

ROBS NewsLetter



NUMBER 23 RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS FEBRUARY 1998

PROJECT HOPE'S SANTA RIDES AGAIN !

This year's homeless family adopted by ROBS through its Community Liaison Committee was a single mother of two girls and a boy. Santa's elves, Frank and Verne Spencer, Ruth McCalla, Harriet Pepine, Shirley and Bob (Walker) Lloyd and Chris Veech shared the Holiday spirit by selecting and wrapping the gifts for the family at the Spencer home.

For the family, the bright packages brought a glimmer of joy into their darkness, which is really what the holidays are all about... or should be. **HAPPY 1998 TO ALL!**

THE CHILDSWAP SOCIETY (A Fable For Our Time)

In the January 16, 1998 AFT ACTION Newsletter, President Sandra Feldman asked a very pointed question in her 'Where We Stand' column: **"DON'T WE TAKE FOR GRANTED THAT SOME KIDS WILL HAVE MUCH BETTER LIVES THAN OTHERS?"**

"Of course...some will get the best medical treatment others will be able to get little or none. ... some kids will go to beautiful, well-cared for schools with top-notch curriculums, excellent libraries, and computers for every child and others will go to schools where there are not enough desks and textbooks to go around - wretched places where even the toilets don't work.

"We take for granted that teachers in wealthy suburban schools will be better paid and better trained than those in the poor, inner-city or rural schools. ... the children whom the lottery of birth has made the most needy will get the least. 'After all,' we say to ourselves, 'it's up to each family to look after its own. If some parents can't give their children what they need to thrive, that's their problem.'"

In the article Feldman alludes to a science fiction story she has never been able to forget. It came back to her this holiday season due to the lack of urgency in dealing with the problems of a 25% child poverty rate in this country.

The story described a society with a national child lottery that was held every four years. no exceptions (except babies) - "children were randomly redistributed to new parents. ... By the time you reached 26, the most time you could have spent with your birth parents was 10 years. The other 16 were simply a matter of chance."

Because the parents your children were redistributed to could be wealthy, poor or in between, the whole society was very "conscientious about how things were arranged for kids. ... everyone's child was - or could be - yours. As a result, children growing up under this system got everything they needed to thrive, both physically and intellectually, and the society itself was harmonious."

What might happen if we adopted this Fable for our own time? When leaders see that their children would have the same chance as the sons and daughters of poor people-no more, no less, - what would happen to the "shameful national indifference to children who are not ours?"

Might we make sure all children had an equal chance to thrive?

A SERIOUS THREAT TO THE MEDICARE PROGRAM



It seems that each time we think we can nod off into a warm, comfortable winter's nap, along comes a tremor to shake us out of our complacency. **There is a new attempt underway to destroy the Medicare program in the name of the Kyle Amendment - S. 1194 / H.R. 2497.**

Last year, as part of the Balanced Budget Act of 1997 (BBA), Senator John Kyle of Arizona managed to attach an amendment to Medicare law that will now permit doctors to charge patients whatever fee they wish under a "private contract arrangement." This change will bypass the balanced billing protection guaranteed by Medicare under which doctors cannot charge more than 15% above Medicare rates (5% in New York State thanks to Paul Harenberg). In effect, it is a "private pay" arrangement. The Clinton administration and the Congressional Democrats added a requirement that any doctor who attempts to demand a private contract would be prevented from billing any Medicare service for two years, and in addition would have to warn patients they would not be eligible for any Medigap payments either (Empire, HIP, GHI, etc.). This program is now law and in effect (Section 4507 of the BBA).

But Senator Kyl, Al D'Amato (one of the sponsors), and the AMA don't think they've gotten enough of your money. **They want to enlarge the provisions of the Kyle Amendment by giving any doctor the right to decide how to charge you for services - either through Medicare or demanding that you pay out of pocket through a "private contract."** They want to repeal the ban that protects you and that prevents such doctors from receiving any Medicare payments for two years. If these bills are passed, doctors will be able to decide who will pay more, which service will be "private pay;" specialists will be able to deny Medicare service and require you pay whatever fee they quote. *This is a blatant attempt to destroy Medicare.*

WE MUST DEFEAT THIS BILL - MEDICARE PHYSICIAN PRIVATE CONTRACTING ACT (S. 1194 / H.R. 2497). Call your members of Congress immediately and tell them to vote **NO!** Let D'Amato know that attacks on seniors and teachers won't win elections. Call your own doctor and express your opposition. Make sure everyone else knows what's happening. Keep informed and stay involved. Capitol Switchboard: 202-224-3121. In unity, *Dot Zuckerman*



D'AMATO TRASHES TEACHERS

Teachers across New York are blasting Sen. Alfonse D'Amato's record on education and his politically motivated attacks on teachers, contained in a series of recent TV commercials.

The Schenectady Daily Gazette slammed the senator for his attacks, noting that "NYSUT and the AFT have been in the forefront of changing education for the better" in calling for higher standards and tougher curricula and discipline. **CALL OR WRITE!**

SCHOOL BULLIES

Bertus Ferreira found nearly a third of 12th grade students in three midwestern schools were so affected

by bullies they wanted to transfer to another school, and 15% said they had considered suicide. 64% of both girls and boys reported being victims of a bully. Ferreira presented his findings at the American Society of Criminology, warning that the issue was more than an academic pursuit.

Ferreira's own school tormenter went on to become a police officer....

no comment

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THE Q TIP

by Edy Filosa (retired Nurse Teacher)

Another new year has begun and with it new plans for all our "spare" time. Probably at the top of everyone's list is travel - I know it is on mine. So let's take a look at how we can make "getting there half the fun!"

The air travel part of a trip - eating, sitting, and sleeping - seems easy, but you need to follow some basic guidelines to stay refreshed after flying.

Airline food can be overcooked, salty, and high in calories despite notoriously small portions. A typical meal has between 600-900 calories, 60% of them from fat. You can request special meals and snacks that are low in fat, cholesterol and calories. Most airlines require 24 hours notice for special requests, but an order can be placed when reservations are made.

Remember to avoid alcohol and caffeine which speed up dehydration. Alcohol can also aggravate the head congestion associated with poor air circulation on aircraft. Drink a glass of water or fruit juice each hour of flight time. If you must have caffeinated beverages, it is best to take them in the morning when traveling west, the evening when traveling east. Pass on high fat peanuts, and pack an "in flight" bag with high protein snacks such as cheese, raisins or fruit.

Jet lag can be a problem when traveling long distances. Traveling north, south or less than two time zones doesn't seem to disrupt the body's circadian rhythm, but when crossing several time zones some care is necessary.

Reset your watch to destination time and follow routines for meals and sleep based on that time. Catnap when you can. Outdoor exercise upon arrival in a new time zone can help the body reset its internal clock. Exercise is also an excellent way to reduce jet lag and prevent leg cramps, ankle swelling, muscular stiffness and indigestion. On long flights you should take hourly walks in the aisles. If prolonged sitting cannot be avoided, use elastic stockings. (Check with your MD on this). Caffeine, including chocolate, cola, tea and coffee, should be avoided three days before departure. (However, use between 3 P.M. and 5 P.M. will least affect the body clock). Staying up late the night before a flight is also a no-no.

Other hints:

- ◆ Pack a medical kit: any Rx you take; any over the counter needs such as aspirin, malox or anti-diarrhial
- ◆ Extra eyeglasses or Rx
- ◆ Medical jewelry to alert others to allergies and special conditions. (Note: Medic-alert [800-ID-ALERT] is open 24 hours, call collect, interpreters avail).
- ◆ Check with medical insurance company
- ◆ When traveling, use of non restrictive clothing is advised: loose fitting waists, belts, knee-hi's, and shoes.



AS ALWAYS, CONSULT YOUR MD REGARDING QUESTIONS.
BON VOYAGE !!!

CONSUMER HEALTH UPDATE

The Advisory Commission on Consumer Protection and Quality in the Health Care Industry, appointed by President Clinton last March, has adopted a "Consumer Bill of Rights and Responsibilities." Free copies of the full report to the President on the Bill

are available on the World Wide Webb at the White House Website (www.whitehouse.gov), or from the Advisory Commission's Website (www.hcqualitycommission.gov). For a printed copy of the report, call 1-800-732-8200.





THOUGHTS FOR VALENTINE'S DAY

by Millie O'Neill, retired Ross H.S. Aide

As I became a recipient of Social Security and Medicare, I was flooded with mail addressed to senior citizens. It took me awhile to figure out that they meant me. What the heck, when they mention a senior citizen discount, I'll admit my age. That I can accept. Just don't label me as old - rather, more mature, wiser and most of all a survivor. (I made it)! Old to me may mean worn out and useless so the term should be changed to "cream of the crop." Of course, arthritis or other infirmities may have slowed our pace so we now expend our energies in new directions.

Our children think we are the never failing Bank of America - the fortress.

I also discovered the meaning of free time - the school nurse calls you to pick up a sick grandchild, a family member's car breaks down ("will you pick me up?") - a grandchild calls ("grandma, can I spend the night at your house?") or will you babysit? So now we know free time is your time spent rendering services free of charge.

Then you get a handmade heart for Valentine's Day. "Dear Grandma: We think you are the best Grandma ever. Your nice, pretty, enkeraging and you give away free candy to us. So Happy Valentine's Day! Love, James and Bobby." That's when you know you've been paid.

THE LEGALITY OF REALITY

Excerpted from THE PREVENTIVE LAW GUIDE, NYSUT Legal Service Publication

The newly enacted capital gains tax law on the sale of a home could adversely impact individuals who own property both in New York and another state. (Snowbirds beware)!

The new tax law permits a single individual to exclude \$250,000 of capital gain and a couple can exclude \$500,000 of capital gain realized upon the sale of their home, provided that the property sold is their principal place of residence and that they have lived there for two years.

If the sellers declare New York as their home state, and sell their New York property, even while they have purchased a second home elsewhere, they can exclude their capital gain from the sale. However, if the sellers have declared another state as their home state, while owning two homes, they will be taxed on the capital gain from the sale of the New York property.

To avoid this tax, if the sellers wish to sell their New York property, they should declare it as their principal residence for two years before the sale. This exclusion is available every two years to people of any age, not once in a lifetime and over 55 as in the

old law. The potential benefit is even further enhanced by a reduction in the capital gains tax rate from 28% to 20%.

Purchasing a "fixer upper" and living in it for two years while doing the work oneself and showing capital improvements becomes an interesting new possibility for those who are handy!

ROBS WELCOMES 1998

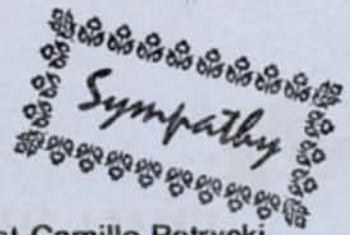
On Wednesday, January 7th, ROBS again hosted its New Year Breakfast, this time at the New Forum Diner in Bay Shore.

Thirty seven hearty ROBS members and guests made the morning a happy, chatty get-to-gether. Thanks again to Harriet Pepine and Ruth McCalla!

Dot and Jack Zuckerman attended the 2nd annual Florida Breakfast of ROBS members on January 21st. Hot or cold, we retirees of Brentwood Schools do like to get together. **HAPPY 1998!**

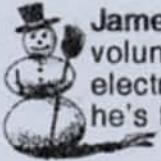


NEWS NOTES



After a lengthy battle with diabetes and cancer, Brentwood resident **Camille Petrycki** died on January 13th. **Camille**, a member of ROBS since her retirement from Northeast in 1992, attended meetings religiously. It was because of her that ROBS offered large type newsletters for those with sight difficulties. Our hearts go out to her family.

Eugene LaColla is making great strides health wise since undergoing heart surgery this fall. Good for you, **Gene**. Also **Bill Heran** is back to feeling well again. Great!



James Watson is involved with Health Reach, a program in Maine that sends volunteers out to visit the sick and home bound. He was also without heat and electricity during the ice storms that ravaged New England in January. Fortunately he's taken off for Mexico and some Elder Hostel events for a bit.

Gloria Alabaster, a Ross H.S. retiree (English) would love to hear from colleagues. 107 Casitas Blvd., Los Gatos, Ca., 95032. Telephone: 408-379-8432.

CONGRATULATIONS

And a very proud first time grandmother is **Veronica Cowan** who retired from South Middle School is living in Forest Hills. Her much awaited Kristin Marie Cowan-Schmanns was born premature, but is doing well and should be home soon. **Veronica** is "enjoying every moment."

Marilyn DePlaza reports from Florida that husband Henry's health continues to improve and he's out on the golf course again. **Marilyn** is enjoying her 7 month old granddaughter, Danielle. They do the mall-park-bookstore thing! Her other two grandkids live in Dallas: Maya, 4; Ariana, 2. She sends greetings to **Judy Curran** and **Judi Hearst Weissman** (who is still teaching, poor thing).

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



I received my ROBS Newsletter and was pleasantly surprised to see the mention of the article about my sister Nancy (Leftenant-Colon). Thanks. I always enjoy reading the newsletter.
Sincerely, *Amy Leftenant*

The following letter appeared in *NEWSDAY* on 12/30/97, one of 4, under the headline: "McCARTHYISM FOR THE 1990s TARGETS TEACHERS." It was written by Brentwood retiree *Thomas O'Connor* of Islip.

A few politicians, seeking to gain favor in election campaigns, have blamed teacher unions for all the ills that afflict our society. Of particular interest, they seek to blame teacher unions for bad teachers getting tenure, which is quite amazing, since school districts, not unions, make such decisions.

When disputes arise between individual teachers and the school administration, teacher unions must represent each and every teacher who asks for their help. They cannot pick and choose which cases they will defend. Actually, good teachers do not want to see weak teachers granted tenure at all. When a bad teacher is passed along and given tenure by the administrators of a school district, the rest of the teachers who must work with that teacher now have a weak link to deal with. And keep in mind that none of this unfortunate situation was brought about by teachers and their union. Poor teachers are the result of poor decisions on the part of those who hire, develop and grant tenure to them - the school administrators under the direction of the local school board.



WE WELCOME LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Chris Veech
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EMMA HOWARD ELECTED TO CITY COUNCIL

Emma Howard, who retired from Brentwood's West Junior High in 1991, gained her first elected post last fall as a member of the Washington, North Carolina City Council. Howard's win is historic. She is the first African American woman to serve on the board, and she sees it as a chance to show by example that people of divergent backgrounds can come together to work for the common good.

"I hope to bring to the position a sense of fairness and concern for the interests of every citizen in Washington," she said. "I've gotten to know people. By getting to know people, you listen to their needs. And maybe I can make a difference...and other people will see a need to get something done. Maybe it can be done and maybe not, but if you never mention things, they never get done."

Howard has been a whirlwind since she relocated to Washington six years ago. She often substitutes in various county schools and serves as president of the N.C. Retired School Personnel District 15 in Washington. She helped organize the Key Woman of America, Inc., a non-profit group that invests in children and community services, and awards scholarships to deserving students in financial need.

Howard has worked with the Beaufort County Boys and Girls Club, and serves on its executive board. Sometimes she'll take the youngsters to area nursing homes and the Rainbow House, a home for disabled persons. There they will read poetry, play games and present arts and crafts to the residents. "Bringing sunshine into their lives," is how Howard puts it.

Howard looks forward to working with the other Council members on what is good for Washington, including economic development, improving roads, and upgrading the quality of life in the city. "My father taught me years ago, 'Wherever you go, you are somebody. You can do anything you want if you want to do it.' That was instilled in me many years ago.... I'm a workaholic. I know there's a lot of work, and I'm willing to tackle it. I feel I can do anything I want to do if I want it badly enough."

With Emma Howard's drive and philosophy of life ROBS knows she'll do the best she can and then some. Congratulations Washington, North Carolina! You've got a winner!

RETIRES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

c/o Zuckerman
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from The Joyful Noiseletter
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Happiness, like most of the other important processes of life, cannot be planned.