western Sahara, the peace process in Central America, Haiti, the list goes on.

“Yes, yes, all of that is true”, he would say, “but if not for the TV, people would not know who I am”. After a brief discussion on the subject, we would raise our glasses and move on to the next topic.

Our conversations continued during this period, more or less, until the book was finished and launched, and a few weeks of the proverbial “promotional tour”, organized by the publisher, had passed. Don Javier’s visits to New York became less and less frequent, in large measure owing to a new round of high responsibilities between 2001 and 2004, when he was appointed Prime Minister and Foreign Minister of Peru as well as Peru’s Ambassador to France.

We always kept in touch. After my return from Australia, where I had served for eight years as UNIC director in Sydney, we saw each other sporadically, during his brief visits to New York with Mrs. Pérez de Cuéllar, who sadly passed away in 2013. She was his companion and confidant for 38 years, and without her, at this point in his life, travel outside Peru almost completely ceased.

Through his family, in particular his daughter Cristina, I followed his activities and conveyed my best wishes and regards every 19th of January, on his birthday.

Almost to the end, Don Javier was still active, devoted to poetry, music and reading.

I think often of Don Javier and his gentle manner – and the once-in-a-life opportunity he afforded to me. His qualities and accomplishments have been an invaluable lesson, and I will forever treasure my memories of him.

Juan-Carlos Brandt



Netta Avedon

1950-2015

Netta joined the United Nations in 1971 as the Receptionist in the Medical Service. In 1980, she was successful in the first G to P Examination. Netta and I got to know each other in June 1989, when I was made Chief of the Professional Staffing Service, OHRM. Netta had been a Recruitment and Placement Officer in the Service since 1985. This was very useful for me in June 1990, when we were sent together on a recruitment mission to Moscow for a week. Netta was the technical expert and was very good at her job.

We interviewed candidates for 28 hours over four days, and our guide, Valery Tkatchouk, Deputy Director, UNIC Moscow, who sat outside the interview room, waited for the first burst of laughter from within. Valery had been an interpreter in New York for several years and we got on very well. He grew to expect laughter from each interview.

Netta was extremely competent, but more impressive was her vivacity and humour. She was always lively and never wasted time. She got straight to the point yet could be direct and honest without causing those with whom she was dealing to be offended.

In 1995, Netta became Chief of the Missions Recruitment Section and in 1995 Chief of a Section responsible for providing human-resources management services to seven Secretariat departments and offices. Her ability was recognized, and she became Chief, Staff Development Services in 2007; and from 2008 until she retired in November 2010, she was Chief, HR Services. In the last four years of her service, Netta was also the liaison between the Secretariat and AFICS/NY. In that capacity, she conveyed the message of the Secretary-General to the 2008 AFICS/NY Annual Assembly.

Netta joined AFICS/NY on her retirement and in 2012 was elected to the AFICS/NY Governing Board. In 2013 she was elected its First Vice-President. We were looking forward to her taking her turn as President; unfortunately, she was diagnosed with a second cancer. In January 2015, her life came to a sad end for all of us. Netta was a fun lady and compassionate colleague who is sorely missed.

O. Richard Nottidge



Lynette C. Cunningham

1945-2020

Lynette is fondly remembered by her colleagues in Conference Services, the Law of the Sea and the Staff Union. She was a generous colleague who gave of her time and knowledge to help others. Her sparkling wit and ready laugh charmed us all.

I visited her often at her beloved 18th century stone cottage located in Jersey City (my home town), which became her pride and refuge, along with numerous dogs and cats. We shared a love of history and, of course, good food.

In remembering her, we also celebrate her role as a tireless defender of the international civil service, as a colleague who was always ready to lend a hand and as a loyal friend. Lynette not only achieved a law degree while working, she moved from the General Service to the Professional category in the course of her long UN career.

Former colleagues and friends will recall that Lynette began working in what was then Conference Services, ending up in the Reference and Terminology Section, where her prodigious language skills were put to good use. During this time, she attended New York Law School, got her degree, served as Editor of the Law Review, and passed the bar exam. She also greatly enjoyed serving on mission as an Electoral Official in Namibia.

When a G to P competitive examination was introduced for legal officers, Lynette took it, passed and was reassigned to the Office of the Law of the Sea in New York, where she continued until her retirement.

Another major focus for Lynette was her role as a staff representative. She initially represented Conference Services and later the Law of the Sea/Office of Legal

Affairs in the Staff Council, and she also served on the Staff Committee as Vice President. It was a natural and easy transition to represent staff as legal counsel. She served for a number of years on the Panel of Counsel, and many staff members were indebted to her for her dedicated service.

Dag Hammarskjöld, who inspired many of us who dedicated our lives to the United Nations, once remarked, "We've got to learn hard things in our lifetime, but it's love that gives you the strength. It's being nice to people and a lot of fun and laughing harder than anything, hopefully every single day of your life." Our dear colleague and friend, Lynette, exemplified this more than anyone.

George Irving



Ransford Cline-Thomas

1947-2020

Ransford Reginald Cline-Thomas passed on the 21st April 2020, at 72. He was one of the early victims of Covid-19. Born in Banjul, The Gambia, on 15 September 1948, he began his career in his home country as one of the pioneers of the then Radio Gambia as a freelance announcer and newscaster. He was later absorbed into a newly established broadcasting fraternity at Marina Parade in Banjul. After a working attachment with the BBC in London, he pursued his higher education in the United States at the Universities of New Haven and Illinois.

I first meet Ransford in 1983, when I joined United Nations Radio. I remember our first meeting as if it were yesterday. I had arrived while he was on assignment. On his return, he came to check out the newbie and introduce himself. He was well liked and respected by the Radio Service colleagues for his professionalism, his charm, his wit, his willingness to help, his excellent writing and editing skills. His microphone delivery was always precise, convincing and passionate.

For years he was the voice that anchored the news, the producer and narrator of the UN flagship programmes "Perspective", "Women" and "Scope", among many others that tackled the tough, timely and pertinent issues of the day. He was usually the point person for UN Radio at international conferences, especially in the 1990s, from the World Summit for Children to the landmark Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the groundbreaking International Conference on Population and Development in 1994, the Global Conference on the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States, to the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen, Denmark and the historic Fourth World Conference on Women, held in Beijing, China, both in 1995. Even when he did not physically cover a

conference from its venue, he had a hand in its planning and organization. He established a network of working relationships in most of our duty stations abroad, having either attended meetings there or having liaised on events with our counterparts in other duty stations. He was the quintessential journalist, always thoroughly prepared for an assignment. He could be seen in the corridors of UN Radio and UNTV, for which he also narrated many documentaries, rehearsing narration and editing scripts at the last minute when necessary.

He was an excellent editor who cared and valued the work of others while helping them to hone their writing skills and develop their own unique voice. He could always give the best captions for a story. I still have some of my scripts which he edited. They are in safe keeping, just to allow me to luxuriate in his meticulous use of the English language. I also treasure, with pride, many cassette tapes and recent vintage CDs of programmes we co-produced together. He was an exemplary collaborator and a delightful team player, who could always give ideas that enhanced and enriched a final product aimed at inviting the listener and leaving them always with a message. He worked hard and expected no less from his peers.

Randy, as those who knew him well fondly called him, was a popular figure in the UN Secretariat. Indeed, wherever he went, he made friends easily and never forgot a name, from the people who cleaned his office and those who served in the cafeteria, to the Security Officers within the building. Even when he became the Chief of Radio (and my immediate boss), a position that he held until his retirement, he still found time to come into my office for a friendly chat as he did with many others throughout the day. We had a special bond formed over many years of not only working

together but daily commuting on the number 7 train from different parts of Queens with our colleague and friend Yvonne Potter Wiredu. That friendship continued into retirement. Although thereafter we saw less of each other, Randy was always the one to call to remind me of others who were retiring from the service, or visiting New York, as was the case of the wonderful reunion that we shared with our dear mutual friend Motlasi Motsasele, or to mark the passing of another dear colleague, Diane Bailey, whom he had mentored and encouraged over many years.

In his own right, Randy was the epitome of an international civil servant. Throughout his career in the United Nations, he steadfastly adhered to the objectives of securing the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity. He discharged his duties conscientiously and without bias.

He loved to travel and was lucky enough to have had many opportunities to do so extensively through his work with UN Radio. He adored the French language and culture. After his daughter Natasha, who studied in France, decided to live there, he used every opportunity to visit the country and get to know it better.

Randy remained deeply rooted in his African and Gambian culture and heritage. Every Friday, he would walk resplendent in his Gambian garb and always ensured that any party that he was involved with had music from Africa. He loved to dance and sing and was the life of a party. He could always be heard humming or whistling as he moved through the corridors of UN Radio. You heard that mellifluous voice before you saw him and could not miss that big broad smile as he entered a room. Wherever he was, there was laughter, as he was always joking and teasing. He remained in touch with UN Radio and UNTV even in retirement, dropping by if he was in the City and hanging out with the guys in the basement, Nyi Teza and Miguel Gonzalez, and/or reading a script for UNTV. On a personal note, I will miss his calls, his emails and his constant teasing. He was my colleague and my best friend. I will also miss his friendship, his warmth and his kindness.

Gail Bindley-Taylor



Alfred (Fred) Landau

1914-1997

Fred Landau and I met initially at the 1970 meeting between the small Group of UN staff members and retirees and Secretary-General U Thant, at which the Group requested U Thant to authorize the creation of the Association of Former International Civil Servants (AFICS). The name of the new Association was deliberately chosen instead of UN Retirees or UN Pensioners and was designed to be more inclusive and as broad as possible to include as potential members of the Association those creative, important, necessary, talented and useful individuals who were instrumental in the founding of the UN in San Francisco in 1945. They had been seconded from Member States or came from the private sector to be members of the UN Secretariat but did not subsequently retire from or receive a pension from the UN. Several former seconded UN staff members were subsequently extremely helpful to the UN after returning to their home country. This special distinction subsequently led U Thant to comment that he felt that the Association could serve as the alumni group for all UN former international civil servants.

As I recall, on behalf of the members of the small UN group, Fred spoke at the 1970 meeting on the important issue of the representation of UN retirees on the UN Pension Board (UNPB). Fred stated that the members of the small UN Group recalled the historical background and the facts that resulted in the existing tripartite representation on the UNPB that excluded a major stakeholder in the proper operation of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund, the UN retirees. It was clear that the reason that UN retirees were not represented on the initial UNPB was that in San Francisco in 1945, when the UN Member States created the UN Staff Benevolent Pension Scheme as an important incentive for recruiting and retaining staff, there simply were no UN retirees! The UN Staff Benevolent Pension

Scheme was converted later into the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund and the exclusion of UN retirees from the UNPB was regrettably continued.

In San Francisco in 1945, several UN Member States where retirees were represented on their national pension boards were strongly insistent that UN retirees be represented on the UNPB; they even stated that the UN retiree seats on the UNPB should remain vacant until such time as there were sufficient UN retirees to be selected for representation on the UNPB. In order to resolve the issue at that time and to approve the UN Staff Benevolent Pension Scheme, an informal understanding was agreed to that when there were sufficient UN retirees, the UN Pension Fund would conduct an efficient and proper election process to select UN retiree representation on the UNPB. Fred stressed that to the small UN Group's knowledge, since UNPB sessions were closed to all but UNPB Board Members and selected UN Pension Fund staff, the tripartite UNPB had not complied with or implemented the informal understanding agreed to in San Francisco.

In response to a question by U Thant at the meeting with the small UN Group as to why the San Francisco 1945 agreement had not been implemented, it was stressed that the major opposition to including UN retiree representation on the UNPB appeared to be the short sightedness of the UN staff members representatives on the UNPB, who were not willing to have their relative percentage share on the UNPB reduced from 33 1/3 per cent to 25 per cent when UN retirees were given their legitimate representation on the UNPB.

Fred assured the Secretary-General, on behalf of the small UN Group, that if AFICS was approved with-

in the umbrella of the UN as proposed, AFICS would strive diligently to pursue and protect the overall best interest of all former international civil servants and UN retirees and represent UN retirees on the UNPB until the San Francisco 1945 informal agreement granting UN retirees full, legitimate representation on the UNPB was properly implemented.

After Secretary-General U Thant approved the creation of AFICS under the UN umbrella with financial support from the UN Regular Budget, Fred worked diligently and tirelessly on behalf of AFICS and also on UN retiree issues before the UNPB. Fred and several others would patrol the corridors outside of the closed sessions of the UNPB when it met in New York and would contact members, lobby, offer proposals and suggestions and ask questions regarding issues of concern to UN retirees.

I was designated by the UN Controller, Bruce Turner, as his representative in the annual examination and review of the Programme Budget proposals submitted by the four UN Regional Economic Commissions, which were in Addis Abba, Bangkok, Geneva and Santiago, in addition to sub-offices in Beirut and Mexico City as well as UNEP in Nairobi and UNIDO in Vienna. Fred was designated by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Programmes, Philippe de Seynes, as his representative in the same budget examination and review exercises and locations, thus Fred and I travelled together on numerous occasions and spent considerable time together in these UN locations away from UN Headquarters in New York City.

Fred was an excellent travelling companion, extremely alert, very, very considerate, demanding, intelligent, knowledgeable, precise and organized. On our long flights together or in restaurants away from New York City, Fred expressed to me his strong dedication and devotion to the goals, objectives and purposes of AFICS and his fondness for the International Civil Service as a noble cause to serve, of which in my opinion he was a devoted member and an excellent example of an International Civil Servant. Also, in my opinion, Fred's views on the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund were very cogent, enlightening and precise, as was Fred's desire for UN retirees to be fully represented on the UNPB.

In his honour as an original member of AFICS and in recognition of his complete and noteworthy loyalty and active participation in the Association and its Governing Board for several years, the AFICS Governing Board named the Conference Room in the Association's office on the 5th Floor of the UN DC1 Building the Fred Landau Conference Room. Fred donated several original paintings that were painted by his wife, Blanka Landau, a recognized contemporary artist, that now hang on the walls of the Fred Landau Conference Room.

It is my fervent hope that the attitude, presence and spirit of Alfred (Fred) Landau is felt and inspires all AFICS members, especially its Board Members.

George Saddler



Antonio Garcia

1928-2021

Hard as it is to believe it, it happened. Antonio was larger than life. Hard to describe and difficult to fence in, he was forever moving and changing as he explored new territories, searching for new adventures. A man of many talents, he stood out on account of his linguistic skills and prowess as a tenor. He was a “people person”, eager to put his talents to the service of his friends and to the community at large. Always foremost on his mind were the United Nations, its staff and its retirees.

We met soon after I joined the UN Secretariat, in July 1968. Early on, I was elected to serve on the Staff Council, where he was already serving. We were both active on the Council for years, but he was a force to be reckoned with and the Council was a big part of his life. We got closer when the President, Dr. Rathore, invited us to join him in representing the UN Secretariat at a meeting of Staff Associations. It was held in Copenhagen, at the downtown regional office of WHO if my memory serves me well. I still remember the name of the hotel where we both stayed: Fem Svanen (Five Swans), situated in the outskirts of the city.

Fifty years have come and gone but I still remember heated exchanges between “moderates” and “radicals”, with the former – and our side – pleading forcefully with the latter to tone down their rhetoric for fear that, in our words, we might end up “killing the goose that laid the golden eggs”. Much later that day, we met for the farewell reception. Antonio was the star; his rendering of arias from mostly Italian operas earned him applause and attention arguably even greater than his morning interventions on the Conference floor. I remembered this event several years later, well after our retirement, when we both worked as consultants in the Public Administration Division, DESA, he as an

editor and I as the producer of reports for the Division. The Director at the time, Mr. Guido Bertucci, was a close friend of Antonio as well as a tenor himself. At office parties, we could always count on these two to sing the best-known arias from mostly Verdi’s operas. One was always on the menu: “Va, pensiero” from Nabucco. Everybody would soon join in and it made everyone’s day.

Marked by larger-than-life personalities, such memories do not fade away. None of those that knew him well will soon forget Antonio. May he rest in peace.

Demetrios Argyriades



Arthur Liveran

1919-2005

This special Bulletin for the 50th anniversary of AFICS/ NY would not be complete if it did not include a memorial tribute to Arthur Liveran, who was a towering figure in the history of the UN Joint Staff Pension Fund (UNJSPF), having served as Secretary of the Pension Fund Secretariat and Pension Board from 1963 to 1983. His close and active association with the UN pension system lasted over 30 years, an achievement that will not ever be matched or even approached in the current era of clear terms and term limits.

Arthur Liveran (originally Liverhant) was born in Germany, 3 February 1919, and passed away in New York, 9 November 2005, at the age of 86. It was fitting that, following his retirement in 1983, he could collect and enjoy his well-earned UNJSPF pension for over 20 years while also remaining an informal adviser and resource person for his successors, Tony Mango and Ray Gieri. Serving as the first Legal Adviser for UNJSPF (1984-1992) and then as the Deputy Secretary after my election by the Pension Board in 1992, I had the personal opportunity and pleasure to work with Arthur from time to time, drawing on his vast knowledge of international law, pension law and diplomacy.

Arthur Liveran studied international law first in his native Germany and then at the Universities of London and Cambridge in the United Kingdom. After the establishment of Israel in 1948, Mr. Liveran joined its diplomatic service. From 1951 to 1963, he represented his country in the Fifth Committee of the UN General Assembly and was repeatedly elected as one of the GA representatives on the UN Staff Pension Committee and hence on the Pension Board; in fact, on two occasions he was elected to serve as President of the Pension Board. Mr. Liveran also played a leading role on the Pension Review Group (1959-1960), which proposed major reforms and revisions in the UN

Pension System that were then largely approved by the General Assembly effective 1 April 1961, acting on recommendations of the Pension Board.

In 1963, Mr. Liveran was appointed as UNJSPF Secretary and Chief Administrative Officer. Throughout his 20-year tenure as head of UNJSPF, Mr. Liveran recognized the importance of a truly independent and financially sound, fully funded UN pension system. Together with a broad vision of the importance of the UN pension system for the international civil service, Arthur also possessed a masterly understanding of the intricacies of the benefits and other provisions in the UNJSPF Regulations and Rules, grounded in his strong legal background. He believed firmly that the UN pension system must always be based on the rule of law, with its provisions applied uniformly and fairly to all its participants and beneficiaries. Mr. Liveran retired on 30 April 1963, some four years after having passed the then normal UN retirement age of 60. While Mr. Liveran had in effect been his own legal adviser, one of the first acts of Mr. Anthony Mango, his immediate successor as UNJSPF Secretary, was to create the post of Legal Adviser; I was privileged to have been the first person to occupy that post.

John Dietz



Signe Rooth

1924-2014

Signe Rooth was my colleague, but more important, she was my friend. Signe entered the United Nations Secretariat as a member of Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld's staff and, like those of her generation, she believed in the letter and the spirit of the ideals and objectives of the United Nations as stated in the Charter and in the Organization itself. For that, we are all the richer. Travelling with Mr. Hammarskjöld in the Congo and Rhodesia, she felt personally the great loss suffered by the world and the Organization when his plane was shot down, a loss still felt today.

I met Signe in 1972, when I joined the Division of General Assembly Affairs. The office comprised just four of us: we two, Betty Hamnett and the Director, Jean Gazarian. Under-Secretary-General Bradford Morse was a champion and ever-present supporter. I learned quite early on that my office-mate and fast friend, Signe, had earned a PhD from the University of Chicago and she, like the rest of us in General Assembly Affairs, edited in English, French and Spanish. She was also fluent in the Scandinavian languages, including Swedish, her mother tongue.

Soft spoken and deceptively appearing meek, Signe had three attributes from which our deep, long-lasting friendship grew. First, her strong, abiding connection to her Church. Second, Signe had a life outside the UN: a vibrant social life that included her love for opera and the Scandinavian community and culture in the tri-State area. Finally, Signe took a keen interest in my daughter and took turns with Mr. Morse asking what she had learned at school that day or what she wanted to be when she grew up and playing the occasional game of jacks.

Signe had long since proved herself a superb, devoted editor by the time that we moved to the 31st floor of the Secretariat and was not interested in the administrative and political aspects of the expanded office. She was the in-house expert on Item 8, which includes the history of all matters discussed in the

General Assembly, and masterful in executing its dense details, from which many editors shied away. Indeed, the Organization called on her specifically to continue her excellent work in her retirement.

Signe's dedication to the United Nations and its promise was rooted in believing that one should endeavour to leave this world better than one found it and that the future for children must never again repeat the horrors of the past. Indeed, for Signe "never again" was heartfelt. Her sympathetic character did not condone any bias, prejudice or cruelty of any sort. She never uttered a mean or unkind word to or about anyone. When I was offered the position of Principal Editor, I was concerned that she would be hurt as I was the last to join the Office. True to form, however, Signe was happy for me, and sensing my reluctance to accept the position, insisted that I was due it and that I must "take occasion by the forelock". She would be there to assist and advise me to the extent I needed her.

Our friendship outlasted our tenure at the United Nations by many decades. Signe enjoyed visiting me in Antigua and Barbuda, taking quiet afternoon tea on my sundeck or in my gardens or watching a cricket match. We would always regret that she was unable to stay longer. When I visited New York City, a permanent item on my social calendar was meeting Signe at Dag's for coffee. Invariably, our eyes would travel to the UN grounds and shared but unarticulated thoughts would hang in the air and we would return to discussing what we had been doing since last we met.

Signe Rooth was my friend. Her friendship was one that I treasure. Signe and her colleagues in the International Civil Service of her era were the rock upon which the United Nations was built; their dedication, commitment and integrity was the Organization's lifeblood. She was a lifelong member of AFICS

Blandina Francis Negga



Sir Brian Urquhart

1919-2021

Perhaps more than any single event has ever done, the death of Sir Brian Urquhart in January 2021 marked for me the passing of an age. And not just because he was an adored friend and mentor for over 30 years.

The last of the giants of the British post-war era, one of the very few survivors who fought – in his case with great distinction – throughout the Second World War right from its very start in September 1939, and of an even fewer number who joined the United Nations (again on the first day) seven years later. Then for over four decades a key figure in our Organization's history.

There have been several substantial obituaries of him (one was by me www.spectator.co.uk/article/on-the-death-of-a-diplomat-brian-urquhart-1919-2021; others were in the New York Times www.nytimes.com/2021/01/03/obituaries/brian-urquhart-dead.html, the Washington Post, The Times [London], and AirMail, the latter a lovely portrait by his former son-in-law). Rather than repeat his career highlights, for this publication we wanted to focus a bit more on what came after his retirement.

Although Urquhart was well past the official UN retirement age when he retired from the UN in 1986 aged 67, having been a supremely effective Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, he still went on to live a retirement that was almost as long as most people's careers – and, as his own career had been, was quite out of the ordinary.

I joined the UN in 1989, three years after he had left it, and it was soon apparent to me that Urquhart was a living legend. There was nobody else who had Brian's standing in the affection and respect of staff members, as well as world statesmen. Many have wondered what was it that made him quite so revered (not too strong a word) in such a variety of circles. I think it was because he embodied a unique combination of

qualities. He was obviously imbued with the highest integrity, ethical standards, courage and compassion. At the same time, he had the acutest understanding – both intellectual and instinctual – of the harsh realities, practical constraints, and murky politicking that so often prevent international ideals from being put into practice. Thus, he was an idealist but far from starry-eyed. A moralist but the least self-righteous one imaginable. One of the world's leading "diplomats", but direct, sincere, irreverent, and unpretentious. His points were delivered in a manner that was often humorous, self-deprecating, and disarmingly modest. The result was that almost every interlocutor felt at ease and able to trust him.

And this continued after retirement. He was widely sought after for advice and comment at the highest levels, based across First Avenue at the Ford Foundation. He wrote a fascinating, inspiring and entertaining volume of memoirs *A Life in Peace and War* (predictably understating his own role throughout). On his 100th birthday two years ago, the current Secretary-General sent a message saying that his book should be required reading for all senior UN officials (if only it was!). He wrote many brilliant analyses in the *New York Review of Books*, and a biography of his own mentor, the African-American Nobel prize winner, Ralph Bunche. While still at the UN, he had written the biography of Dag Hammarskjöld, almost certainly the most influential book ever written about the UN. One of the most remarkable aspects of Urquhart was that he combined being an absolutely central figure in the UN's history with later becoming its most eminent historian.

He took his life membership of AFICS seriously, delivering an important keynote speech at its Annual Assembly in 2005 at a time when the United Nations was under attack from several quarters. He clearly saw the potential of the AFICS membership to fight back in

a passage that is worth remembering: “We are facing, at the same time, a sort of ideological blitz, which is new. Like eradicating crabgrass, trying to keep it at bay is hard work and you have to keep at it. However, I believe that there is something that we members of AFICS can do. It may not seem much at the time, but if everybody in their particular community, when they hear an especially grotesque account of what this Organization is, or is doing, we should hold up our hands and say, politely enough, ‘That is absolute nonsense’. And explain why. If everybody plays a part wherever they happen to be, it will make a difference in the end. I believe that is a very important part of the AFICS mission.”

In the same speech, Urquhart pointed out the crucial role of the master-negotiator Lakhdar Brahimi in both Afghanistan and Iraq. (It was an incredible privilege to introduce these two UN icons, when I was a junior official who happened to know them both, inviting them to my apartment for dinner in about 1998, and the way they instantly took to one another on first acquaintance was wholly unsurprising but still gratifying.)

Although he lived in the US for 75 years, Brian’s accent remained resolutely that of a British army officer of his generation. Every Memorial Day, he would don his many medals (asked what they had been awarded for, “I think basically for just being a good chap”) and attend the service in a country churchyard full of gravestones of patriots killed in the wars of 1776 and 1812 against Britain. There he stood (or in later years, sat in his wheelchair) alongside local veterans and their families from recent conflicts who recognized a much-loved neighbour and ally from the World War II era, but few had much knowledge of what he had actually done.

When he was 92, a stroke in Paris left him almost speechless. The morning before, he had been staying with my family in Serbia and I invited him to speak to UN staff in Belgrade, and he wowed them with his total recall and penetrating insights from the 1950s and 1960s. Many people might have felt tempted to call it a day at that point. Not Urquhart; in his indomitable way he started therapy, relearning — from scratch — the ability to speak.

He never lost his zest for keeping up with world events, although some in latter days were perhaps not such a comfort to him. He was an accomplished oboist. He loved literature (the novels of Patrick O’Brian were favourites), art (he was on the board of the Metropolitan Museum for Modern Art), and nature (roaming the hills around his Massachusetts home despite debilitating back pain that lasted 80 years, the result of a wartime parachute accident). Right until the end, he made every conceivable effort to remain physically and mentally fit.

Brian was a deeply loyal and caring friend to many. And he worshipped his corgi dog, whose charms may not have been as evident to others as they were to Brian but who was constantly told “Archie, my boy, what a noble fellow you are”.

But I think more than anything Brian Urquhart was — especially in retirement — a devoted family man, a beloved patriarchal rock to his 30 descendants and second wife of nearly 60 years, Sidney, famous for her beauty and her intolerance of pretentiousness that was even more acute than Brian’s. They adored each other and sparred boisterously. She survived him by just 36 hours.

A phrase I often heard him say with irony, because it was a hackneyed British phrase of both our youths (half a century apart), was “they don’t make them like that anymore”. Whoever it was he was talking about, it cannot possibly have been more apt than for us to say it about him. There will never be anyone like him again. For those who knew and loved him, the loss is immeasurable. But as time heals the pain, it should be possible – one hopes – for feelings to settle instead on the life-enhancing privilege that it was to know such an extraordinary man as Brian Urquhart.

Andrew Gilmour

ASSOCIATION OF FORMER INTERNATIONAL CIVIL SERVANTS/NEW YORK

HONORARY MEMBERS

Martti Ahtisaari
Ban Ki-moon

GOVERNING BOARD HONORARY MEMBERS

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

OFFICERS

President: John Dietz
Vice-Presidents: Deborah Landey, Jayantilal Karia
Secretary: Demetrios Argyriades
Deputy Secretary: Susan De Souza
Treasurer: Angel Silva
Assistant Treasurer: Mary Ann (Mac) Chiulli

OTHER BOARD MEMBERS

Paulette J. Austin
Steven Avedon
Thomas Bieler
Gail Bindley-Taylor
Marianne Brzak-Metzler
Lowell Flanders
Anthony J. Fouracre
Elaine Fultz
Nancy Hurtz-Soyka
Joan McDonald
Nancy Raphael
Warren Sach

PRESIDENT OF AFICS/NY CHARITIES FOUNDATION

Anthony J. Fouracre

Office Staff

Velimir Kovacevic

Librarian

Dawne Gautier

**AFICS/NY OFFICE WORKS REMOTELY IN ACCORDANCE WITH UN PANDEMIC GUIDANCE
FROM TUESDAY TO FRIDAY 10 A.M. to 4 P.M.
THE OFFICE IS CLOSED ON MONDAYS**
