



UBC Emeritus College Newsletter Supplement

Celebrating on the Occasion of the United Nations International Day of Older Persons, October 1

In 1990, the United Nations General Assembly (res. 45/106) declared October 1 the International Day of Older Persons. By ‘older persons’ is meant people who are 65 years or older. The broad objective in marking this day was “to recognize the contributions of older persons and examine issues that affect their lives.” Recent annual themes for the October 1 date have included “Taking a Stand Against Ageism” (2016) and “Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society” (2017). “Fulfilling the promises of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights for Older Persons: Across Generations” is the theme for 2023. Most of the world’s 65 year and over population live in low- and mid-income countries, and world-wide, people live on average 20 years longer than they did 50 years ago. How do those of us in high-income countries spend those extra years?

In the course of strengthening the ties of the UBC Emeritus College to the European Association of Professors Emeriti (EAPE), the College co-sponsored and operationalized a live-streamed international webinar panel discussion among experts from our College and EAPE on the topic ‘Healthy Aging’ in 2021 (see <https://emerituscollege.ubc.ca/healthy-ageing>).

For 2023, the UBC Emeritus College is marking the day with this special supplement to the College Newsletter, which carries a sampling of stories about what College members do in retirement. We are sharing our special supplement with members of EAPE; we congratulate them on learning only days before October 1 that EAPE will receive a medal from the Italian Republic for organizing, since 2020, a slate of international events for the International Day of Older Persons.



Dianne Newell
Professor Emerita, History, Inst. for the Oceans and Fisheries
Advisor, International Day of Older Persons EAPE Events
for October 1, 2023 Committee

Introduction to Transitions to Retirement in Celebration of Older Adults



Wendy Hall
Prof. Emerita
School of Nursing

We have all experienced many transitions in our lives. They create profound changes in our activities, perceptions, and interactions with others. Retirement is a major and very individual transition. The seismic changes to our lives can create a lot of uncertainty. We face questions about how others perceive who we are, how we perceive ourselves, and how we find meaning in our lives. We may worry about managing finances and our health and health care, and staying engaged with others through volunteerism or continuing to share our skills. We may be looking for a point of connection. The stories here represent diverse views about individual's "transitions". They are similar to the many stories that have been shared during the transition to retirement seminars supported by the Emeritus College. The transition to retirement seminars, like other Emeritus College activities, offer opportunities for those individuals who are contemplating retirement to learn about various aspects of retirement and to share with individuals heading on that journey. The College serves as a point of contact for many group activities and a source of support for academic activities through funding and advocacy for access to University resources.

What Emeriti Have Taught Us About Retirement

Judith Hall, Prof. Emerita, Pediatrics, and Medical Genetics

As a department chair during the era of mandatory retirement at age 65, I had to be responsible for encouraging my faculty who were coming up to about age 60 to think about their retirement. So much changed when mandatory retirement was done away with at UBC in 2007. Many people chose not to retire until they reached age 72, when they had to start taking pension benefits. Interestingly, many women who had held teaching instructorships retired much earlier because they wanted to concentrate on writing and research.



When I had the pleasure of being President of the American Pediatric Society, I did a survey to find out at what age those individuals retired and what they were doing in their retirement (Hall 2013*). It turned out that about a third of responders retired to their family and community—doing volunteer work or pursuing special interests and never thinking about academia again. Another third continued to teach or do research at their own expense because they loved it. The remaining third found new and creative ways to use their expertise and experiences from their years in paediatric academia. They were creating models for other retiring individuals—and we all need models of the possibilities. They became executive officer in their professional organizations, taught in low-income countries; they became consultants to business and legal cases; they took up writing novels, taught continuing and community education courses, and much more!! It would be a terrible waste of human potential not to use all that experience!!

Our UBC Emeritus College Preparation for Retirement Seminars are designed to provide academics over 55 with all kinds of information to plan for and enjoy their retirement while continuing to use their hard earned skills if they choose to do so. We hope they will find models that would work for them! We know everyone is unique and will find what seems right for them. We also know they will modify and change their interests and energy as they enter new age groups!! As a community of Emeriti we hope to provide a variety of models and share our experiences.

*Judith G. Hall, 2013. Trajectory of an Academic Career. *JAMA Pediat* 167:108–90. (<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-genom-091416-035213>)

John Gilbert, Prof Emeritus of Audiology and Speech Sciences and Principal Emeritus of the College of Health Disciplines, reflects on the ‘r’ word

The simple truth is: I received a failing grade for “retirement”. My journey away from my academic home at UBC was a simple transition from paid to unpaid labour. I continue with my work on health education and policy in a role that that has expanded from local to federal to global. I have an adjunct appointment at the University of Technology in Sydney, Australia, and a Chair at the Manipal Institute for Higher Education in India. Almost daily I link with the global community through innumerable in-person keynote presentations and Zoom webinars, by serving on committees of, e.g., WHO and PAHO (Pan American Health Org), co-supervising doctoral students, and writing papers with colleagues in Canada, the USA, Europe, the Global South, India, and Australia. At UBC I’m starting my fourth three-year term as a Convocation Senator, where I’m on the Tributes, Nominations, and Agenda Committees. I have served on, and continue to serve on, a large number of boards in BC, e.g., the BC Patient Safety and Quality Council, and and take great pleasure in presiding at Canadian Citizenship ceremonies, to date having had the pleasure of admitting more than 7000 new Canadian citizens. For fun, I joined the Dunbar Lawn Bowling Club eleven years ago, continue to walk for about an hour-and-a-half every day, eagerly anticipate Carolyn’s Thumb-print Travel plans for the coming year, and enjoy family and friendship with others of our age and disposition. “retirement” (note the small “r”) has offered, and continues to offer, wonderful opportunities to do the “academic” thing—differently.



Editor’s note: John has been recognized for his achievements with a number of awards. He is a Member of the Order of Canada.

Peter Dodek, Prof. Emeritus of Medicine reports: “Volunteering fulfills me”

After a 36-year career as a critical care physician and health services researcher, I am enjoying the adventure of retirement, where I can ‘do what I want’. One of the things that I enjoy doing is volunteering. For me, it is a way of giving back in gratitude for the knowledge and experience that I gained during my career. Even while I was active in my career, I enjoyed volunteering for Scientists and Innovators in the Schools (a program of Science World), where I visited many classrooms and discussed my career trajectory, especially about how it was anything but straight and narrow. These visits led to many conversations with students and even job-shadowing experiences in our Intensive Care Unit (when they were allowed). Now, more than 30 years after I started doing this, I continue to volunteer for Science World. Another related volunteer activity is mentoring medical students, postgraduate physicians, and junior faculty. I help medical students through programs at the medical school where I graduated, University of Toronto, and at UBC, where I worked as a faculty member. It is a pleasure to help medical students solve issues related to career development and to introduce them to other faculty who are in careers that the students are considering. I help postgraduate physicians and junior faculty with similar issues through a program at the American Thoracic Society (an international organization of pulmonary and critical care physicians). Although I don’t practise medicine anymore, I make a small contribution to health care by packing food bags one morning per week at a food bank. It is a pleasure to help provide basic supplies for people in need. All of these activities are a delight for me.



The Community Volunteer Group



A number of Emeriti who volunteer (including several contributors to this issue) participate in the Volunteer Group, a dedicated space in the College in which to explore and enhance, as well as celebrate, the role of volunteering in the lives of Emeriti. This group was highlighted in the January, 2023 newsletter to celebrate its 1-year anniversary. It was established by **Professor Emeritus Nancy Gallini** after her retirement from UBC’s Vancouver School of Economics. Nancy’s own post-retirement experience with volunteer activities and her concern for the growing number of crises at home and abroad, as well as for the severe shortage of volunteers in Canada, started her on this path. The volunteer group has become a hub for UBC Emeriti who are engaged in volunteer work and/or for those seeking to learn about new opportunities. Nancy’s basic survey of group mem-

bers found, as a 2013 survey by Judy Hall (ref. on p. 2 above) had a decade earlier, that Emeriti experiences with volunteering prior to and/or after retirement were extensive and varied. In this case, everything from teaching English as an additional language (EAL) programs, to facilitating dialog between youth and elders, to sponsoring and mentoring immigrants and refugees from abroad, working with women and homeless persons in Vancouver’s Downtown East Side—a neighbourhood with deep and complex social problems—to participating in meaningful, often high impact advisory and governing boards.

Sometimes retirement offers completely new opportunities: Sharon Kahn, Prof. Emeritus, Dept of Ed Psych and Special Ed, uses her career skills in new way:

In retirement, I joined the Board of Directors of Early Music Vancouver (EMV). I knew nothing about historically informed performance, I was not a musician, and I had never been to an early music concert. Nonetheless, I was delighted to become involved with an arts organization. I likely would have been equally happy to join the board of a theatre company or the ballet.

At the first couple of board meetings, I had no idea what was being discussed, and I wondered what I had to offer. As I began to learn about the organization, attending Board meetings and concerts, I observed that some of the skills that had supported my academic career would be very useful. What are these skills that had supported me in my academic career that now support me in volunteering? Skills of organization, leadership, time management, creative thinking, problem solving. The same skills one uses to manage a research project, to advise students, to chair a committee.



I know that EMV is grateful for the volunteer work I do. But more importantly, I am grateful for the opportunities and challenges that volunteering provides me. I am certain that I gain more than I offer. My involvement with EMV has been a focal point and highlight of my first decade of retirement because it continues to meet some important needs that used to be met by my work at UBC, such as having a purpose and enjoying social relationships.

From Zero to 100 Years: Answering the Call

“Life” has a way of intervening in our lives. When it happens, we are called upon to expand our knowledge and skills and refocus our energies.

My first years of retirement saw me continue my work as a nurse specialist with expectant and new parents of twins, triplets and quadruplets. Years later, I encountered circumstances that were essentially new to me: very elderly family members and close friends in ill health and needing supportive care. My new journey encompassed learning more about the challenges associated with ageing, declining health and cognition, and end-of-life matters. I began visiting these elders who resided at home or in long-term care residences and during their stays in hospital or hospice.

I have provided assistance in navigating our complex health-care system, acted as a consultant to families and care providers, supported decisions about care-at-home or public/private-pay senior’s residences as well as advocated on health and end-of-life concerns, often as their Health Representative. As power of attorney, with guidance from associated professionals, I have managed financial and legal affairs. My goal has been to address the needs of individuals and their families while maximizing their control in decision-making.

Later life and end-of-life decisions are cloaked in emotion. This type of involvement can be physically and emotionally draining, stressful, sad, and even frustrating. The upside is knowing that quality of life for those most vulnerable and too often neglected in our society has been enhanced, and that, when a life draws to a close, a peaceful death has been achieved.

Marlene Asselin, Prof. Emerita, Language and Literacy Education, writes:

My passion is supporting literacy and learning in diverse communities, particularly those less resourced than in the Global North. Since 2007 and continuing into retirement in 2021. I have volunteered for the Canadian Organization for Development through Education (CODE) in two ways: as an “on the ground” volunteer and as a research advisor. For 60 years, CODE has partnered with higher education institutions and government sectors in African countries and more recently with Canada’s Inuit nations. These partnership programs take various forms, including developing libraries, writing and publishing literacy materials, and teacher education. They range in scope from local communities to national.

I worked primarily in Ethiopia—a longstanding country partner uniquely focused on developing rural libraries. The few “reading rooms” left from a 1970s national literacy drive contained meagre materials and no library staff/professionals. For 10 years during the latter part of my career, I worked with CODE’s Ethiopia partner to establish both a professional certification program and a professional association of community libraries. A few years before retirement, I joined longtime CODE Director, Mr. Scott Walter, in designing and piloting an innovative research program to support African literacy by African researchers for African citizens. Upon retirement (2021), it was easy to continue participating in the *Context Matters* advisory. This work enables me to retain my scholarly commitment to literacy and learning, connects me to numerous like-minded supporters and emerging scholars, and ensures opportunities to apply knowledge and research methods that come from a long career—with minimal time demands.



Linda Leonard, Assoc. Prof. Emerita of Nursing and Chair, Emeritus College Transitions to Retirement Committee



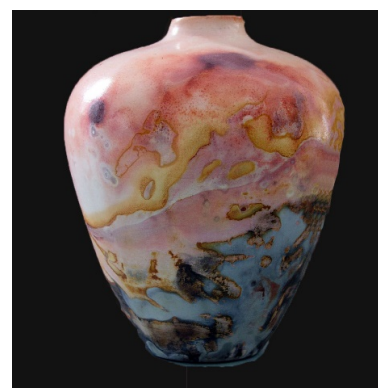
Some Emeriti continue activities begun during their careers but find new enjoyment in them when they retire



David Dolphin, Killam Prof. Emer. of Chemistry, writes:

My retirement was preordained, since my tenure was during the era of mandatory retirement. As such, I didn't have to face the timing decisions currently faced by staff and faculty. However, in retrospect I am thankful that I retired at an "early" age. My wife, Diane, was twelve years younger than me; my financial consultant and smart friends all recommended she also retire, which she did a year after I did. This was a fortunate decision, since she died at the early age of only sixty-seven! So, my first reflection is—don't wait too long before you retire; you never know how the future will unfold.

I experienced a productive career both academically and administratively; nevertheless, I decided to completely abandon scholarly chemistry on the day I retired, and since then I have not written, read or refereed a scientific paper. I made this decision, which I have never regretted; during the year of my retirement I won the Hertzberg Medal, and further part-time studies would simply be downhill. I did, however, at the persistence of the Premier, accept an administrative position as the Founding President of the BC Innovation Council. I resigned from this position after eighteen months realizing, my second reflection, that retirement should be enjoyed.



Enjoying life is paramount, but my third reflection is that keeping one's brain active is equally important. One of my enduring hobbies is woodworking and, by a circuitous route, this led me to ceramics; the development of new glazes and new ways of manipulating clay has challenged my brain, and my knowledge of chemistry, for many years.

Diane and I shared many common interests, one of them being travelling around the world. During my academic career we were fortunate to visit many different countries on lecture tours at other people's expense. We discovered, in retirement, that travelling at our own expense was equally rewarding when, amongst many other places, we visited the Galapagos, the Antarctic, Africa and Machu Picchu.

Perhaps the most fun we had was our joy of fly fishing. Diane loved organizing our trips, partly I think, because she always caught bigger fish than me! Upon reflection I realize I have had, for nearly two decades, a fulfilling retirement and wish the same for all of you who are about to, or have just, retired.

Editor's note: David was instrumental in the discovery, development, and commercialization of Visudyne, and the establishment of one of Canada's most renowned university spin-off companies, QLT Inc. He has won many awards and prizes for his work in biochemistry—and has now gained recognition for his pottery. He is an Officer of the Order of Canada. To learn more, see <https://daviddolphin.-com>.



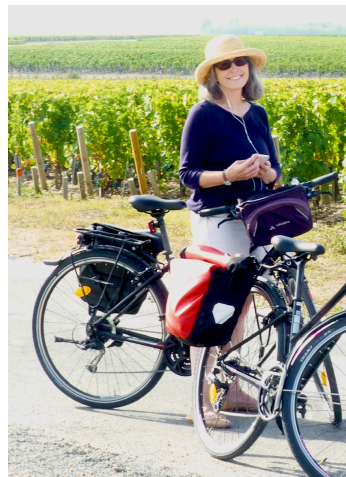
Kay Teschke, Prof. Emeritus in the School of Population and Public Health, tells us about:

Biking and Stages of Life

Maybe you have something in your life like biking has been for me: a pastime that has evolved over the years and brings new joy in retirement.

- Learning, but not riding: My first bicycle was a gift when I was 5, and though I learned to ride, I still walked almost everywhere.
- Being poor: When I went to university things were a little further away, so biking was the way to go: cheap, fun, no need to wait for buses. I rode all through grad school.
- Being confident, having fun: When I began working at UBC, why shouldn't I continue? My husband and I could get by with one car, and I was confident enough to go anywhere, including riding holidays—Canadian Rockies, Loire Valley, Scottish Highlands . . .
- Worrying mom: When my daughter was born, I worried because children don't ride in straight lines. I wondered about the risk on Vancouver's bike routes, which mainly mixed bikes and cars. I decided to get involved in advocacy.
- Research: Advocating meant learning what the research said, which revealed the gaps . . . so biking became a completely new research subject for me.
- Retirement: Ahh, helping advocacy groups understand the research, but not having to lead them. Ahh, having time to bike to shops and appointment, and with a wonderful group of retirees, led by Graeme Wynn. Ahh, having money to buy an electric bike. Ahh, having time for more biking holidays. Ahh, enjoying the improving bike routes everywhere we go.

Grateful.



Some Final Words from Judith Hall, Professor Emerita,
Departments of Pediatrics and Medical Genetics

STAGES OF HUMAN DEVELOPMENT*

Because I am a paediatrician I think in terms of the stages of development in a child after birth, and what the new capacities are as children grow older. Pediatricians test for children's motor, intellectual, and social developments and chart these over time. Less thought and clarity are available about stages of development from puberty onward. However, over the millennium, new stages have been added to this repertoire. Of course, each stage has epigenetic control, and we are just beginning to gain insight into those processes. It appears that most gene expression is part of a pathway, and those pathways are different for different tissues and change over time during a lifetime of development. They are most definitely different for males and females. As I observed my colleagues, I became quite sure there are at least four stages in adulthood after adolescence, and maybe more! (young adult, middle-aged adult, older adult, and over 65-year-old adults). These stages, as in childhood, are characterized by changes in physiology and the development of new abilities (i.e., different genes being expressed) as well as the onset of specific genetic disorders/diseases.

What is needed now is a catalogue of 1) tissue-specific (there are over 400 tissues in our bodies), 2) time-in-development-specific, and 3) male- and female-specific gene expressions. There are around 22,000 human genes in our genome (in every cell), and over 200,000 specific proteins are expressed from those genes by alternative splicing of the exomes within the genes!!

Since the epigenetic processes by which genes, their alternative splicing of exomes, and their pathways are controlled are being identified, it may be possible in the near future to alter the physiology of a specific tissue, particularly when there is a mutation-carrying disease involved in that tissue. This would probably be much easier than the present type of gene therapy.

*This text is Judy's layperson's abstract of her just-published paper: Judith G. Hall, 2023. The importance of age-specific gene expression (Invited Commentary). July 17. *American Journal of Medical Genetics*. Part A, 1–5.

Judy is a clinician and observer who describes what she sees. She says that, for some time now, the Emeriti have been her major inspiration. This is why she's so certain that elder persons have a changing physiology in addition to the onset of diseases and disorders at the proposed ages and stages. Judy is an Officer of the Order of Canada and a member of the Canadian Medical Hall of Fame. A much celebrated and generous Emeritus Professor and major contributor to the UBC Emeritus College, including serving as President of the UBC Association of Professors Emeriti, Judy has provided this laypersons' Abstract and link to the full paper: <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajmg.a.63354>.