



PORT OF CALL

The newsletter that keeps Port's retirees connected and informed.

**PWTA RETIRED EDUCATORS CHAPTER
PORT WASHINGTON, NEW YORK**

December 2014

VOL.24 NO.4

NYSUT NO. 19 080R Visit our website at: www.pwta.us/PWRE AFT NO. 9591-R

Did You Vote?

From the Desk Of Our



**President
Elaine Berman**

Only about one-third of New York State's eligible voters got themselves to the polls to vote this past November – NYSUT members included! If you are one who did not – *for shame!* Labor and unions are under attack; “elder Americans” (yes, that’s us, folks) are being accused of taking too much out of the system. We cannot fight back with the kind of money that comes from wealthy donors. (It was estimated that about 4.1 billion dollars was spent on campaigning – amounts considered “pay for play” from contributors who expect special treatment when their candidate wins. We NYSUT members have only VOTE/COPE . . . and our votes.) If we can boast that we have *x* number of mem-

bers and 98% of them vote, our opinions count even without the big bucks in support, but given the dollar shortage, we MUST show our clout with our voting records.

I do hear you saying, “I was not impressed with the candidates so I stayed home.” There were three propositions on our ballot and a large number of offices to fill. Was there not ONE individual you could support? For example, our best friend in Albany, always there for us, always on our side, overseeing the best pension system in the country, always defending our defined benefit system, is NYS Comptroller Tom DiNapoli. Surely *everyone* could have cast a vote for Tom –even if you cast no other vote. No one knows *how* you vote – only that you *do*.

Watch the newspapers carefully. Gov. Cuomo has labeled public education a monopoly, vowing to break its hold (read “unions”) with public monetary support for charter schools; Sen. Dean Skelos has said that more tax dollars will be used for charter and parochial schools. In support of charter schools, with big money, are such names as Carl Icahn, the billionaire activist investor, Ken Langone (Home Depot founder), and politically influential and wealthy charter school operator Eva Moskowitz. Given the push for charter schools by the Governor and New York’s other top political leaders as well as by the well-financed lobbyists, to which must be added the tax cap restraining the schools from supporting essential costs, the public schools are in – forgive me – deep doo-doo.

What can we do? We can continue to contribute to VOTE/COPE to support NYSUT’s efforts in a number of current suits, we can FAX/call, write letters to our legislators in support of our positions (note: the Governor’s Budget will probably try for the third time to rid us of our IRMAA reimbursement), we can refer to and use frequently the NYSUT MAC site to support current efforts on our behalf, and we can attend or read minutes of meetings discussing issues of most pressing interest to us. What can we NOT do? We cannot just sit back and wait for others to act on our behalf. They need our active support – now and always.

Voltaire said that we live in “the best of all possible worlds.” While I am not sure that this is true, despite all of the above we do have much to be grateful for. As we approach this holiday season and a new year, I wish all of you a healthy and peaceful 2015 – a continuation of all that we value, and a continuing search for that which we feel may be missing.

Elaine

2015 will be an elections year for the Port Washington Retired Educators (at our General Meeting/Luncheon in May – details later).

Are you willing to help steer *your* organization? Some of us may be willing to continue to serve in present positions, but we need more of you – motivated (and yes, perhaps some younger members) to continue the past performance and future survival of the PWRE.

A Nominations Committee has been appointed consisting of Norma Ziegel (Chair), Harriet Englander and Stella Thymius. Let them know if you would like to run for office or chair or serve on a committee.

Norma can be reached at LZEEGEL@aol.com; their email addresses and phone numbers can all be found in our Retiree Directory.



Come to the P.W.R.E. Book Club

All are welcome whether you've read the book or not. If you plan to attend, please RSVP to the host. (check member directory for address & phone number, or email.)

Date: Thurs., January 22nd @ 11 am
Book: The Lowland - Jhumpa Lahiri
Hosted by: Joyce Shapiro

Date: Thurs., March 26th @ 12 pm Brown Bag Lunch
Book: All the Light We Cannot See - Anthony Doerr
Hosted by: Seth Ehrlich

Correction: In the September issue under Friendship/Remembrance Josephine Stankiewicz, was mistakenly listed as Joan.

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Dec 2014 Vol. 24 No. 4
Published by the Retired Educators Chapter
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- ◆ Monthly social security and supplemental security income benefits will increase 1.7% in 2015.
- ◆ Premiums for Medicare Part B, including IRMAA (Income Related Medicare Adjustment Amount) will not increase in 2015.
- ◆ NYSUT is suing the State Education Department in Federal Court, alleging that free speech rights are being violated by the requirement that teachers who agree to score the standardized tests cannot talk about the questions. Teachers signed a state-generated statement warning that violation of the agreement could jeopardize their employment and certification and could lead to criminal charges. NYSUT President Karen Magee has stated that they are “under a gag order to be silent – and that hurts children.”



FRIENDSHIP/ REMEMBRANCE COMMITTEE

Joan Gerken

Get Well Wishes were sent to:

Janet Davis
Neila Farber
Constance Fisher
Ruth Haugaard

Condolences Were Sent to:

Vinnie DePietro on the loss of his brother
Nancy Lobell on the loss of her father
Louise Pennisi on the loss of her brother

The Family of Robert Johnson
The Family of Marilyn Paul
The Family of Nancy Pratt
The Family of Barbara Spencer

A \$50 contribution, in memory of each, has been sent to the PWRE Scholarship Fund

Robert Johnson
Marilyn Paul
Nancy Pratt
Barbara Spencer

A Musical Pilgrimage

Mary Ryan, Marilyn Sittner, and Sue Mellen traveled to Ireland on a musical pilgrimage from Sept. 9 -18.



As choir members of the St. John the Evangelist Church in Naples, Florida, we journeyed to Ireland with over 60 other parishioners to sing in musical performances in various churches and cathedrals. As we did our sightseeing, we were making trips out to various sites along the way....Killarney, Galway, Dublin, and Kenmare to name a few!

We very much enjoyed having our own famed Irish seannachie (Gaelic for "storyteller") Batt Burns. He was a wonderful guide who accompanied us for the entire trip.

Can't wait to make our next pilgrimage together!

Sue Mellen

Food for Thought: Eat Turkey, Buy American

Where do we stand on the old "proud to be an American" slogan?

Have you been shopping your favorite stores, in person or on line, and been looking for "made in U.S." tags? If so, especially for "on sale" items, whether clothing or household, you know they are next to impossible to locate.

Have you always considered Thanksgiving to be the true all-American family holiday - food, friendship, gratitude? If so - were you one of the many employees being asked to work on Thanksgiving? (or even prodded by and giving in to your family members to hurry out and get the sale items?)

Is \$\$ your only G-d these days?

Do you join, or sympathize with, violent protesters against people or ideas with whom/which you disagree instead of peacefully sharing your views?

Do you recycle, save energy wherever you, can, in the belief that perhaps there really *is* a pending need to avoid disaster up ahead?

Is it time for all of us to reevaluate what "being American" has come to mean in 2014 - and perhaps to rethink our own resolutions for 2015? Perhaps this holiday season can see a new beginning to old beliefs.

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Enjoy another
episode in the

*Adventures of
Merry*

This quote by Dwight David Eisenhower recently appeared on Bernie Sanders' website:

“Every gun that is made, every warship launched, every rocket fired, signifies in the final sense a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed.”

I believe that taxes are dues we pay to belong to “Club America,” but I have serious doubts that our system of representative democracy in fact represents my wishes and desires for the direction in which our country should be going. I suggest that tax returns should include a place for each of us to indicate how we want our tax dollars allocated. My assignment of dollars to education, housing, and infrastructure, for example, might be counterbalanced by others' desire for say, defense spending. But, at least, I'd feel that I have had my say, which in the current gridlocked congressional situation, I do not.

If money wins an election, why not just total the funds each candidate garners, and have the winner be the one who spent the most? Why bother to hold an election at all?

With the current divisiveness in congress, it no longer seems to matter what a candidate stands for, or the level of intelligence evinced, or how well the candidate reflects the voters' desires. It's all about voting blocs and party lines. If we were giving our elected officials report cards, how well could we grade them on “works well with others?” If we are all expected to vote along party lines, why not simply count up those registered in each party, and award the election accordingly? Think of the savings in campaign funds that can total more than the budgets of some countries.

On his first show, Stephen Colbert coined the term “truthiness.” In a world where opinion and fiction masquerade as the truth, in which an educated populace is too absorbed in its devices to look up, when news shows give sound bites and not details of a story, and newspapers and “news shows” scream vulgar headlines, how is it possible to have a grasp of what is really going on?

The cost of waging peace is far less than the price of waging war. Health care for all, outstanding school facilities, no more childhood hunger, prisons that educate instead of simply incarcerating, not needing to make a profit on mass transit, affordable housing, repairs to our crumbling roads and bridges, commitment to energy efficiency; these are issues I want my government to address.

Won't You Join Us?

January 14: "I have planned a docent tour of the **Brooklyn Museum** on January 14th at 11:30. The tour will be a general one and will include a little of the special exhibitions. There will be time after the tour to see more of the museum. There are several options for lunch at the museum and in the neighborhood. I will describe them in a future email to those who choose to take the docent tour. Lunch will be on our own and not planned as a group. If you would like to participate, contact me at LBBLUM67@gmail.com or call me at 883-0360."



From Barbara Blum

We know you are busy. Save the date!

Event: Spring Luncheon

Date: Thursday, May 14, 2015

Location: Harbor Links Golf Course

Time: Noon—3:00

Cost: \$37



This includes butler served hors d'oeuvres for the first hour, one drink, appetizer, salad, choice of main course, desert and coffee/tea. All at a beautiful location and with the very best of people. We will be electing officers at this meeting. (see page 2) Please join us for a great afternoon.

A flyer will appear in the March issue of Port of Call. Hope to see you there.

News from the December 11th PWRE meeting



At the invitation of the Amsterdam at Harborside, our December 11th meeting was held in a lovely lounge-like setting on their premises, complete with coffee service and assorted breakfast pastries. Some 20 of us met for the business meeting. At its conclusion we were accompanied by staff representative Director of Marketing Mary Donovan to the dining room, where a hot buffet, salad, dessert and coffee awaited us. While we enjoyed dessert Mary gave us a rundown on the facilities and services of the Amsterdam, and invited those interested to take a tour. It was interesting to learn that some 65% of the Amsterdam's residents are former teachers—including a few of our own.

We Asked To Hear From You And We Did

Albuquerque Balloon Festival! From Patricia V. Reed



In October Tom and I attended an Airstream National Rally at the Albuquerque Balloon Fiesta. Over 200 Airstreams attended, dry camping on the Balloon Fiesta grounds. (see photo with the Airstreams in the background)

Each morning at 4:30 we arose to the sound of inflating hot air balloons

and by 5 AM they had started the mass ascension. Many mornings the balloons floated over our trailers, so low we could talk to the pilots! Over 700 balloons would go up on a good flying day!



A Beautiful Fall Day From Lenore Ilberg

Here is the Ilberg "Clan" at the Sea Cliff Yacht Club on a beautiful fall day. Including ...

Lenore's 2 sons' families with 5 grandchildren.

A Mathematical Gathering From Barbara Schmidt

Twelve of Port's retired math teachers met for lunch on November 20 at the West End Cafe in Carle Place.



Congratulations to Bob Busby



Capt. Bob Busby, retired social studies teacher from Schreiber H.S. has been appointed as a multi species advisor representing NY State to The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission based in Washington D.C. He has also been President of The North Fork Captains Association for the past 8 years as well as a professor of history at Suffolk County Community College in Riverhead NY.

A Tour of Princeton and the Gardens of Sculpture

The forecast was for rain and I prepared my raincoat and umbrella. I knew that if I put my umbrella in my bag, there would be a chance that it would not rain, but if I forgot my umbrella, it would definitely rain!

The bus took us to Princeton and Mimi Omiecinski of Princeton Tours gave us a tour of some of the original buildings on the Princeton University campus. Mimi gave us the lowdown on the history, traditions, and facts about the University. She shared engaging anecdotes with a sense of humor that we all enjoyed. Then Mimi boarded our bus and took us on a journey through the town and showed us the homes of many dignitaries with a story about each. We saw the homes of Albert



Einstein, Woodrow Wilson, Grover Cleveland, and James Madison. Energetic and enthusiastic, Mimi left us with an understanding of her love of Princeton.

From Princeton we went on to Hamilton, New Jersey to tour Seward Johnson's Gardens of Sculpture. A docent of the Gardens took us on a journey around some of the 42 acres of sculpture. There was something wonderful to see every-



where you looked. The sculptures were life size, realistic portrayals of people doing everyday things. Many of the sculptures were scenes taken from famous impressionist paintings. The landscaping in the Gardens was a delight as well.

Lunch was at RATS restaurant on the grounds of the Gardens of Sculpture. Also created by Seward Johnson, it had a charming, impressionistic atmosphere. We enjoyed the lunch, had time to explore the gift shop, and then boarded the bus back to Port Washington.

We had a delightful day and it didn't rain until we



were back on the bus and heading home!

Photos courtesy of Carol Kratenstein

Barbara Blum



Port Washington Retired Educators Chapter

Meetings will be held on Thursdays at the Port Washington Library on the dates and times listed below, **unless otherwise notified. Please check your e-mail or the website for any meeting changes.**

These meetings aren't just for the PWRE officers. All members are welcome to attend.

2015 Meeting Dates

No meeting in January

February 12 - 10:30 am in the Lapham Room

**PLEASE NOTE: Checks for contributions to the PWRE Scholarship Fund should be made out to the PWTA Scholarship Foundation and mailed to:
Penny D'Antonio
1425 Port Washington Blvd.
Port Washington, New York 11050**

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