

ROBS NEWSLETTER

NUMBER 34

FEBRUARY 2000

RETIRES GEARING UP



AFT president Sandra Feldman told an overflow crowd at December's AFT Retirement Leadership Conference in Washington, D.C., that the coming election is "one of the most important we have ever faced." For the past six years, she said, President Clinton has stopped a great deal of damaging legislation coming from the conservative leaders of Congress. "We cannot lose the presidency," she said. "We want a society where children get nourished, where the elderly have dignity, where the ill get taken care of."

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-Md.)

told the retirees, "There is no group in America whose energy and faith and devotion lights more sparks or raises higher the torch of freedom than teachers." He asked the retirees to "Teach America about its future" during the election campaign. Conference organizers had expected only 50 to 75 retiree leaders to attend but more than 160 came, (including Dot & Jack Zuckerman) reflecting the growing activity of retiree chapters.

In addition to discussing the political campaigns, conferences focused on the nuts and bolts of building retiree chapters.

RETIREE DELEGATE

Sheila GOLDBERG, Plainedge retiree and political action coordinator for RC 17 is on the ballot as a delegate for Al Gore. If you are a registered Democrat, you can **vote for her in the March 7th Primary** in the **2nd Congressional District** (Lazio). She is a NYSUT endorsed delegate. In the 1st CD, (Forbes) NYSUT delegates are: Lynn Costello, Vivian Fisher, and Diane Hettrich, alternate. **Sending union members to the Democratic Convention sends a strong message of support for public education and strengthening Social Security and Medicare.**

Inside this issue:

ROBS Breakfast	2
Opinion Wanted	2
Retiree Strength	2
News Notes	3
Nysut Legal Plan	insert
Africa	4
Project Hope	5

- "...THE COMING ELECTION IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT WE HAVE EVER FACED."
- AFT President, Sandra Feldman

ROBS SETS SPRING PLANS - JOIN US



Now that the groundhog has spoken, Ruth McCalla's Program committee has finalized meeting programs through June.

ALL MEETINGS ARE AT THE ISLIP PUBLIC LIBRARY AT 10 A.M.

March 1
MULTI-FAITH FORUM
Learn about differences
April 5
HOBBIES & COLLECTORS EXHIBIT
Call Ruth McCalla, 234-8013 to participate

May 3
"REVISITING THE GOOD YEARS"
History Project video of "us"
June 7
ROBS LUNCHEON
Bonwit Inn



RETIREE STRENGTH: DOROTHY ZUCKERMAN, PRESIDENT

We have just completed an enormously successful membership drive for the year 2000. Your response has been very encouraging. It's an inspiration to those of us who work tirelessly and voluntarily on your behalf to know that you understand and appreciate what we do. But now the time has come for some serious introspection.

What is your role as a Brentwood retiree? Is it enough to read in the newsletter about other people's activities? Have you added to the whole by reading about meetings and conferences that you haven't attended? A portion of your ROBS dues entitles you to be a participating member of NYSUT Retiree Council #21. That puts you in

communication with the retirees of ten other school districts in Suffolk County. You have lifetime membership in NYSUT, AFT, and AFL-CIO. How often have you taken advantage of these wonderful resources? How often have you actively undertaken an action to ensure your retiree benefits?

On Tuesday May 9, 2000, NYSUT and all other New York State AFL-CIO public employees are going to hold a rally in Albany to lobby the governor and our legislators for a permanent pension COLA.

Busses will be leaving from all over the state, including Nassau and Suffolk Counties. Will you be on one of those

busses? Will you ride to Albany for a day to show your support and your need for a cost-of-living adjustment?

When overwhelming numbers of state retirees join together to demand that the legislators take action, we cannot and will not be ignored. This is the time for you to make your voice heard.

Join us on May 9th and show what ROBS membership really means. We'll all be there with you.



The little chapter that could.....

ROBS BREAKFAST A WINTERY SUCCESS, NORTH & SOUTH

Another cold day on Long Island was brightened by a good, warm breakfast at the Forum Diner in Bay Shore surrounded by more than 50 ROBS members and guests.

Latecomers were lucky to find seating. Long absent members, and newcomers were in attendance, and it was good to see all. Jack Zuckerman pointed his new digital computer camera at everyone, and we can be assured of being in his new photo computer file! One of these days this editor will figure out

how to transfer them to this newsletter.

Thanks again to Ruth McCalla and her Program Committee for putting together something that has become a tradition to us northbound members.

In Boca Raton, Dot and Jack Zuckerman attended the south Brentwood luncheon, organized by Marilyn DePlaza. Some 40 attended.

Dot fielded many good questions on health care, and appraised our Florida

contingent on COLA and the importance of making contact with state legislators. Gov. Pataki has designated a task force to look at the issue. Email:

Govpataki@chamber.state.ny.us

"Catching up with former colleagues is so nice!"
Dot Zuckerman

ROBS NEWSLETTER STAFF

CONTENT EDITOR: Christin Veech (chrisveech@aol.com)

COORDINATOR COMMUNICATIONS: Phyllis Goodwin

ROBS OFFICERS

PRES. - Dorothy Zuckerman (dotzee@juno.com)

V.PRES: - Harriet Pepine

SECY: - Lynn Prass

TREAS. - Lilian Kelly



YOUR OPINION WANTED

ROBS Writer's Group wants to know what you think about Congress earmarking \$134 million of Title I funds for mandated programs to give permission to parents of students in "failing schools" to transfer their children to other public schools within their district. Send to:

Writer's Group, c/o Siciliano, 2 Landview Drive, Kings Park, N.Y. 11754-2827

NEWS NOTES

Who said you can't go home again? **Pete Cerullo** did. He attended his 50th high school reunion in Lawrence, Massachusetts. Out of a class of 800, 100 attended. **Pete's** reaction was "people don't really change, their voices, as well as appearance." Needless to say he had a great time!

E s t h e r (Kitty) Hayes & Dorothy Schaller both former Ms. New York Senior contestants. (Kitty won) are members of the Seasoned Steppers, women all over 60 and former finalists, who are coached by a former Rockette. In September all 16 danced at the Cameo Club in Las Vegas and were featured on ABC's Good Morning America. Way to go Women!

On January 5, the day of the ROBS breakfast, **Dave Brown** celebrated his 70th birthday. Happy happy, Dave!



Up in Vermont, **Marion Gray** spearheaded a campaign to raise money for the children's library in Montpelier. The present building floods, and so the funds are to be used to build a new one. That's wonderful, **Marion**. Makes us all proud to be silver!

And we heard from **Betty (Newton) Packer** up in Williston, Vermont. She reports that last June she took a trip to Alaska. They flew to Anchorage, coach to Valdez, the Columbia Glacier, where they saw lots of sea Otters, hump-backed whales, seals, and eagles. Then to Fairbanks to pan for gold. Bear, moose & caribou in the state park before taking the train back to Anchorage. In July she had her second knee replaced and family kept her company while she recuperated. In October she lunched with former college classmates and **Wilma (Kinny) Fosgate** from Arizona was in the group. They had a nice reunion

Heard from **Claudette Sylman Benjamin** by e-mail the other day. She and husband Bill have relocated from Deer Park to Florida. In October they became registered voters there. She spent some "un-rushed" time with her sisters in North Carolina last month due to "the snow-fall of a lifetime." They are renovating a home there for the "humid months." **Rick Edwards** had just been to visit, and she reports that "he's so-o cool on his motor bike. It's so un-Rick Edwards (the teacher)... He's a man on the move...that's just what he needs and is enjoying." **Rick** is our "ON THE ROAD AGAIN" feature writer currently doing Florida.



Spoke with **Ed Robles** (Ross) in San Diego where he finds himself a liberal in the midst of conservatives. As a member of Retired Seniors Volunteer Control he directs traffic and gives out tickets (\$340) to those in handicapped spaces, and everyone spots that he's a New Yorker. He's busier now than when he worked.

Larry Somers had broken pieces removed from his arm in December. Recuperation time was 7 weeks.

Harriet Pepine, ROBS vice president is also on the mend after surgery in December.

And we're all sending our good wishes to **Walter Karp**, ROBS representative to RC 21 executive board.

Edith Erder had a successful second operation on her hip. After a year of complications, she is now recovering nicely. And we hope this newsletter finds **Bernie Heller** feeling a good deal better after hospitalization.



This past Fall, **Fran Graff** (SE, '85) and husband Joe (principal Hemlock Pines), moved to an assisted living facility in Pa. from Florida to be near their son. **Fran** could use some cheery messages. Joe has advanced Parkinson's. Address: 324 Lancaster Ave., Malvern, Pa. 19355-1863. Phone: 610-240-7767.

Former Brentwood School Nurse, **Ruth Weaver** died November 8 from injuries she sustained in a car accident. She worked in the Brentwood Schools, where her husband Fred was a principal, for 11 years. She also resided in Brentwood.



Frank Cannon, Brentwood School Board member lost his sister Leona Cogan on December 20th.

And **Betty Smith**, who taught in Brentwood for 40 years, died on December 8th. She lived in Yaphank and retired from South-east. **Betty** is survived by two sons. Her son, Tom, is in his 31st year of teaching in Brentwood's Southeast Elementary School.

Ed Parnell, who retired from Ross High School, died in December.

After a long illness, **June Farbman's** husband, Ted, passed away in November.

Our hearts go out to all the families and friends of our former colleagues...

AN EARTHWATCHER REFLECTS DONNA MARIE RAGONESE



The Earthwatch Institute involves some 4,000 members in scientific field research with 200 scientists in 48 countries. I was accepted to join Kenya's

WILD HERITAGE expedition last October. With 14 volunteers from 7 states and 5 countries, I stayed at Elsamere, author (Born Free) Joy Adamson's home. Which is on Kenya's largest lake, Naivasha.

It is heavily used by people and animals, and to protect its unique ecosystem, scientists & volunteers have been monitoring it for the past 12 years. As a result Naivasha was declared a Ramsar (a wetland of international importance), local farmers have agreed to maintain a voluntary buffer strip at the lake's edge, and Kenya's Wildlife Services can base conservation measures on the data.

The compound, situated on the lake, consists of 100 acres of acacia woodlands filled with over 350 bird species. The first day we climbed Hippo Point across the lake, a very strenuous climb,

6500 feet above sea level. But the zebra, and giraffe were worth it.

Both Vervet and black & white Colobus monkeys were seen daily around Elsamere. They were fun to watch, and often woke us up early by jumping on the tin roof. After sunset, the 16 lake hippos came up to graze on the lawns 10 to 15 feet from the porch.

For 14 days we worked in the field. I spent time in a small boat on the lake measuring water temperature, turbidity, and collecting water samples around the gorgeous papyrus and water hyacinths. I spent afternoons in the lab measuring, weighing, and counting the zoo plankton that we got from the samples.

We also set traps in Hell's Gate National Park to catch small mammals. We weighed, measured, sexed, took blood samples and then released them. Off in the near distance we could see zebra, giraffe, hyrax, wart hogs, eland, and fish eagles. This is the real reason I love Africa - the animals.

I learned 3 different machines in the lab and tested for phosphates from soil

samples from different parts of the shore. I also learned a good deal about the culture from the native Kenyan scientist I was assigned to. I also got to use the laboratory at the local geothermal plant which had more sophisticated machinery.

Four of us climbed Mt. Longonot. I didn't make it to the crater's edge (8500 feet). Instead, I sketched the Rift Valley, and watched the flight of many beautiful eagle!

We also took an hour flight in a small plane to Masi Mara for a private full day safari. We ate breakfast and lunch sitting on rocks by the Mara River watching hippos play, and stork and vultures swim and attack the carcass of a dead wildebeest. Also lions, elephants, zebras, giraffes, monkeys eating, sleeping, nursing, playing mating, and just plain "hangin' out." Totally fulfilling for me.

My memories will last a lifetime. My friendships will be nourished by mail and e-mail, and perhaps a visit or two. Plus, Africa still beckons - I am already dreaming of a return adventure next year!!

ON THE ROAD AGAIN BY RICH EDWARDS, TOURING THE U.S. BY RV/MOTORCYCLE

1/31/00: Won over \$100 on quinellas at Tampa Bay Downs, the local thoroughbred race track (picked the 1st & 2nd finishers)..

Decided to have a special dinner at Bern's Steak House in an area of Tampa that has seen better days. It is one of the finest eating places I have ever visited. Consider:

- Four 1200 gallon tanks hold fish kept alive until ordered
- Waiters are trained for 1 year
- Most vegetables organically grown on their own farm

- Bread baked from flour they grind in pans made in their own metal shop
- Steaks are U.S. Prime aged 5 -8 weeks. My filet mignon was the best I have ever eaten
- Wine list is a book of 7000 wines. 23 kinds of caviar, 100 brands of beer

Guests are welcome to tour the kitchen & wine cellar. They are huge!

Dessert is served in 44 private booths, some small and cozy for 2, others large enough for a dozen diners. Each has a

control panel to select the type of music one wishes. All 65 dessert selections are made on the premises. They were delicious, but the coffee was spectacular. Each bean is selected for perfection and ground in separate grinders so there is no unexpected blending.

The meal cost \$100 for two but was equal to any the finest N.Y. city restaurants could serve. And it would cost three times as much in the "Big Apple." If you ever get to Tampa, you must visit Bern's.



PROJECT HOPE MAKES SMILES HAPPEN

Community Liaison Committee Chairperson, Frank Spencer, is proud that ROBS members keep on giving HOPE to homeless families. ROBS adopted two families for Thanksgiving, and two families for the holidays, spending about \$1000 on all four.

"We made 17 children and 5 adults very happy for the holidays. (see letters). Vern Spencer and the Sustrin twins shopped carefully and donated generously for the Thanksgiving goodies so we could save most of the money for Christmas," commented Frank.

The Spencers, and Letty and Sheila did the gift shopping. "You gave the dollars and we stretched them to their

limit."

On December 22nd, Phyllis Goodwin, Irene Spano and the Spencers sorted and wrapped the gifts at the Spencer home in preparation for Frank's delivery on December 23rd. "The smiles on the children's faces was worth it all," said Frank.

The Community Liaison Committee wishes to thank everyone for their



support, with very special thanks to Vern Spencer and the Sustrin twins.

...Sometimes we feel very alone and helpless. Then someone will come along with an act of kindness, such as yourself, and we are able to regain our confidence that there are people who care about our work...and we are able to regain strength ...to continue...
...Suburban Children

LETTERS FROM OUR FAMILIES

Dear Members of ROBS:

On behalf of the Jenkins & Lopez families, we would like to express our heartfelt thanks for providing a wonderful Christmas for these families.... This act of kindness describes the true meaning of Christmas from wonderful, caring people.

These families have expressed their appreciation for your overwhelming generosity. It has restored their faith in mankind in a society that they feel has forgotten the less fortunate. This kind act has proved to the Jenkins & Lopez families that there are people who care about them....

We would also like to thank you ...for what you did at Thanksgiving for the Strange and Jeffrey families. For some reason this year we housed more and more families during the very busy holiday season and getting them settled into some kind of stability took priority and our thanks was delayed.

Sincerely, Diane Gustaw, Martha McIndoe:
Suburban Children, Inc.

Dear ROBS & Santa: Thank you for the gifts you have given to me and my family. They enjoyed the gifts! ...We appreciate it.

Sincerely, William Gomez

Dear ROBS: I really liked the presents...it's what I wanted for Christmas

Sincerely, Izzy Gomez

Thank you Santa ROBS: For all the good toys and clothes. I like my truck set...

Bryant Lopez

Thank you . When I open my presents I was surprised. I got a hot wheel set and a truck set.

Sincerely, Jonathan

Thank you for the good presents....
Sincerely, Brenda



MUCKETY MUCK THREAT

Robert Reno had some wise words in his 12/8/99 "Reno At Large" column in Newsday. "If you're desperately worried Congress has dithered for another session without "saving" Social Security, relax. Just consider that we got through another year without mucking up a perfectly good system that may not need saving."

He quotes from a new study: "Social Security: The Phony Crisis" by economists Dean Baker & Mark Weisbrot, who take issue with Clinton's 'fix the roof while the sun is shining' statement. "Most who say that want to knock holes in it..." According to the study, "There will be 2.1 workers to support each retiree in 2030. Now

there are 3.3. In 1955 there were 8.6 workers per retiree, and the decline from 8.6 to 3.3 did not precipitate any economic disaster." If the promises of technology mean anything, we should be able to carry this off without throwing away or diminishing a system that enjoys wider support than any other federal program.

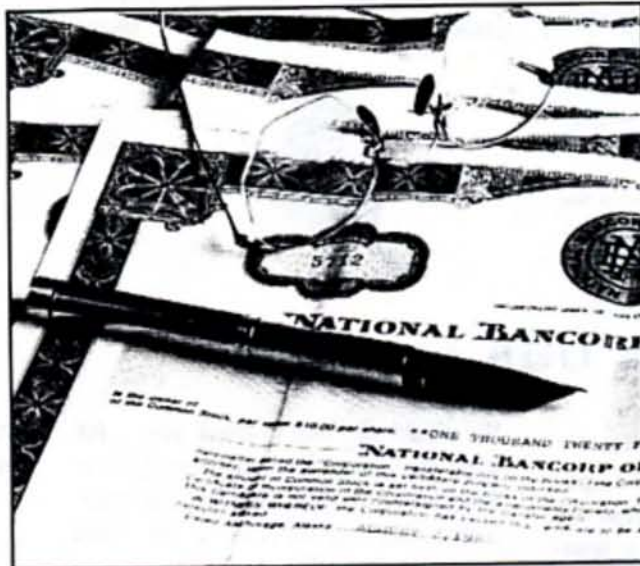
Are you up to the challenge?

If you're like most people, you make New Year's resolutions only to break them soon after. NYSUT Member Benefits challenges all NYSUT members to make and keep this one resolution: I resolve to draw up (or update) my will.

The importance of having a will to protect your loved ones and your wishes cannot be stressed enough. This is especially true if you have children under the age of 18 or if you have dependents with special needs. A will allows you to name a legal guardian for your children. It also ensures that your estate will be distributed according to your desires. Without a valid will, these very important, personal decisions are made by the state.

The NYSUT Legal Service Plan is a convenient vehicle to help you meet this challenge. It provides one simple will or update, free. A simple will provides for the proceeds of one's estate to be distributed to specifically named beneficiary(ies), with an alternate distribution plan in the event the primary beneficiary predeceases the writer of the will. With a simple will, proceeds are to be distributed outright with no conditions attached. Placing a condition on a bequest requires a trust, which can be obtained from the Legal Plan for a fee.

The plan also gives you access to unlimited, toll-free legal advice from plan attorneys. These attorneys will make phone calls and write third-party correspondence, at no charge, to resolve your personal legal situations before they become major problems. In addition, when you enroll in this plan, you receive two coupons for free, hour-long consultations with a plan attorney.



Is there a real estate transaction coming up in your near future? Do you have any traffic violations? You can receive legal assistance on a variety of personal legal matters when you enroll in the Legal Service Plan. If the matter can't be resolved over the phone or with a letter, you will be referred to a plan attorney in

your area who abides by the Legal Plan's discounted rates. Optional riders for Elder Law services and for business protection can be added to your legal plan coverage.

Don't put it off any longer! Make your will now. Enroll in the NYSUT Legal Service Plan and use it to help you, or do it another way, but just do it! The peace of mind you'll have once you have taken care of your loved ones is worth any unpleasantness associated with making up your will.

**MEMBER
BENEFITS**
nysut
Working to Benefit You

For more information on the Retiree Legal Service Plan, call NYSUT Member Benefits at 1-800-626-8101.

CALLING COLLECTORS & HOBBYISTS

To participate in our April 5th ROBS Exhibit,
call Ruth McCalla at 234-8013

10 A.M. at Islip Library

SUSTAINING MEMBER-

SHIP

At the December 16, 1999
ROBS Executive Meeting, the
honorary membership for
those 75 or over was fine-

tuned:

All ROBS who have been members prior to age
75 will be placed on sustaining membership.
This will eliminate sending out follow-up letters
for dues.

RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD
SCHOOLS
C/o Zuckerman
8 Woody Lane
Oakdale, N.Y. 11769-1515
631-567-3866, dotzee@juno.com



RETIRES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS
C/o Zuckerman
8 Woody Lane
Oakdale, N.Y. 11769-1515

**Mark your calendars:
ROBS MEETINGS**

Wednesday, March 1, 10 A.M.
Wednesday, April 5, 10 A.M.
Wednesday, May 3, 10 A.M.
Islip Public Library



TOLD
YOU SO....

The following is from Dumbing Down Our Kids, by Charles Sykes in which he talks about how the feel good, politically correct teachings create a generation of kids with no concept of reality and set them up for failure in the real world. Share these insights...

- Life is not fair, get used to it.
- The world won't care about your self-esteem. The world will expect you to accomplish something before you feel good about yourself.
- You will not make 40 thousand a year right out of high school. You won't be a vice president with a car phone until you earn both.
- Flipping burgers is not beneath your dignity. Your grandparents had a different word for burger flipping; they called it opportunity.
- Before you were born, your parents weren't as boring as they are now. They got that way from paying your bills, cleaning your clothes, and listening to you talk about how cool you are. So before you save the rain forest from the parasites of your parent's generation, try delousing the closet in your own room.
- Your school may have done away with winners and losers but life has not. Some schools have abolished failing grades; they'll give you as many times as you want to get the right answer. This, of course, doesn't bear the slightest resemblance to anything in real life.
- Television is not real life. In real life people actually have to leave the coffee shop and go to jobs.
- Be nice to nerds. Chances are you'll end up working for one.



**ISLIP LIBRARY DISTRICT
VOTE**

ROBS member Tom O'Connor, who retired as a Sonderling social studies teacher, will be on the ballot for Library Trustee in Islip. The vote will take place on Thursday, April 13 th at the library.

Anyone living within the Islip school district lines is eligible to vote in the library election.

Re-elect our fellow retiree to his 5th five year term as Islip library trustee.