



# PORT OF CALL

**PWTA RETIRED EDUCATORS CHAPTER**

**PORT WASHINGTON, NEW YORK**

**MARCH 2009**

**VOL. 19 NO. 1**

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In its always constant efforts to pursue constructive solutions to the budget crisis that would spare students and needy New Yorkers from undue harm, NYSUT called upon its Committee of 100 members to come to Albany on February 3rd for an extraordinary meeting with legislators. Among our RC 19 stalwarts who met the challenge not only of confronting difficult political times but a blizzard on L.I. as well were Co-Presidents Louise and Rosemary, Bill and Naomi from Great Neck, and Mary Anne Cariello and myself. Discussed with our Senator Craig Johnson (7th S.D.) and Assemblywoman Michelle Schimel (16th A.D.) were NYSUT proposed solutions that would focus on the revenue side of the equation as well, e.g. increasing the PIT (Personal Income Tax) to create new tax brackets starting at \$250,000 in order to generate a substantial (\$6B) amount of permanent revenue. Also urged were maintaining the foundation formula for K-12 education to assure quality education for all, restoring \$40 million to Teacher Centers and \$10 million for the Teacher Mentor Intern program, restoring cuts to SUNY/CUNY and to hospitals and Medicaid, and rejecting the proposed Tier V. While our legislators are not unsympathetic to our recommendations, their enlightenment will be continued both by our political staff in Albany and our own continued efforts through phone calls, letter writing, and the next scheduled Committee of 100 meeting in March. In as much as Assemblyman Tom Alfano had a committee conflict with our scheduled appointment we did not meet with him, but will attempt to do so in his local office.



Elaine Berman

In total there were some 400+ Committee of 100 members visiting their legislators on that day, including several from the other Nassau and Suffolk EDs. It is always impressive to see the legislative halls filled with the serious and well-informed NYSUT "negotiators," and equally impressive is the reception with which we are greeted in the legislators' offices. The job of ALL of us is to continue to send the FAXes posted on the NYSUT website ([NYSUT.org/legislative](http://NYSUT.org/legislative)) and to make the telephone calls when we are asked.

The 2009-10 school budget votes, scheduled for May 19, will occur during a difficult time. I have been attending meetings of our Board of Education and its legislative and budget committees, and it becomes apparent that decisions will not be made easily nor taken lightly. I urge that we all take an active role in seeing that a budget passes in Port Washington that will uphold our standards of excellence; nothing less than the future of our children and our community is at stake.

**Just back from Albany** You already know of my PAC (political action committee) hat, but glutton for punishment that I am, I now also serve on NYSUT's RAC (Retiree Advisory Committee). This group, meeting four times a year, makes recommendations on behalf of retirees to the NYSUT Board of Directors and officers through Kathleen Donahue, NYSUT Vice-President and RAC co-chair (along with Joan Perrini, President, Retiree Council #21). Although RAC is not a policy-making body, it has had positive results in its recommendations to NYSUT's Board of Directors and officers.

The most recent meeting, in January (next meeting in April) included in its many-faceted agenda an overview of the impact of new IRS regulations on retiree councils, and a very thorough legislative update by Steve Allinger (NYSUT Director of Legislation) giving direction to the scope of action to be taken on the state and federal level in particular regard to the needs of education and educators.

If there are retiree issues which you have not yet seen addressed by this group, through NYSUT proposed legislation, etc., please bring them to my attention and I will follow through; to best represent you, I need to know what is on your minds. Thank you.

# P.W.R.E. CHAPTER NEWS



## P.W.R.E. Meeting Time Change

Because of increased numbers of bookings of library functions, it is becoming more difficult to schedule our once-usual meeting times. As noted in the last issue, the February meeting was on FRIDAY, Feb. 20, at 10:15. However, we have scheduled March and April meetings on Thursdays at 1 p.m. - March 26 (same date as book club) and April 23 - and if this new time proves acceptable to most, we will try to keep to that time on future Thursdays. If you attend these meetings, let us know your reaction. The only other alternative, as we see it, would be to meet at the Teacher Center at Weber on Thursday mornings, but, inasmuch as there is no parking at that location, we would have to use parking lots in the vicinity.

### Important Dates to Remember

#### The P.W.R.E. Spring Luncheon

Date: Thursday, May 28th  
Place: The Swan Club  
Time: 12:00 P.M. - 3:00 P.M.  
Price: \$35 per person

Please make your check payable to the:  
**PORT WASHINGTON TEACHERS ASSOCIATION (or PWTA)**  
and mail it to: **Penny D'Antonio**  
**1425 Port Washington Blvd.**  
**Port Washington, NY 11050**

\*Be sure to give Penny the name of everyone in your party.

#### Book Club Meetings

Thursday, March 26 @ 11 AM  
The Book: [The Gate House](#)  
Author: Nelson DeMille  
Where: at Ruth Haukeland's house.

Wednesday, May 6 @ 11 AM.  
The Book: [Lyndon Johnson and the American Dream](#)  
Author: Doris Kearns Goodwin  
Where: at Sue Mittelstaedt's house

### Friendship/Remembrance Committee...Joan Gerken

#### Condolences Were Sent to:

The family of Joseph Caruso  
Nicole Hamburger on the death of her mother  
The family of George Kesner  
Annette Mione on the death of her husband  
The family of Mark Rothman  
The family of Joseph Ryan  
The family of Anna Shackel  
Sally Slater on the death of her husband



A \$50 contribution was sent to the PWTA Scholarship Fund in memory of each:

Joseph Caruso  
George Kessner  
Mark Rothman  
Joseph Ryan  
Anna Shackel

#### Get Well Wishes Were Sent to:

Lee Aschenbrenner  
Gloria Clancy  
Neila Farber  
Toni Salerno  
Louis Thymius

A Thinking of you card was sent to: Bob Bartels



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#### PORT OF CALL

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# ... AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

## Happy 4th Birthday to the Education Support Center

**... A "VOLUNTEER" PROJECT... Jane Tafarella**

How quickly time goes by! This month, The Education Support Center, sponsored by the Port Washington Education Foundation, in cooperation with the Port Washington Public Library, celebrated its Fourth Anniversary.

The Education Support Center is an after school program that offers support to children in third grade who need help with language skills. The children participate in a wide range of activities, get help with homework, and have access to books and programs at the library.

This wonderful program is supported by a dedicated group of volunteers who offer as many Tuesday afternoons as they are able. We have a large group of Schreiber students, members of the Port Washington community, and of course, a large group of Port Washington Retired Educators. It is the commitment of these volunteers that keep us going.

Our volunteers sign up for the dates that best fit with their busy schedules. You do not have to commit to every week. We have students that come around the sports schedules, and we have our "snow birds" who help us in the fall and spring. If you'd like to join us, please contact me at [j\\_tafarella@hotmail.com](mailto:j_tafarella@hotmail.com). We can always use another pair of hands.



## A Reminder About Medicare Costs and Changes in 2009

If you are covered by the Empire Plan (NYSHIP), late last year you should have received a statement from the Department of Civil Service notifying you that you have creditable prescription drug coverage. This notice verifies that you do not need to and should not sign up for any Medicare Part D Prescription Drug Plan. Keep this document with all your important papers to prevent any potential future changes or charges. If you receive any mail from Civil Service, open it immediately to be aware of any possible changes!

Although there has been a 5.8% Social Security COLA increase for 2009, the amount of Medicare means testing charges has changed. The basic Part B medical insurance monthly premium deduction from our Social Security remains the same. However, the amount of the income related surcharges (means testing) has increased as follows:

| <u>Individual Tax Return</u> | <u>Joint Return</u> | <u>You Pay</u>           |
|------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|
| \$85,000 or below            | \$170,000 or below  | *\$96.40                 |
| \$85,001-\$107,000           | \$170,001-214,000   | \$134.90 (from \$122.20) |
| \$107,001-\$160,000          | \$214,001-\$320,000 | \$192.70 (from \$160.90) |
| \$160,001-\$213,000          | \$320,001-\$426,000 | \$250.50 (from \$199.70) |
| Above \$213,000              | above \$426,000     | \$308.30 (from \$238.40) |

Keep in mind that, under Civil Service law, school districts are required to reimburse NYSHIP enrollees for Medicare premium charges. You must notify the district when you become eligible for Medicare. It is strongly recommended that you do not drop your coverage because of the increased surcharges. If you should leave the district plan, your former employer is no longer required to reimburse the monthly premium. Before you make any changes, contact your district's business office and call the Medicare Rights Center 1-800-333-4114 to speak to a counselor.

In order to receive full reimbursement for a Medicare surcharge you must inform the district and supply the necessary information including a copy of your notification from the Social Security Administration. Contact your district to find out what forms they require.

## **NYSUT Retiree Member of the Year**

Louise Levine-Rosenthal was one of two NYSUT members honored as a RETIREE MEMBER OF THE YEAR.

Levine-Rosenthal has been active in the union for more than 35 years. Throughout her in-service career, she held all but the office of president in the Mineola TA. She served as president for six years of the Mineola retiree union and since 1998 has served as co-president of Retiree Council 19.

She has been diligent in support of issues important to the quality of life of retirees. A strong opponent to the privatization of Social Security and Medicare, the NYSUT-trained speaker has presented these issues at various venues on Long Island. She is a strong supporter of LIARA (Long Island Association of Retired Americans) and serves on its executive board. As such, she meets with leaders of retiree groups in the labor movement.

She worked actively to promote pension COLAs and COLA improvements, and has been an active leader to bring in new retiree chapters. She also has served as a committee member on the NYSUT Making Strides Against Breast Cancer effort for Nassau County. Levine-Rosenthal received the AFT Living Legacy Award in 2006.



## **OUR RETIREES TELL US**

### **From Carolyn Jacobson—Weber Retiree**

For the past 5 years I have traveled to Ecuador every February to visit my two Grand children who live in Quito. I have traveled to the coast where we have family in Esmeraldas. My husband and I took a tour on the Rio Napa into the Jungle to see the beautiful birds and butterflies and to visit indigenous Ecuadorians who live in the area. We have also spent time in Cuenca, Riobamba and and Otavalo as well as taking lots of day trips to sites all around Quito. There are also many wonderful museums, restaurants and places to visit in Quito as well so if anyone is thinking of a trip to Ecuador, I will be happy to share my knowledge, books, maps, and experiences.



### **From Ellen Zimmerman—Schreiber Retiree**

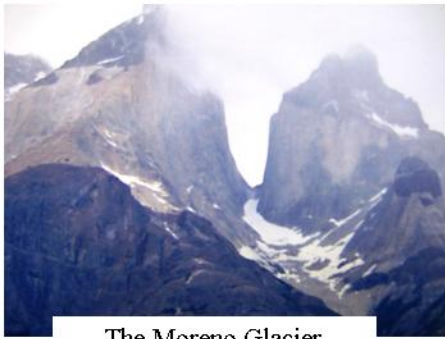


Since retiring from teaching ESL at Schreiber, I have found a good fit in being on the board of Friends of the Port Washington Public Library (FOL.) Among many programs, We sponsor a popular series called Sandwiched In, Fridays at noon. I volunteered to be a book seller at one such event, probably six months ago, and had a lovely experience which I want to tell you about.

The young author who spoke was Vincent Louis Carrella. Vincent lives in California now, but he attended Port Washington Public Schools. He wrote a fascinating, disturbing book of fiction, *Serpent Box*, about a boy growing up in an Appalachian town where snakes are used in religious rituals. The very first paragraph of the book sets the tone: " They tell stories about a boy who was born here right on this mountain, a child of the hollows, a child of the mists. His daddy was a snake preacher who had the eyes of a reptile himself, and his momma was a simple wife. They lived over in Leatherwood, where the Sequatchie River runs into the Tennessee. This was in 1936, the same year the Sequatchie flooded, and not so long ago.

The presentation was very well received and then Vincent took questions from the audience. One man stood and said, "Vinnie, I am so proud of you." The author answered, "I have to thank you for telling me in sixth grade that I could be anything I wanted to be. That opened doors for me." The audience was moved by this interchange.

The proud teacher was Walter Chaskel. It was a touching reunion. All of us who have worked with children hope that our influence will bring positive and lasting results and sometimes it does! I wanted you all to know about this sweet vignette that I witnessed.



The Moreno Glacier

## Patagonian Perfection!

**Elaine Berman**

Christmas Eve, Christmas Day - what could have been a better gift than sailing into Ainsworth Bay, mooring near a 120-foot high glacier and taking a zodiac shore excursion (Elaine seen here in glamorous attire with one of the 20 in the group) to observe a colony of elephant seals (wrestlers all); then navigating part of the Beagle Channel as we sailed toward the Pia Glacier in the Darwin Mountain Range.



On the boat sailing into Ainsworth Bay.

Ah - just a small part of a 16-day dream trip through Patagonia, Tierra del Fuego and the Chilean Fjords, and on to Iguassu Falls in Argentina/Brazil.

From Buenos Aires through Chile and Argentina around Cape Horn to Ushuaia - the "end of the world" and an ice chunk's throw from Antarctica - wild life abounded. We saw Magellanic penguins (wide black strap Underneath chin and inverted horseshoe shape on stomach), guanacos (llama-like), rheas (ostrich-like), condors, black-necked swans, birds of many names (Elaine here in another flattering outfit stepping gingerly over barbed wire to get to a bird sanctuary at the Nimes Lagoon in the outskirts of El Calafate) and of course horses with their gaucho riders.



Exploring the bird Sanctuary at the Nimes Lagoon

Majestic scenery, varied climactic conditions, compatible companions, super guides and exquisite cuisine- - if this is earth, heaven can wait!



## An Update From the Chair of the 2010 Caldecott Award Committee

**P.W.R.E. Member Rita Auerbach**

This is a year of exciting professional challenges. As Chair of the American Library Association's 2010 Caldecott Award Committee, I am supervising the choice of the "most distinguished American picture book" for children through age 14 published in 2009. The award goes to the book's illustrator who must be a citizen or resident of the United States. Although we've been communicating for some time by email, our committee met for the first time this past month at ALA's Denver conference. Some of us have known one another for many years, but most of us were meeting each other for the first time. In addition to reviewing committee procedures, we needed in this first meeting to begin to develop the cohesive spirit that will allow us to work together cooperatively even when we disagree about the relative merits of the year's books. And there will be many books. Boxes and boxes are already arriving from publishers.

Each month, the fifteen committee members will submit suggestions of books they consider worthy of the award. Late in the year, we will also be formally nominating books for committee discussion. We will next meet this July in Chicago, but our final decisions will be made next January in Boston. The award will be announced at ALA's Monday morning press conference on January 18, 2010.

We are only beginning to see the year's books and there is no way yet to know what books will excite our interest. The process is highly secretive. No one outside of the committee can know which books we are considering. Will our final selection be a predictable choice or will we surprise the library world and, perhaps, ourselves? As we start this year of hard work and careful deliberation, we are all, I think, sharing a sense of responsibility and wonderful anticipation.



Are you following Fashion Week? Do you wonder, as do I, who will ever wear that awful stuff that's being shown as the latest, newest, have to have. Less sleeves, more peek a boo, shorter—maybe it's a reflection of economic cutback, although the prices of these garments don't seem to be cutback much. (Contrast this with current department store shopping, where “regular” clothing is sold (to us regular people), and we are virtually being paid to take it away.)

Having spent a great deal of time reading about clothing as a reflection of the history of the era in which it's worn (one of my absolutely favorite books is “Let There Be Clothes, 40,000 years of fashion, a century by century romp through civilization's wardrobe, manners and trends,” by Lynn Schurnberger), I wonder what generations to come will see about our era that's displayed in our attire.

Take for example those big, low slung pants. Do you know that the fad began on Riker's Island? When prisoners' belts were taken away to prevent harm, their pants drooped, and a style was born. The only time I truly regret not having pursued my administrative career beyond one year, is when I think about the joy I'd have been able to take in outlawing that style in a school. So as not to infringe on anyone's right to self expression, I muse, I'd say it was dangerous in an emergency (could I invoke 9/11 here?). Say kids had to hustle out of a building, mightn't they slow an evacuation down, imperiling everyone, while having to clutch their pants with one hand to prevent tripping.

I visited the Museum of the City of New York today, for the first time ever, and it was fascinating. In addition to exhibits on the “Growing and Greening of NY:PlaNYC, and the Future of the City” “ Broken Glass: Photographs of the South Bronx,” and some excellent historical/modern exhibitions of NY Theatre, among other things, there was a major show of the work of Valentina, a New York City based couturier to American celebrities in the 30's, 40's and 50's. She described her style as “disciplined simplicity,” hallmarks of which were elegant fabrics beautifully draped, separate pieces that could be mixed and matched, and designs based on classic design of the past. The most amazing thing, to me, was that each and every one of these designs could be successfully worn today, if only they could be found in stores.

I once took an FIT extension sewing course with a designer named “LaRue” (no that's not Mr. LaRue, just LaRue), who solved my problem with getting the clothing I was making to fit me better by suggesting that I lose 20 pounds, and it would simply fall into place. No wonder the largest most successful manufacturer of clothing is Mattel—those designs just have to fit a Barbie doll, not the rest of us.

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# 2008 New York State Teachers' Retirement System Legislation That May Affect You



The following is a summary of 2008 NYSTRS-related legislation that has been signed into law.

## Chapter 640 of the Laws of 2008

Chapter 640 of the Laws of 2008, signed into law Oct. 7, 2008, strengthens transparency and accountability measures relative to employee hiring and reporting. Among its provisions, the law:

- Implements various reforms to the process by which a retired public employee may obtain a waiver under Retirement and Social Security Law §211 ("**211 waiver**"), which allows a retired public employee to earn in excess of the legislated earnings limit (\$30,000 in 2008) while continuing to receive a public pension;
- Prevents a retired public employee from working under a 211 waiver in the same or similar position for one year from the retiree's date of retirement from a New York State public retirement system;
- Increases the reporting and public disclosure obligations of school districts and Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES); and,
- Bars attorneys from simultaneously serving a school district or BOCES as an employee and independent contractor and makes any violation of that a felony.

**Please Note:** Amendments made to Section 211 by this chapter of law do not apply to individuals already working and/or granted waivers prior to the statute's effective date.

## Chapter 173 of the Laws of 2008

Chapter 173 of the Laws of 2008 – which revokes a member's prior designation of a former spouse as a beneficiary in the event of a subsequent divorce, annulment or judicial separation – was signed into law on July 7. In general, Chapter 173 provides that a divorce, annulment or judicial separation of a marriage revokes a NYSTRS member's prior designation of a former spouse as beneficiary of certain death benefits and retirement options – except as provided by the express terms of a governing instrument (for example, a domestic relations order on file with NYSTRS). Under Chapter 173, the former spouse is treated as having predeceased the member.

The designations impacted by Chapter 173 include the pre-retirement death benefit, and any lump-sum retirement option under which the member is permitted to change the beneficiary. Chapter 173 does not apply to designations that are irrevocable by law, such as the beneficiary designation of a joint and survivor retirement option, or designations that are required under a certified domestic relations order on file with NYSTRS. For Chapter 173 to apply, NYSTRS must receive written notice of the divorce, annulment or judicial separation before it issues payment of the death benefit.

To ensure benefits are distributed as intended, it is important for divorced members to review their beneficiary designations with NYSTRS and, if necessary, file a new [\*Designation of Beneficiary\*](#) form (NET-11.4). A member's current beneficiary designation is listed in the *Benefit Profile* mailed to active members annually and, for registered members, in their personalized [MyNYSTRS](#) account on the NYSTRS Web site. Chapter 173 also revokes a former spouse's rights to serve as a personal representative, executor, guardian, attorney-in-fact or any other fiduciary role for marriages ended on or after July 7, 2008 – the day Chapter 173 was enacted.



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**Port Washington Retired Educators Chapter**

**Meetings are held in the Port Washington Library on Thursdays  
\*at 1:00 P.M. on the dates listed below unless notified otherwise.**

**\*THIS IS A NEW TIME. PLEASE SEE PAGE 2 FOR DETAILS.**

**2009 Meeting Dates**

**March 26th** in the Hagedorn Room

**April 23rd** in the Hagedorn Room

**May 28th** the P.W.R.E. Spring Luncheon  
from 12 Noon to 3 P.M. at the Swan Club.

See page 2 for details.

**All members are welcome and encouraged to attend these monthly meetings.**

**PORT WASHINGTON  
RETIRED EDUCATORS CHAPTER, PWTA  
101 CAMPUS DRIVE  
PORT WASHINGTON, NY 11050**

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