



The CBC Pensioners
National Association

Preserving our Future, Sharing our Past

L'Association nationale
des retraités de la SRC

Assurer notre avenir, partager notre passé

DURHAM-TRENT CHAPTER



NOVEMBER—————**2021**

DR. BRIAN GOLDMAN RETURNS!

We're delighted to welcome back Dr. Brian Goldman as our guest speaker for this month's **Annual General Meeting**. A year ago, he spoke with us then about the state of the pandemic and the coming vaccines. Now we're looking at booster shots and continuing measures to keep everyone safe. Dr. Goldman will share his experiences of the past year and take your questions about COVID-19, the pandemic, booster shots and anything else you want to ask!

JOIN US FOR THE AGM ON NOVEMBER 24TH, 2021 AT 10:30 AM ON ZOOM.

You will need to register by November 23rd, by emailing Barbara Saxberg at bsaxberg@outlook.com in order to attend. A Zoom link will then be sent to you.



Dr. Goldman will follow the business of the AGM which we anticipate will take about 20 minutes. You don't have to be a Durham-Trent member to attend the talk.

Dr. Brian Goldman is a veteran ER physician and an award-winning medical reporter. As host of CBC Radio's White Coat, Black Art, he uses his proven knack for making sense of medical baffle-gab to show listeners what really goes on at hospitals and clinics.

He is the author of **The Night Shift** and **The Power of Kindness: Why Empathy is Essential in Everyday Life**.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Greetings!

This is my final newsletter message since I will be stepping down as Chapter President at the end of this year.

It's been a busy three years and I'm proud of what we've been able to do, despite spending the past year and a half navigating our way through the pandemic. We expanded our Executive to include several volunteer directors, we overhauled our bylaws, we improved and increased our newsletters, and we still managed to hold several luncheons before they got shut down. We increased our membership slightly in Durham while bidding farewell to several members, and were delighted to welcome the members from Trent into our Chapter.

At the end of this month, we will be holding our Annual General Meeting which will include elections for the four Executive Officers of the Chapter. I hope to see some of you putting your names forward so that we'll have a newly energized Executive to launch us into the new year.

If you think you might be interested and would like to know more, please drop me a note. I'm happy to chat anytime! bsaxberg@outlook.com

This issue of Buzz also brings you the latest on the status of the arbitration over the Memorandum of Agreement regarding any pension surplus, news about the EAP, a piece on Fall Prevention Month, and a feature on a former CBC-er with a new book on how the wisdom of seniors can be an invaluable asset to their families and to society... here, here!

Happy Reading! And thanks for letting me serve. It's been a privilege.

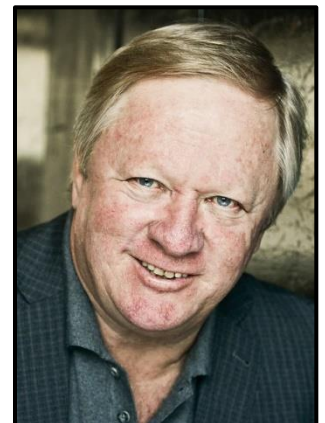
**Barbara Saxberg, President,
CBC PNA Durham-Trent Chapter**

CBC PNA NEWS UPDATES

MOA DISPUTE GOING TO MEDIATION

By Dan Oldfield, PNA CCSB Representative

The Minister of Labour has appointed two senior officials to conduct the mediation concerning the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) on Pension Surplus Sharing. Peter Simpson, the Director- General of Federal Mediation and Conciliation Services (FMCS) and Robert Bellerose,



Regional Director –Quebec Region, were appointed last month. It is hoped that the mediation process will begin later this month.

The dispute between the CBC and the PNA and the CBC’s Unions is scheduled to go before an Arbitrator in late February. The mediation is an attempt to resolve all outstanding issues before the arbitration begins. Should the mediation not succeed, it will be left to the Arbitrator to make a ruling.

The CBC has taken the position that the MOA, which came into effect in 2009, has expired and is no longer in force. The agreement itself has no expiry date. In fact, the language of the agreement calls for a “review” of its terms every ten years, “beginning in 2019.” That review was undertaken and no changes were made.

CBC DISBANDS THE EAP

A recent decision by the CBC to dismantle the long-running Employee Assistance Program took the PNA and the Unions by surprise. The PNA and the Unions were apprised of the decision after the fact, and after the staff were reassigned.



The new program is described as “an integrated digital platform offering comprehensive total individual wellbeing (Well@Life) to employees and their eligible dependents from best-in-class third-party providers.” This would seem to indicate that PNA members will no longer be included although that has not yet been determined.

Dan Oldfield, the PNA’s representative to the CCSB, provided further details:

“What we know at this point is that they have unilaterally killed the joint Executive Board, which included representatives from the PNA, the Unions and the CBC that oversaw and developed strategy for EAP. It made this move unilaterally, a move that excludes employees and retirees from any meaningful consultation.

The National Board (of the PNA) will be lodging a protest with CBC management. No doubt it's also a decision that will undermine the confidence users and potential users have in EAP.

The services themselves have long been provided by a third party; the direction of that third party will also now come only from the CBC. It is a short-sighted and unnecessary action.”

STILL SEEKING A COMMUNICATIONS COORDINATOR

The National Board has posted a six-month contract position for a new Communications Coordinator.

The Co-ordinator, working with a new Communications Advisory Board, will be tasked with developing a communications policy for the PNA and a consistent and coordinated strategy. If you are interested, the job description and how to submit can be found here:

<https://www.cbcpensioners.ca/communications-coordinator-a-unique-opportunity/>

IN HEALTH NEWS...

NO FALLS THIS FALL!

By Bette Laderoute Sampson

It's OK to be afraid of falling but not OK if you don't do anything about it. November is a good time to start.

November is Fall Prevention Month in Canada and there is no end of information on offer that can help quell that fear and, better still, reduce the number of Canadian seniors over 65 hospitalized due to falls annually.

LOOP: Fall Prevention Community of Practice (FPCP) might be a good place to start if you are looking for help or suggestions to make sure you feel safe inside and outdoors. Your local community care organizations can also help with home safety checks and suggestions as to how you can make improvements to reduce risks of falling.

FPCP's website, among others, has many suggestions:

1. Create a safe indoor and outdoor environment. This month, many websites and print publications are currently offering hints and tips for home safety check lists.



2. Be physically active. It encourages muscle strength, balance, and flexibility. Many programs are available online. During this time of Covid 19, creating a safe space for exercising in your home, with online programs.

3. Consider a medical alert button, which provides a measure of confidence that, should a fall occur, communication to needed help is readily available. This should be worn or kept always within reach.

4. Learn how to get up from a fall. This skill increases confidence that, should a fall occur, there won't be the "long lie" of being stranded while possibly being injured as well. Check out the Fall Prevention Month website for resources on what to do after a fall.

5. Avoid letting fear cause social isolation. The company of others is essential for good emotional health.

While there is much we can do to reduce fear of falling at home, prevention should be a mantra for outdoor safety as well.

LOOP suggests:

- correct cracked sidewalks, uneven levels
- ensure there is good lighting indoors and outdoors
- install handrails and grip bars on stairs and by slippery surfaces in public spaces, and in homes
- wear safe footwear indoors and outdoors to reduce slips
- advocate for safer public spaces



In addition, here's a sample from an excellent episode of CBC Radio's White Coat, Black Art hosted by our AGM guest speaker Dr. Brian Goldman:

https://www.cbc.ca/radio/whitecoat/6-overlooked-risks-of-falls-for-seniors-and-how-to-prevent-them-1.6202152?_vfz=medium%3Dsharebar

1. Check your hearing and sight
2. Handrail shapes can make a difference
3. When it comes to steps, size matters
4. Consult with your health care provider for a medication review.
5. Optometrists recommend annual checkups for everyone over 65.
6. Side-effects from some medications can be risk factors

FEATURE STORY

BENMERGUI TACKLES THE BIG QUESTIONS

By Graham Rockingham, Contributor to the Hamilton Spectator – reprinted with permission



On page 223 of his new book, “I Thought He Was Dead,” Ralph Benmergui admits he “can be a bit of a bum at dinner parties.”

That’s because Benmergui, best known for his long career as a radio and television personality with CBC and Jazz-FM, likes raising questions we don’t necessarily have the answers to. You know, the big ones.

“Do we wish to believe, as our ancestors did, that there is life after death? That it is indeed a better one?” he writes. It’s a question we don’t want to face, especially those of us entering our so-called “autumn” years.

Nonetheless, it’s a question Benmergui has spent a lot of time pondering. It popped into his mind a little over 10 years ago when he was diagnosed with heart disease and underwent life-saving surgery. It re-emerged a few years later when a form of cancer partially disfigured his face. There it was again in 2016 when he lost his well-paid job as an executive adviser to the president of Sheridan College in Oakville.

He was turning 60, entering those “autumn years,” in a nice house near Locke Street in west Hamilton, with a lovely wife and two teenage sons (he also has two grown sons from a previous marriage and two grandchildren). How could he make the best of the rest of his life? And what happens when it ends?



Friday Night with Ralph Benergui in 1993.CBC Television

He decided to fully explore those question and a few others by enrolling in a three-year course to become an ordained spiritual counsellor through the ALEPH Ordination Program, a liberal Jewish group that seeks renewal in faith with the help of meditation and ancient Judaic practices.

Benmergui’s spiritual journey is documented in “I Thought He Was Dead,” published by Hamilton-based Wolsak and Wynn.

The 263-page book is part memoir and part instruction manual on how to make the most of our final years on this planet. (We are elders, not seniors, “sage-ing” as opposed to “age-ing,” and, by the way, life can be more than just taking advantage of discount days at Shoppers.)

As a memoir, “I Thought He Was Dead” is a lively and often funny look at an incredibly active life that begins in Tangiers, Morocco, with Benmergui’s birth into a family of Spanish-speaking Sephardic Jews, and their subsequent move to Toronto, where he was raised.

Benmergui turned his youthful talent as a class clown into a budding career as a stand up comedian and the occasional singing gig with a rock band. In his late 20s, he switched to journalism, studying at Ryerson University and got a job with the CBC in Winnipeg.

Over the next 20 years, Benmergui climbed to the top echelon of the Corporation's on-air talent: hosting "Night Lines," "Prime Time," and "The Entertainers" on CBC Radio, then cohosting CBC TV's "Midday" with Valerie Pringle before landing the high-profile "Friday Night! With Ralph Benmergui." "Friday Night" — an all-Canadian TV variety show — should have been Benmergui's crowning achievement. Instead, it was a ratings disaster and was cancelled after two seasons in 1993. For a few years, he hosted "Benmergui Live" on CBC Newsworld, but that too was cancelled in 1999.

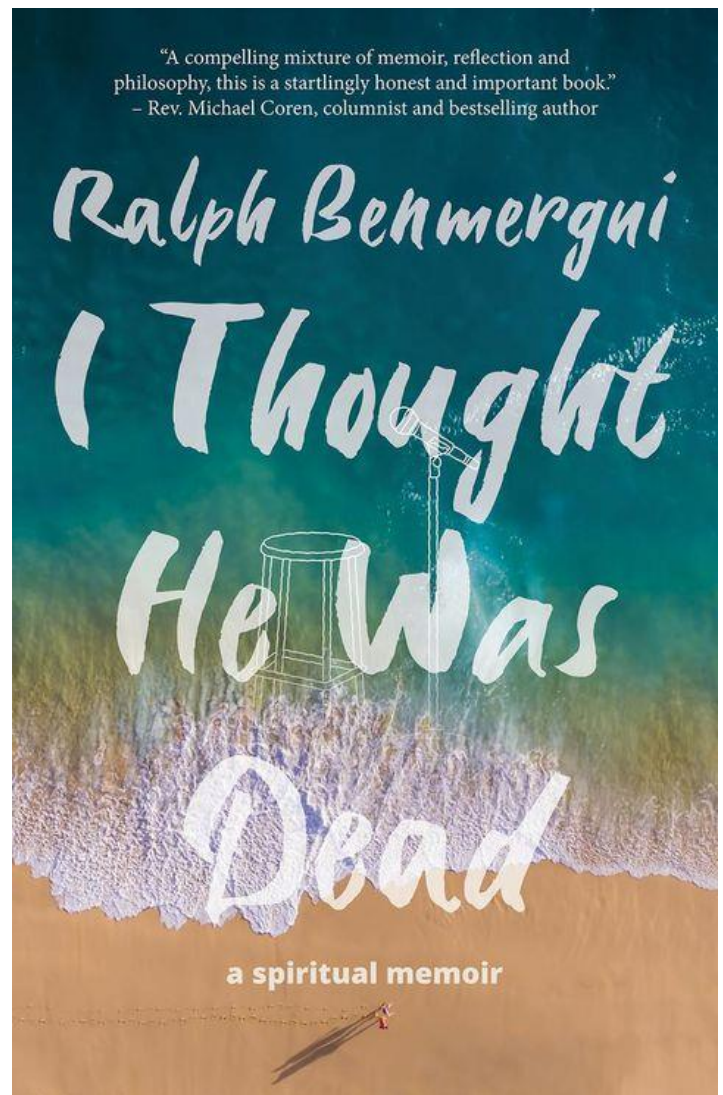
Benmergui produced a series of documentaries for Vision TV and hosted the Jazz-FM morning show. He also turned to politics, first as a senior adviser to the Green Party of Canada and then as communications director for Ontario cabinet minister Glen Murray. In 2013, Benmergui landed an executive job with Sheridan College, which prompted his family's move from Toronto to Hamilton, a decision he has never regretted.

Now 65, Benmergui is a spiritual counsellor, hosting the popular podcast "Not That Kind of Rabbi," as well as conducting workshops and counselling sessions, with a specialty in spiritual issues around aging, or "sage-ing" as he prefers to call it.

In "I Thought He Was Dead," Benmergui explores how seniors can cope with their challenges and how their wisdom can be invaluable assets to their families and society as a whole.

"It's important to realize at any age that this is not a rehearsal. It's important to understand that there are seasons to life and those seasons can end abruptly," he says in an interview.

"If we're entering autumn, we have to own it. We must take an inventory of who we are as people and try to cultivate whatever wisdom we can from who we've been and find ways to



be useful. Society doesn't value us. We're going to have to elbow our way back into the conversation, not as consumers, but as elders."

As far as religion is concerned, Benmergui calls himself Jewish, but he does not consider God as Jewish. He sees God as ecumenical and universal, a god of connectivity and oneness. He believes we have a soul that lives beyond the life of our bodies. We are all stardust in the great scheme of things.

"I don't see God as a noun," he says. "I see it as a verb in that it is really just a flow that never stops creating. A star creates a star, stardust creates us. It's just something that goes on in ways that are far beyond my comprehension."

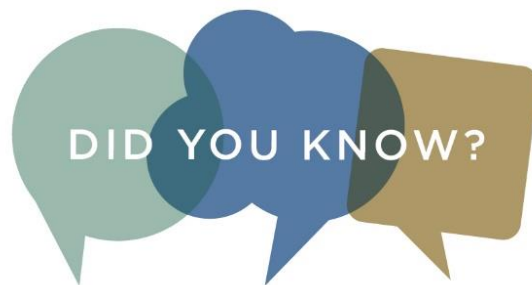
And about that big question, the one about the afterlife that he sometimes throws out at parties? Well, he doesn't have it figured out and is resigned to never really having the answer.

"When I think of dying, I think of energy, the energy that's in what (spiritual guru) Ram Das calls a spacesuit with our name on it, it just falls away," he says. "We're just a shell and the energy leaves, to where I have no idea."

One thing he is sure of, however, is that we live in a "very death-phobic culture." We should stop worrying about the coming abyss, he says, and turn our focus to the now.

"When you're here, enjoy the ride and be grateful for it," he says. "It's one hell of a ride."

A former staff reporter and editor, Graham Rockingham is a freelance contributing columnist for the Hamilton Spectator.



CBC Pensioners will soon have access to reduced rates at all Good Life Fitness facilities.

Details of the deal are being finalized but the plan is to offer retirees the same reduced rates given to CBC employees. Retirees will have to request a special code. We will let you know once the discount is available.

PNA SPOUSAL MEMBERSHIP

Individuals who receive pension survivor benefits are eligible to become members of the PNA and access all PNA member benefits including the Special Assistance Fund, loyalty programs, discounts and social activities. They are also eligible to hold office in the PNA and serve on committees.

Join us! We want to hear from you!

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE FUND

The Special Assistance Fund (SAF) helps CBC retirees, their spouses and dependents with health care expenses not covered by OHIP or the SHCP. It also offsets the cost of hearing aids and mobility devices. There are some restrictions.

Contact the CBC PNA staff in Ottawa for eligibility requirements and help in applying. More information and application forms are on the PNA website.

www.cbcpensioners.ca

CONTACT US:

Would you like to comment on this or anything else in the Buzz?

Perhaps you have a story to tell – something from your days at CBC or something interesting you're doing now?

Maybe you know of a CBC retiree with a skill to share? Or a retiree we should profile? We're also interested in any photos from your working days you might like to share.

We welcome your contributions and story suggestions.

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