



# SOUTHERN GERONTOLOGIST

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## ***President's Message***

### **Forty Years Along: [Aging Colleagues](#) or [Aging Colleagues?](#)**

Do you recall where you were on April 4, 1968? I will never forget. I was a senior English major at Mississippi State University, just leaving a Contemporary Drama class, when I heard that Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr., had been assassinated.

I and all my close friends were devastated. We were hero-worshippers in those heady days of protest and change, when it seemed to us that anything was possible. The moment we heard the terrible news our outlook changed forever. We had learned, truly, that anything was possible, but it would not always be good. Three years later Don McLean sang that the end of innocence for American youth was "the day the music died," when a 1958 plane crash took the life of Buddy Holly. I rather think my own innocence—and that of my now-aging generational peers—was ripped out of us that southern spring day almost 40 years ago when Dr. King was shot.

Innocence may have been lost, but certainly not hope. The next day, a Friday, a small group of about 10 of us gathered at noon at the base of the flagpole in the middle of the ROTC drill field in the center of our campus to stand silent vigil for the tragedy. We wore black armbands and handed out leaflets calling on our fellow students to stop and consider the high cost of violence. It was a feeble attempt to do "something" in the face of overwhelming despair. Our efforts were little noted nor much appreciated by our lunch-bound peers, who were largely not fans of our hero.

Now we are approaching the autumn of our careers and our lives. The world has continued to change since then, not always for the better, but

not always for the worse either. We have made many long strides toward racial justice and toward class justice, though we have many miles to go. Certainly we are more aware of the rewards of democracy, diversity, and reconciliation, as we ponder the huge costs of their absence.

During the four intervening decades arose movements aimed at liberating women, gay people, disabled people, and elders, movements that borrowed much from the one led by Dr. King and his closest associates, Coretta Scott King, Ralph David Abernathy, John Lewis, Fred Shuttlesworth, and many others. Although the liberation of the elders is not complete, as with racial equality, significant progress has been made.

As you prepare to join your aging colleagues (that's aging colleagues, rather than aging colleagues) in Atlanta for our annual meeting, I hope you will remember Atlanta's most famous native son. Give yourself time to visit the King National Historic Site on Auburn Avenue, which is just a mile or so from our hotel. The site encompasses the King birth home, Ebenezer Baptist Church, where he preached, the King Center and gravesite, and a new visitors center, which houses a permanent collection ("Children of Courage") of pictures and documents from the Movement's early days. It is designed to stimulate our individual recollections—both inspiring and sad—of the promise and the hope we once possessed. I am sure it will remind you, not only where you were that bleak Thursday in 1968 (if, indeed, you were anywhere) but more importantly, why our work still matters.

My hope is that all of us can use this meeting to renew our hope for a better, less violent, more meaningful life for all our fellow human beings, whether they share the blessings of our citizenship, our economic security, and our health, or not. The old among us will all be better for it.

**-- Frank Whittington, President**

### ***ATLANTA MEETING PREDICTED TO BE BEST EVER***

By the time you read this we still may not know the outcomes of the presidential nominating races and, thus, who our choices will be in November. I was going to speculate about the possibilities of a Giuliani vs. Edwards race, but both those once-hot political commodities, though popular with the pundits, did not wear well with the actual voters. Therein lies a lesson for us all. I wish I knew what it was.

During this political season one is unavoidably reminded of the quip attributed to Albert Einstein that every complex problem has a simple solution—that is always wrong. So it seems to be with our politics these days. Every analysis of who is up and who is down seems, at the time, quite logical and compelling, but soon, like many of our theories, each has been "slain by ugly facts." So, as I write this the day after Super-Tuesday, with Mike Huckabee looking over my shoulder, I am hesitant of predictions.

**But I am sure of one prediction except for one thing: our 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting in Atlanta will be the best ever.**

Of course, SGS meetings are always memorable and worthwhile. I recall stimulating good times in Charlotte and Little Rock and Raleigh and Orlando and Lexington and, yes, several in Atlanta. We owe our past leaders and meeting planners many debts. But this year the shoe is on my foot, as I am charged with putting on a good show for all of you and making you happy you came.

I know we will succeed because we have wonderful leadership in Dana Bradley of Western Kentucky University, who is serving as Program Chair, and Meldrena Chapin, who recently completed her doctoral program at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, but who resides here in Atlanta and is in charge of Local Arrangements. They are ably assisted by a slew of folks from Georgia State and the surrounding area. The plans are coalescing—I thought about saying, “congealing,” but that didn’t sound quite right—for a blockbuster program and truly exciting time in Atlanta. Remember, it will be spring and the dogwoods and cherry trees will be blooming and baseball season will be underway. In fact, we are planning a trip to the Braves game as one of your dine-around choices.

If a hot dog among fellow gerontologists were not enough, consider the speakers already committed: Robert Butler, Robert Binstock, Erdman Palmore, Graham Rowles, Chuck Longino, Rick Moody, Steve Cutler, Lynne Hodgson, Ed Ansello, Shirley Travis, Jim McAuley, Malcolm Cutchin, Chris Hertzog, Paula Dressel, Gordon Walker, and many others. We have nearly 100 abstracts in hand that will ensure an exciting set of posters and presentations. A visit to the spectacular new Georgia Aquarium is also on the docket for an evening you won’t want to end.

You will be sorry if you miss this opportunity to learn from and meet the wonderful clinicians, providers, and scholars who will gather in Atlanta from April 17-20, 2008. The hotel is the Sheraton Atlanta, located downtown on Courtland Street, and we negotiated a truly affordable room rate of \$129 per night. Hotel registration information and a preliminary program can be found on the SGS website. Take a moment now to check us out and make your reservations. I predict this will be the best SGS meeting ever.

**-- Frank Whittington, President**

### ***Approved SGS Bylaws Changes:***

Article V, Section I (composition of the Board of Directors) is amended to read:

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS:**

**SECTION I:** The Board of Directors shall consist of: the President, the President-Elect, the immediate Past-President, the Secretary, the Treasurer, 10 elected Members-at-Large, and one elected Representative from the Retired Member category, one Student Representative appointed by the President, and one Student Representative-Elect appointed by the President-Elect.

Article V, Section VII (Election and Term of Office) is amended to read:

**SECTION VII: Election and Term of Office:** Half of the Members-at-Large shall be elected annually. Each shall serve for a term of two years. No Member-at-Large shall serve more than two consecutive terms. The Retiree Representative shall be elected annually and may succeed him/herself for up to three years, if his/her eligibility status continues. The Student Representative and Student Representative-Elect shall be appointed for a term of one year and may not succeed themselves, except that the Student Representative-Elect is eligible for appointment the following year as Student Representative.

Article IX, Section XII (Student Committee) is amended to read:

**SECTION XII: Student Committee:** The Student Committee shall consist of the Student Representative as Chairperson, the Student Representative-Elect, and other student members of the Society appointed by the Chairperson with assistance from the Board. The Committee will generate interest in aging and in the Society among students and provide recommendations to the Society regarding student needs and interests.

These changes provide for continuity and transfer of knowledge for the Student Representative (SR) position by adding a Student Representative-Elect (SRE) position, and; 2) to increase the odds that the Student Representative and Student Representative-Elect are students whom the President and President-Elect (respectively) know and with whom they have good working relationships.

These changes were approved by the members of SGS via electronic voting distributed on January 14, 2008.

## ***SGS Contact Information***

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## ***Welcome to New Members***

Tracy Cermak - GA  
Elisabeth Burgess - GA  
Ann Pearman - GA  
Kevin Valadares - IN  
Randall Hunt - FL

Barbara Block - FL  
B. Burgin Ross - NC  
Julia Wiggins - NC  
Dana Bradley - KY

Irene Richardson - GA  
Karen Carter - GA  
Megan Witte - FL  
Caroline Westerhof - FL

## ***SGS Membership: What's In It For You? How Do You Join?***

[Professionals exploring issues, applications and answers in the field of aging](#)

***SGS Annual Conference & Meeting:*** Leadership & Professional Networking; Continuing Education. Members receive a deep discount on registration fees for the annual meeting.

***Publications:*** The Journal of Applied Gerontology, The Southern Gerontologist Newsletter. A free subscription to the ***Journal of Applied Gerontology (JAG)***, the official journal of SGS is included with membership. The Journal is devoted to the publication of contributions that focus explicitly on the application of knowledge and insights from research and practice to improvement of the quality of life of older persons. Particular emphasis is placed on manuscripts and editorials that enhance dialogue among researchers, policy makers, and practitioners. In addition, members receive the ***Southern Gerontologist***, a quarterly newsletter that complements JAG by providing updates on applied projects, member activities and emerging issues, and informing members of new books and videos of interest to the field of aging.

***Student privileges:*** Membership discount, Conference registration discount, Networking &

## Leadership opportunities

SGS Committees are member friendly and provide an excellent opportunity to enhance one's professional development. By adding your voice to SGS you can help ensure that dialogue and cooperation maintain the balance between research and practice, through the guiding principle of SGS-- the alliance of practitioners and academicians to enhance the lives of our elders.

For more information contact **Lora Gage** SGS Executive Director, at [Lgage4sgs@aol.com](mailto:Lgage4sgs@aol.com) She will gladly send you an application and information. Don't miss the opportunity to become a member of a group of the South's most respected gerontology professionals.

***JOIN TODAY!***

## *February is American Heart Month*

Love your heart this month!!

Exercise is a great tool that can assist caregivers in living healthy lives. Studies show that exercise reduces the risk of heart disease as well as anxiety and stress that many caregivers experience. Click on the following link to be directed to "Just Move", a virtual fitness center, which includes resources, tips, and an online exercise diary developed by the American Heart Association.

<http://www.seniornavigator.org/vaprovider/consumer/report.do?directoryEntryId=58833>

Walking is an easy, inexpensive way to be physically active and keep your heart healthy. Visit the following link to learn more about the benefits of fitness walking, how to begin a walking program, safety tips, and more. See Walking: A Step in the Right Direction at

<http://www.seniornavigator.org/vaprovider/consumer/snArticle.do?contentId=3>

This is a SENIORNAVIGATOR E-QUICKTIP. SeniorNavigator, a national model for aging and disability resources combines online assistance with a network of volunteers. SeniorNavigator brings over 21,000 health and aging resources to seniors, caregivers, adults with disabilities and their families. SeniorNavigator is a public/private partnership with the Commonwealth of Virginia, Virginia Department for the Aging, local governments, and hundreds of private sector partners. SeniorNavigator-where community and technology come together.

[www.seniornavigator.org/vaprovider/consumer/snArticle.do?contentId=3](http://www.seniornavigator.org/vaprovider/consumer/snArticle.do?contentId=3)

## ***Editorial: Funeral for a Southern Lady***

This winter I had the privilege of attending the funeral of a 96-year old woman who passed away. Her name was Dorothy, but most people knew her as Dot, and I found out how many people knew her as Aunt Dot. For the last six years of her life Parkinson's disease had played its usual havoc with her body and her mind. She was lucky though; she had care from her daughter's family and she was able to stay in her own home right up until the end. It was really her third home. Born in Kentucky, she lived most of her life in Nashville, Tennessee. When she could no longer maintain her home, her daughter moved her to Salem, Virginia where she could be near her family. But her roots were in Nashville.

I accompanied Dot's granddaughter to Nashville for the visitation and funeral. It was with some trepidation and discomfort that I approached this duty. I don't like funerals. Too many deaths when I was young, I guess. I remembered the funerals of my great aunts and aunts, most of whom had no children and who had watched the size of their families wither over the years. Too many funerals where it was the coffin and a mere handful of family members huddled around. For the last great aunt, it was only my mother (her niece) and me standing forlorn in a huge cathedral while the brief eulogy echoed around empty pews. Usually, we had to hire pall bearers. There was just nobody around.

This was not the case for the funeral for Aunt Dot. I had heard some family was driving in and that members of her Nashville church would come, but I was astounded at the turnout for this 96-year old woman. First, her church fixed a luncheon at the funeral home for the family. No chicken salad sandwich on white bread ever tasted so good, let alone the vegetables, brownies and chess pie, deviled eggs and a full salad bowl. Even the sweet tea felt right. Then the extended family arrived – grandchildren and great grandchildren, cousins from Ohio, Kentucky, Georgia and Tennessee. What struck me was how each one had some precious memory of Aunt Dot. All except the very youngest had spent some time at her house, usually on some kind of vacation trip, and each cousin had a memory of the gifts that Aunt Dot gave, whether favorite food that she cooked, an encouraging word for a young person unsure of themselves, or a story of laughter and cheer to raise their spirits. And members of her church – she was devout – arrived, additional mourners of a Southern lady, even though they hadn't seen her in many years. They too remembered the gifts, especially her gifts of time and energy for members of the congregation. By the time the services began, there were sixty people gathered to celebrate her life and mourn her death.

As we in SGS continue to think about what makes the South unique in respect to aging and what makes SGS distinctive in its focus, certainly the resilience of extended family ties must draw our attention. Whether this outpouring of affection will continue in a future of smaller families is a question. I like to think that for those with fewer children, we will have fictive kin – a wonderful group of non-related 'aunts' and 'uncles' and 'cousins' galore – to fill up our aging lives. But we need to remember what Aunt Dot knew, you only get what you give.

We look forward to seeing you all at our SGS Annual Meeting in Atlanta. Come build some 'fictive kin' with your colleagues. What better place to do so than SGS?

— J. James Cotter

## ***SGS Member News***

**Joe Ritchey (South Carolina)**, Vice President for the South Carolina Gerontological Society for the last few years, has been nominated to be President of the SCGS Board as of 1-01-08.

**Karen A. Roberto (Virginia)** was elected chair of the Behavioral and Social Sciences section of the Gerontological Society of America (GSA). She began her 3-year term, starting as chair-elect, in November 2007. Karen was also named Fellow of the World Demographic Association (WDA). The WDA is headquartered in St. Gallen, Switzerland, and focuses on world demographic change, aging, and generational issues.

**Luci Bearon (North Carolina)** has been named a 2007-2008 Fellow of AGHE.

The Gerontological Society of America has appointed **Rosemary Blieszner, (Virginia)** editor of *Journal of Gerontology: Psychological Sciences* for the 2008-2012 term.

**Dana Bradley (Kentucky)** and **Ayn Welleford (Virginia)** were named the Distinguished Teachers of the Year by the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE).

**Barbara Karcher (Georgia)** retired from Kennesaw State University and have been named Professor Emerita of Sociology. She was honored to be named Georgia Sociologist of the Year by the Georgia Sociological Association and was awarded a Certificate of Merit for service to the Georgia Gerontology Society.

**Leonard W. Poon, (Georgia)** and Thomas T. Perls, Editors, have put together the *Annual Review of Gerontology and Geriatrics: Biopsychosocial Approches to Longevity*, a book written by an international group of experts that considers the methodological and design dilemmas faced in conducting centenarian research.

## ***Media Resources***

### **Would I want to live there?**

In looking at media to explore nursing homes and cultures, I previewed the ***Creating A Home in Nursing Homes: Perspectives form the Inside***. This 21 minute DVD presents a list of recommendations gathered from input from residents, family members and staff. An engaging presentation of real-life scenes promotes the idea of patient- and family-centered care.

Another excellent video/DVD that highlights the life of real residents inside of nursing homes is ***Abuse: the Resident's Perspectives***. This brief video tells us what simple actions and behaviors constitute disrespect, neglect and "abuse" from a personal, everyday perspective. We have knowledge of physical abuse and neglect, but this gives us another view of how lack of respect and what are seemingly "little" things can also be abusive from the



perspective of those who live in institutions.

Both videos are available from [www.terranova.org](http://www.terranova.org), 1-800-779-8491

And if you are not aware of the Green House Project, the concept of creating an “alternative” to the traditional Medicaid-approved nursing home facility by using a group home living environment based on Dr. William Thomas’s vision, then you will want to visit the site to view materials <http://www.rwjf.org/files/newsroom/profiles/greenhouse/> or order the DVD (\$20) <https://www.ncbcapitalimpact.org/cart/order.htm>. The first Green House© homes were built in Tupelo, MS and are now expanding nationwide.

If you have new media, books, or other resources that you recommend for students, families, staff, or the aging network, please let us know at SGS or [joquin@olemiss.edu](mailto:joquin@olemiss.edu)

— Jo Ann O’Quin

## ***Calendar***

For those of you interested in upcoming conferences, check out the Gerontological Society of America’s listing at <http://www.geron.org/USCalendar.htm>. Here’s a listing of a few of the more general conferences coming up.

### **March 30 - April 1, 2008**

Clemson, SC. The 2008 South Carolina Aging Research Conference: Movement and Mobility. See <http://www.clemson.edu/aging/2008conference.html> for more details.

### **April 16, 2008**

Online Teleconference. The Hospice Foundation of America’s 15th annual National Bereavement Teleconference, Living With Grief: Children and Adolescents, will be broadcast live Wednesday, April 16, 2008 from 1:30-4:00pm EDT. See [www.hospicefoundation.org](http://www.hospicefoundation.org) for more details.

Get Ready for Careers in Aging Week 2008!

### **April 13-19, 2008**

The Gerontological Society of America (GSA) and the Association for Gerontology in Higher Education (AGHE) are proud to present the Seventh Annual Careers in Aging Week, which will take place April 13-19, 2008 on college campuses across the country. If you are interested in holding a Careers in Aging Week event on your campus, visit [www.careersinaging.com](http://www.careersinaging.com) for more information and e-mail [CIAW@geron.org](mailto:CIAW@geron.org) to sign up! from another site

### **April 17 – 20, 2008**

**(This premier conference should not be missed!)**

Atlanta, Georgia. 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Southern Gerontological Society, for further

info see <http://www.wfu.edu/gerontology/sgs/>

**July 20-23, 2008**

Nashville, TN. The National Association of Area Agencies on Aging (n4a) 33rd Annual Conference and Tradeshow will be held from Sunday, July 20 – Wednesday, July 23 at the Renaissance Nashville Hotel and the Nashville Convention Center in Nashville, Tennessee. All of the information you need to submit a session proposal can be found at: <http://www.n4a.org/>.

**August 11-14, 2008**

Orlando, FL. The 2008 Florida Conference on Aging, Renaissance Orlando Resort at SeaWorld. Call (850) 222-8877 for more information or go to [www.fcoa.org](http://www.fcoa.org). For reservations, call 407-351-5555.