

while above-average income and education, an absence of health restrictions on activities and the availability of a partner with whom one can travel, all promote seasonal migrations. The paper is concluded with an extended discussion of the trends in American society which are likely to increase the incidence of seasonal relocations and dual residences. It is an interesting account although little time is spent considering possible contrary influences, and an obvious omission is any reference to the interactions between real incomes and housing supply.

Age Concern Institute of Gerontology,
King's College London

Education

Joanna Bornat

Mary Casling, 'The older student: a personal point of view', pp. 231–233; Sydney J. Butler, 'Writing for posterity', pp. 234–240; Steve Ryan, 'The Open University and older students', pp. 241–245; all in *Adult Education*, vol. 58 (3), December 1985.

Mary Casling retired at sixty and had acquired the degrees of Master of Education and Doctor of Philosophy by the time she was sixty-seven. She provides an older student's insight into the experience of learning at a late stage in life. Her conclusions are that age-segregated classes bring fewer rewards than grouping by interest, that reduced income and physical slowing down need to be compensated for with smaller classes and understanding from tutors and that new technology need hold no fears for older learners. Learning for its own sake brings enjoyment, also skills and knowledge which have spin-off in other areas of life as well as a wider social circle and welcomed opportunities for life review and self knowledge.

Sydney J. Butler describes how a group of 12 women in their sixties and seventies, mainly from professional backgrounds but with little recent experience of writing, took part in a course in 'life-writing' on titled 'Writing for Posterity', at a social centre for senior citizens in Vancouver, Canada. He began with the aim of co-ordinating a group to produce their own booklet, from initial writing, through editing to final publication. With access to a computer the group were able to review each other's work from week to week with supportive criticism. The outcome was a class booklet, 44 pages long, photocopied and stitched in a cardboard cover.

Use of the computer meant a professional finish to the look of the pages. For the students the whole process proved sufficiently self-enhancing for them to pursue funding from the Federal Government for a project. Their aim is to involve other seniors, in centres and residential homes, to become part of a writing and publishing programme. For Sydney Butler, the success of their application is less relevant than the fact that they made the proposal on the basis of their experience of taking part in a writing group.

Steve Ryan reports on the main findings of a survey of the almost 3,000 people over the age of sixty who, in 1982, were registered as Open University graduates. In 1984, out of nearly 68,000 undergraduates, 4.5% were over the age of sixty. The size of this figure means that almost all the people in this age group studying degree courses are enrolled at the OU. The survey included all the older students in 4 of the university's 13 regions and asked students to report on their reasons for study at Britain's Open University, previous educational and work experience, use of OU facilities and the rewards and difficulties of study with the OU. A comparative group of people under sixty were similarly surveyed. As an age-group, the over-sixties are under-represented in the OU population, though within the group they share particular characteristics. Women outnumber men, a majority had retired from professional occupations, a high proportion, 8%, already had a university degree, but a great many more had had their early education interrupted by wartime or by family commitments. Study with the OU had brought the rewards of access to new ideas, greater mental stimulation and a sense of achievement. At the same time these older students had feared problems with their memory and with exam performance. These older students showed a preference for arts courses and were least interested in mathematics and technology. Measured in terms of results, the older age group as a whole performed only slightly less well than the under sixties: 64% compared with 67% passing on all courses, 35% compared with 29% passing no courses. In relation to forms of assessment, these older students did slightly better in continuous assessment but achieved lower results in examinations than the younger students. The conclusions drawn from this survey are that older students benefit from a combination of home-based study and the regional support service provided by the Open University and seem stimulated and refreshed rather than deterred by demanding forms of assessment and participation in degree level learning.

Education Resource Unit for Older People,
Inner London Education Authority