



A Letter From Bill...

I was a few minutes early for the chapter meeting, in time for coffee and a bagel. Driving to Conshohocken, I had tried to remember the last Y Alumni chapter meeting I'd attended. It was some years earlier. It might have been one of those delightful seashore get-togethers at the Wilsons' Strathmere home.

I probably should take a minute to explain why I've been such an unfaithful attendee. It's not for lack of interest. I've sustained my membership, kept in touch through Clippings, picked up news from my buddy Ken White, the only fellow retiree I see regularly.



But my ability to take hours out of a weekday to get to a meeting or event is severely limited. My wife Margie is bedridden in a nursing home with advanced Parkinson's disease, compounded by dementia. I spend many hours a day with her, a routine she's come to count on. She becomes anxious and upset when I'm not there when she expects to see me.

That Tuesday, as I entered the room where our meeting took place, my first encounter was an enthusiastic hug from Past President Barbara Taylor and a handshake from her husband Roy. Looking further, I thought I had somehow traveled back in time. My old friend Hank Van Zanten was chatting with my erstwhile assistant Cathy

Fromm, both of them evidently untouched by the passage of time that leaves its marks on the rest of us.

Cathy, my wonderfully capable administrative assistant for the 11 years I served as MRC Director, led me to a front-row seat and we sipped coffee and got caught up with one another's lives. The room was filling up. President *pro tem* Len was at the lectern ready to get things started.

I studied the room. I knew nearly everyone there. Most of them had been at my retirement party, 20 years (!) ago. I was overcome with that special feeling you get at a family reunion where beloved but long-unseen relatives magically gather.

It was a wonderful time for me. And not just because I was surrounded by colleagues and friends with whom I shared so much meaningful YMCA work over decades. The other thing that made the meeting so significant was being reminded of all the good works of Y Alumni, notably underscored by Gary Graham's firsthand account of the National Service Project, and learning how the Greater Philadelphia YMCA has developed and grown since my years on the corporate staff.

The feeling in that room, that day, was one of warmth, mutual appreciation, and fellowship. I felt so blessed to be there. And I hope I'll be back, at least once in a while.

Bill Cameron