



# PORT OF CALL

**PWTA RETIRED EDUCATORS CHAPTER**

**PORT WASHINGTON, NEW YORK**

**SEPTEMBER 2009**

**VOL. 19 NO. 3**

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Visit Our Website at: [www.pwta.us/Retirees](http://www.pwta.us/Retirees)

**F** O tempora, o mores! Can this be my *thirteenth* You-Don't-Have-to-Go-Back-to-School Anymore rendezvous? While the years have passed so very quickly, and fortunately - save for an occasional personal mishap (remember the broken- leg- in- wheelchair luncheon??)- I have enjoyed good health. As I look back, I can see at least two proofs-positive that time doth indeed march on: my columns have gotten longer, and my wrinkles have gotten stronger!

**R** In the nine or ten years that I have been speaking at, with and to you in print, there has been a commonality of themes:

- O** 1) This is your organization, volunteer, get involved, come to meetings, make suggestions;
- M** 2) Attend the fall NYSUT Nassau County conference, if you can, (this year on Nov. 4, Woodbury Country Club) to meet colleagues from other chapters and hear first-hand some of the issues currently on our agenda;
- T** 3) Contribute to, and march in October on behalf of, NYSUT's annual participation in a breast cancer walk at Jones Beach;
- H** 4) Contribute generously to VOTE/COPE;
- E** 5) Stay apprised of the legislative and budget battles affecting us all on the national, state and local levels; *take action* by writing, 'phoning and/or FAX'ing your political representatives. Numbers count!!!



Elaine Berman

**D** We have borne witness to the passing of many of our beloved members (most recently of Lee Aschenbrenner - see tribute later in this newsletter), and while we welcome all "newbies" that have joined us, nothing takes away from continuing to miss those who have left us. We have seen many changes in our local Board of Education (stay informed of the process and the selection of a board member to replace Sue Sturman who has resigned), and in attitudes thereon in terms of contract negotiations and other matters of importance to educators and school population.


**E** We will be faced again this year with serious issues. On the state level we have seen contentious goings-on in Albany, and we must stay alert, and take action when it is asked, if and when problems arise during the course of the next year. On the federal level of greatest concern is the health insurance agenda - read the later pages in this newsletter for recent (perhaps not THE MOST RECENT) proposed configurations, and consult the NYSUT website [www.NYSUT.org](http://www.NYSUT.org) and/or AFT and/or ARA for details of how you and your loved ones might be affected in the varying scenarios.

**S** You've heard it many times before, but WE DO NEED ALL OF YOU. Have a good, healthy year - and pat yourself on the back for being a conscientious contributor - to VOTE/COPE and to participation in many of the activities noted.

## TAKE ACTION ON HEALTH CARE REFORM NOW!

**K** How health care is "reformed" will affect all of us, not just the uninsured. It is important that you learn both the "pros" and the "cons" of the issue and decide your own position rather than be manipulated by one-sided media coverage, claims of the drug and insurance industry or pressure from organizations. Once you know where you stand on the question, make your position known to your legislators. The message needs to be LOUD and CLEAR. It seems that only large volumes of mail, faxes, phone calls and e-mails make enough of a difference for those legislators to "sit up and take notice."

## AFT Mourns the Loss of Sen. Edward Kennedy

**O**  The AFT mourns the passing of one of our own, Sen. Edward M. Kennedy, who was sometimes nicknamed "the senator from AFT." AFT president Randi Weingarten says Kennedy earned that playful moniker by virtue of our substantive and long-lasting partnership. "Several years ago, we made it official by bestowing upon him an honorary lifetime membership in the AFT," she says.

*Reprinted from the AFT Leadernet webpage of August 26, 2009.*







# P.W.R.E. CHAPTER NEWS

## The Annual "First Day Brunch"

The annual "First Day Brunch" attracted fifty of Port's retirees on September 8th. Three of the newest retirees (see the picture at the right) enjoyed the food and camaraderie at the Fish-Ka-Bob restaurant along with the "veteran" retirees.



Joan Maria Gail



Matt Scott has agreed to oversee the P.W.R. E. budget.



The Book Club met at the Library on September 8th to discuss *Heart and Soul* by Maeve Binchy.

## Important Dates to Remember

THE NORTH FORK TROLLEY TOUR, scheduled for October 15th, has been cancelled due to lack of interest. If you have already paid, your money will be returned to you.

Breast Cancer Walk ...Sunday, October 18th  
Meet at Jones Beach, Parking Lot 5, at 7:30 a.m.

A WALKING TOUR OF GREENWICH VILLAGE is planned for November 9th.  
Contact Elaine Berman if you're interested.

## Book Club Dates

November 12, 2009- 11 A.M.

at **Barbara Mayer's**

The book: *The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court.*

Author: Jeffrey Toobin

December 15, 2009 - 11 A.M.

at **Elaine Berman's**

The book: *The Guernsey Literary and Potato Peel Pie Society*

Author: Mary Ann Shaffer

From Bernadette Dempsey (516) 767-0664

The orchestra at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation with its choral group will present Handel's *Messiah* on December 13th. For further information, contact Bernadette at the number above.

Please Note: The 2010 Spring Luncheon  
will be held on April 22, 2010

at the **George Washington Manor in Roslyn.**  
Details will follow in the March newsletter.

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Joan Gerken

## Condolences Were Sent to:

The Family of Lee Aschenbrenner

The Family of Violet Pechar

Kathy Stanco on the death of her mother

Stella Thymius on the death of her husband



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

Get Well Wishes Were Sent to:

Toni Salerno

We were so sorry to hear of the death in July of Vi Pechar, secretary at Weber for some 27 years. Not only did Vi always display care, affection and dedication during her career days, but she was a most active and valued member of the Retired Educators Association, frequently attending monthly meetings and joining in our luncheons and other social events.

As a loving grandmother, great-grandmother and good friend to many, she enjoyed traveling and spending time with family. She will be greatly missed. Memorial donations are being accepted in Vi's name by the Community Hospice Foundation for the Bailey Center, 4266 Sunbeam Road, Jacksonville, FL 32257.

## Inside PORT OF CALL September 2009

Chapter News...	page 2
Important Dates to Remember ...	page 2
The Annual "First Day Brunch"...	page 2
Friendship/Remembrance Committee...Joan Gerken	page 2
PORT OF CALL contact information	page 2
TRS Pension Security: A Message from David Keefe	page 3
Lee Aschenbrenner - A MAN for ALL Ages...Barbara Mayer	page 3
Keeping in Touch	page 4
We Asked to Hear From You, And We Did	page 5
Merry-Go-Round ...Training for Adjectival Education...	page 6
The Health Care Reform Issue	page 7
Editorial: Health Care Reform: Who Will Benefit the Most?	page 7

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## ... AND ITEMS OF INTEREST

### TRS Pension Security: A Message from David Keefe

The current NYS-TRS payroll of \$5 billion is protected by an advanced funding formula that is based on investment income, our active member contributions and employer contributions. The formula is designed so that if one of the funding sources proves to be inadequate, the other two will make up the inadequacy. Our fund is over \$60 billion and has liquid assets of over \$11 billion. These liquid assets are in such securities as treasury bonds and other government-backed obligations.



David Keefe

Our fund is widely diversified in all asset classes. While the

stock market may go down, our investments in private equity or real estate may go up. Such diversification increases the security of the pension system. Over the past several years the system has generated double-digit increases in the fund through such diversification. Our fund is currently positioned to make gains when the economy rebounds.

Also remember that our individual pensions are guaranteed by the New York State Constitution. The Constitution guarantees that our pensions "shall not be diminished nor impaired." Our pensions are as strong as New York state, which has not defaulted on an obligation in more than 200 years.

Our pensions are in the hands of professional investment experts and our system is overseen by a 10-person board of trustees. Sitting on that board are two school administrators, three active teachers and one retired teacher. These members have a fiduciary responsibility to maintain the sanctity of the system at all times.

NYS-TRS has the liquidity needed to pay all benefits today and the accumulated assets to do so in the future. Despite market volatility, you can rest assured that your retirement fund is safe, secure and guaranteed by the New York state constitution.

David Keefe is a trustee on the NYS Teachers' Retirement System Retirement Board.

*Reprinted from the June/July 2009 issue of The Retiree Organizer*

### Lee Aschenbrenner - A Man for ALL Ages

*By Barbara Mayer*



Lee Aschenbrenner was truly a renaissance man. The term is used to describe a person who is well educated or who excels in a wide variety of subjects or fields. Doesn't that describe Lee? He was the consummate educator, the adoring husband of "T" for 66 ½ years, and the beloved patriarch of a large, and growing larger, family. He mentored all: family members, students, teachers, and administrators alike.

The memorial service for Lee, held at The Community Synagogue on August 21, was a love fest and a very fitting tribute. The sanctuary was filled, (as it usually is only during the High Holy Days!) with his loving family, colleagues, former parents, and friends from all walks of Port Washington life and beyond. Numerous speakers extolled Lee's virtues and his strength and courage during the months after his tragic accident. It was noted that at the time of the accident, Lee was doing what Lee always did: showing he cared for others by virtue of his actions.

My personal experience with Lee mirrors that of so many others. I worked with him at Manorhaven School in the 80s. He made such a difference in my career. He showed genuine interest in me and enthusiasm for my lessons and classroom. And I surprised him and myself when I told him that I did need those paper clips and scissors that he grilled me about for my kindergarten kids! Always frugal, Lee cared most about what mattered most: the students. He knew them all: their family stories, siblings, strengths, and needs. He cared about each and every one of them as his own, and he never forgot any of them; in fact, Lee never forgot anything at all that I know of!

Lee gave me the most beneficial gift of all - the confidence to succeed. This was such a valuable lesson that I, and many, many others, tried to "pay it forward" with colleagues and students throughout our careers. It's a precious part of Lee's endowment to us.

Lee was "Mr. Port Washington," both in the schools and in the community, for six decades. He is no longer with us, but his legacy and his example will continue to live on for many generations to come.

Thank you, Lee.





## KEEPING IN TOUCH



Ed Berkowitz

You may remember **Ed Berkowitz**, who retired as an Assistant Superintendent some 21 years ago, and has been living in Baltimore all these years with wife Barbara and as grandpa to 8 and great grandpa to another.

Ed, involved on many levels in education, has also been honored for his dedication to his religious institution (Congregation Beth El) and to the Torah. He was feted by the Seaboard Region Federation of Jewish Men's Clubs at their annual dinner as "Blue Yarmulke Man-of-the-Year" honoree. It was stated on the occasion, "We have all been blessed to share his spirit and his wisdom."

Congratulations to Ed and his family. Just remember, Ed - Port Washington gave you some of your "basic training!"

Check out Ed's interview with Ellie Ginsburg at: <http://userpages.umbc.edu/~jonfeng1/thesisproject/elliieginsburg/interviews/edwardberkowitz/index.html>

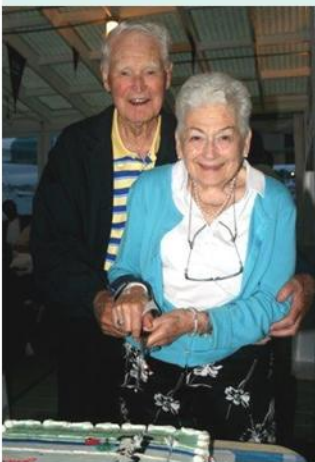
### **An Excerpt from Ed's Interview the Ellie Ginsburg**

When Edward was asked about the Holocaust, he remembered that toward the end of the war he began to hear things. "The country was fighting totalitarianism and fighting Hitler, but we did not know about the Final Solution until later." Going to high school with a German Jewish refugee also instilled fears in him that things were horrible in Europe. "We were really innocent of the Holocaust. We got a letter from a family who had the same surname of my mother's maiden name, seeking funds to help them immigrate. I remember my family discussing this but I don't remember what came of it. I always had a personal sense of guilt of not being aware and not knowing what that monster was doing."



Ed with his wife, Barbara.

### **From: Lorrie MacGowan, secretary to Thomas Lovett and the "delightful bunch at Guggenheim School."**



Lorrie and Jack MacGowan on their 65th anniversary.

I frequently look at the wonderful album I have of the great party we had at Beverly's (Rubin) house- what a fine farewell! We left Long Island in 1982 and moved to Rhode Island, built a nice townhouse on the water near Wickford. I did eight years there fighting for the environment against mass-burn incineration of garbage. That was exciting.

We then left the townhouse to become stewards of a very significant historical site. It is called Smith's Castle and is located on the Old Post Road north of Kingstown, just north of the sweet village of Wickford. For four and a half years we guarded, nourished and promoted this wonderful place. During that time, while we were living on site and dressed, much of the time, in colonial costumes, this castle qualified for significant grants, enough to totally restore this historical house for perpetuity. It was thrilling to realize that we had a small part in the transition from a house waiting to collapse to this wonderful landmark building with an important future.

It was time to move on again and Jack had not played enough golf (and I wanted to learn how) so we packed up and moved to Mesa, Arizona where some other teachers had moved, including Betty Mueller and her husband Fritz (a coach at Manhasset).

There's a saying out there that "Old age ain't for sissies," so, after fourteen years in Mesa and with health issues looming and our son Andrew saying that Mesa was too long a trip for him to bring us a bowl of soup, we moved back to Rhode Island and are living in Newport.

Warmest regards, Lorrie MacGowan (*will be 87 in October. Jack is 91...ain't that something?*)



## WE ASKED TO HEAR FROM YOU, AND WE DID!



### From Anne Burkard

My husband, Andrew, and I just got back from a delightful stay on Lake Canandaigua (one of the NY finger lakes). The lake is beautiful as is the surrounding countryside. We took a side trip to revisit Niagara Falls. This time, however, we were more adventurous than in our younger years, and took a ride on the "Maid of the Mist", which is a boat that takes you right up to the foot of the gigantic Horseshoe Falls. All I can say is that hurricane conditions prevailed! Great Fun!

If anyone has the inclination to visit in that area, be sure not to miss the enchanting town of Niagara-on-the-Lake. It's a short trip from the falls and a breathtakingly beautiful spot. A true treat for the eyes!

### From Sue Melchior

Hi to our retired teacher friends,

The view (literal and figurative) from Cooperstown is, indeed, lovely. The best I can do for our wonderful Newsletter is to catch you up on what Tim and I spend our summer days and nights doing.

Tim has become a super landscape architect. We have 40 acres that are his playground and back-breaking workplace. He's in the process, with the help of friends who have heavy duty equipment, of digging ponds and building waterfalls down the 1/4 mile stretch of hill to our cabin on Red Creek. Can't really tell you why he loves it so much because it's extraordinarily laborious. Still, he seems to be thriving. The neighbors are beginning to call it Versailles....I call it TimmyWood. When he's not up to his knees in mud, he's on the glorious Leatherstocking Golf Course shooting in the mid to upper 70's....or, needless to say, mowing!

I'm super-stimulated here in the Upper Catskills: I love doing the pottery thing (wish I had Carolyn McPott giving me some pointers), and find that I'm more interested in handbuilding than throwing on the wheel. I have 5 tall vases with attitude called 'Tudes on exhibit at the Smithy Gallery here in C'town. I'm rehearsing two shows that will be performed at the end of July and into August: A.R. Gurney's LOVE LETTERS and my own Poetry Theatre script called WOMEN AND WATER. I've done both on Long Island as you may recall and am still loving it. Glimmerglass Opera is stupendous...really world class, and I manage to see everything since I volunteer as an usher. The price is right! Outside of these things, I garden....a lot. We have so many stone walls around flower beds that the joke on the hill is: "Stand still long enough, and Tim will build a stone wall around you!"

I hope this doesn't sound too much like those Christmas letters that I love to get but hate to write.... Oh, yes, speaking of writing, I've enrolled in a wonderful writing course created by The Institute for the Writing of Children's Literature in West Redding, CT. I'm hooked on the genre. We'll see what happens when I finish in a couple of years.

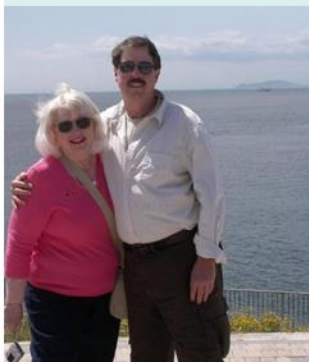
My best to everyone...and deep thanks, too, for all the members who work so hard to keep our PWTRE active and viable. Love, *Susan Melchior*



### From John McCormack

**Hi from the Philippines...** *Cebu and Siargao* where I now call home. I got remarried over here in April. My wife, Ferelyn, and I have opened a small resort on a notable surfing island. I saw the land 5 yrs ago and was able to grab it for almost nothing... 3 acres on a nice sandy beach... Rooms are only \$30 and no credit cards yet...no wifi or cable... check out the web site: [www.jafesurfandsail.com](http://www.jafesurfandsail.com). My sisters save the newsletters and they are the first thing I read when I visit NY.

### From Marty and Nicole Hamburger: Some snaps from our Mediterranean vacation



Nicole and Marty at Europa Point, the southernmost terrain of the continent. That's Morocco across the straits



Page 5

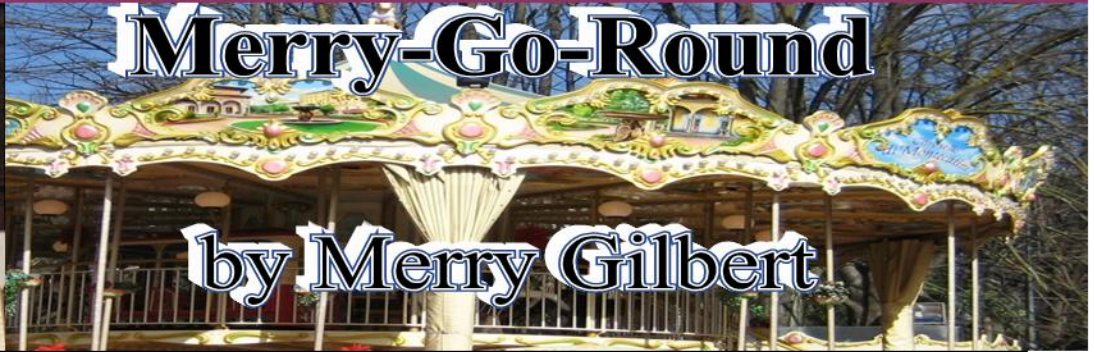


Nicole's timeout from shopping in Florence.

First Spain entertained the Moors, then the Hamburgers.



## SHARING THOUGHTS



### **Training for Adjectival Education (and a Little Known Career I Would Have Loved)**

Yes, in 1967 my principal joked that I'd need my mother's permission to teach sex education in first grade, since I was underage at the time. The first grade curriculum standard I remember best was a benign "Your family is composed of those who live with you," an idea that juxtaposed a non-traditional family against the Dick, Jane, Sally, Puff, Spot, Mother and Father family the children were reading about in their Scott Foresman primers, to show the worth of different configurations.

Years later, career education emerged as a trend for the sixth grade curriculum. As part of my training to teach this curricular area, I participated in a summer program where I was assigned to shadow people involved in non-traditional careers, to observe them in action, and assist where possible.

At a horse farm, I learned how to wheel the wheel barrow into which I'd just shoveled a stall's contents of manure to the very top of the pile before upending it, to slap the horse on the stomach before fastening the saddle girth, how to clean tack, and other vital jobs a horse-crazed person would love to do.

I followed a refrigeration mechanic from dank restaurant basement to dank other kinds of basements in the sticky summer weather, as he repaired refrigerators, freezers and air conditioners— an interesting and challenging job for a mechanically inclined person who wouldn't want an office job.

I visited a sheltered shop where developmentally disabled adults assembled gift baskets. The job of supervisor of this endeavor falls in the category of doing good works as well as doing a job, as the people on the assembly line had the opportunity to socialize with each other as they worked productively.

About 5 years ago, though, I sniffed out a job I would have loved, if I had known it had existed, having nothing to do with education in the traditional way—or at least not with students.

I dream of being a Nose.

It began with reading the book *Perfume*, by Patrick Suskind, lauded by the New York Times as "A fable of criminal genius... Remarkable." It is the story of a baby abandoned in the slums of 18th century Paris who has no discernable scent of his own but who "possesses an incomparable sense of smell." Apprenticed to a perfumer, he learns the art of distilling perfume, and begins his "demented quest to create the ultimate perfume." (n.b. Kathy Reilly hated this book as much as I loved it—so beware.)

Much time passed before I stumbled on Luca Turin's book *The Secret of Scent-Adventures in perfume and the science of scent*, in which he describes the debate on competing theories of smell—one based on molecular shape, the other on molecular vibrations-- and Chandler Burr's books (you can read his occasional column in the New York Times Magazine) *The Emperor of Scent*-a story of obsession, perfume, and the last mystery of the senses, and his *The Perfect Scent*-a year inside the perfume industry in Paris and New York, the story of the creation of Sarah Jessica Parker's perfume *Lovely*. (How disappointed I was when I spotted the beautifully packaged and displayed *Lovely* in Macy's and actually smelled it, to discover after years of work that went into creating it that it literally stinks.)

And so I was hooked. I thrilled to the idea of involvement in the industry of creating scent, in which "noses" (those with astounding abilities to create new scents) play a large part.

The most recent book I read, *The Scent Trail*, by Celia Lyttelton, is the story of a woman who wants a bespoke perfume, and works with a nose to create one. This account has an unusual wrinkle: Lyttelton, daughter of an anthropologist, seeks the potential ingredients of her scent by traveling to the places in the world to learn how they are harvested or created.

Although I have not yet figured out how to reconcile my allergies with my longed for new calling, would certainly be a "scentsational" job.



# THE HEALTH CARE REFORM ISSUE

## New Materials Available To Push for Healthcare Reform

Even though the U.S. Congress is on its summer recess, the debate about healthcare reform continues as intensely as ever. In an ongoing effort to help pass comprehensive reform, the AFT has been running ads in major Capitol Hill publications and a variety of online blogs.

Different versions of healthcare reform bills are under discussion in both the U.S. House and Senate, and many of the key details vary. Long before either bill was introduced, the AFT had pushed for the inclusion of some key principles, and the union still wants to see these included in whatever legislation gets passed. The union's [priority principles](#) include a public plan that guarantees high-quality, affordable coverage; a requirement that employers provide high-quality healthcare or subsidize the costs of healthcare for their employees; no taxation of employer-provided healthcare benefits; and safe-staffing standards for nurses and other healthcare professionals.

More information about the union's campaign for comprehensive reform is available on the AFT's "[Fight for America: It's Dollars and Sense](#)" Web site and in a [special section of LeaderNet](#). Coming soon: materials that help counter some of the myths about reform now being circulated by opponents. [Dan Gursky]

August 13, 2009 *From AFT Leadernet*

**FROM**  A Union of Professionals

AFT LeaderNet E-mail Alert

## Healthcare Reform Needs To Include Public Option

Healthcare reform must include a public option that provides the real competition needed to help control spiraling costs, AFT president Randi Weingarten says. "Absent such cost containment," she adds, "we will continue down a road in which high-quality healthcare is further out of reach for many Americans and in which everyone is adversely affected by the drain on our economy.

"Healthcare reform needs to happen now, and it needs to take place in an atmosphere that allows for real discussion based on the facts about what is being proposed. An issue of this importance deserves nothing less. The AFT will continue to support a comprehensive reform bill that makes quality healthcare accessible and affordable for all."

In the [Aug. 18 New York Times](#), columnist Bob Herbert makes a strong case for why a public option is a key element in effective healthcare reform. [AFT press release] August 19, 2009

**To read Bob Herbert's article, check the August 18th issue of THE NEW YORK TIMES.**

**This Is Reform?** By BOB HERBERT Published: August 17, 2009

Bob Herbert



## HEALTH CARE REFORM... WE COULD BENEFIT OR WE COULD LOSE... IT'S UP TO YOU!

The "heat" that we faced this summer didn't only come from the high temperatures outside. While Congress tried to come up with Health Care Reform bills that would both serve the agenda of the current administration and fulfill the needs and demands of the public, all forms of media bombarded us with the pros and cons of a legislation that hadn't even been adopted yet. This issue became so "hot" a topic that members of Congress and even the President spent their annual summer vacations campaigning for it, a rather strange occurrence considering that the word from Washington was that, so far, there isn't an accepted plan. Rather than encouraging us, this unusual pressure to accept something that "isn't" raises many suspicions. In particular, we want our government to prove that ALL of us will benefit from this kind of reform, that it will provide better health care and coverage than we receive now and that health care costs will be reduced not just for a year or so but for the foreseeable future. We need to be assured that there are no hidden agendas for drug and insurance companies and that a health care program for all will not sink our country deeper into debt.

For those of us taking a "wait and see" attitude on this issue, be assured that our many educational organizations are very aware of the controversy and are following up on the questions being raised. On August 19<sup>th</sup>, [AFT Leadernet](#), the e-mail "arm" of AFT, notified those of us signed up to receive their "alerts" about a NEW YORK TIMES article by opinion columnist Bob Herbert. For those of you who still take a guarded approach to who will benefit the most from government legislation, this column is a "must read." As educators, we taught the difference between fact and opinion. We need to practice that for ourselves now by studying both sides of this issue with open minds not ones prejudiced by political party affiliations. Then we need to let our legislators know how we feel.

*Jean Sellers -Editor*



**Port Washington Retired Educators Chapter**

**Meetings are held in the Port Washington Library on Thursdays  
on the dates listed below unless notified otherwise.**

**\*\*Please note the different location and time for the November 19th meeting  
(below) and the different time for the December 17th meeting.**

**2009 Meeting Dates**

October 22nd at 1:00 P.M. in the Hagedorn Room

\*November 19 at 10:00 A.M. at Marilyn Gilbert's Home

\*December 17 at 11:00 A.M. in the Hagedorn Room

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

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

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