



## ROBS NEWSLETTER

April 2005

RETIRES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

ISSUE 59

April 7 Foxwoods Trip cancelled

Instead, join us **April 14**  
for

**THE GAMES**  
**PEOPLE PLAY**

**MAY 12**

**History Video**

**Bay Shore Library**

**10 AM**

**JUNE 3**  
**LUNCHEON**

**Riverview Restaurant,**  
**Oakdale**



Keep that commitment to start exercising with some help from AFT PLUS Member Benefits. AFT PLUS health club discount program offers pre-negotiated 20 to 60 % discounts on monthly fees at more than 1,500 health clubs nationwide. Your membership can be canceled at any time and you will have the ability to freeze your membership and reactivate it later. The program lets you transfer membership between participating health clubs for just \$10. More info & to find participating health clubs in your area, call 888 294-1500 or visit <http://www.unionplus.org/healthclubs>.

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### BUDGET, SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS MAY 17

The day when "the people" have their say on the most local of elections is fast approaching.: Tuesday, May 17th. (FYI - Norway will be celebrating its 100th year of independence from Sweden that day too.)

Last year, only 85% of the state's budgets passed on the first vote. On Long Island the rate of passage was substantially lower. Part of the reason was low voter turn out, as it is every year.

For all of us there will be a school vote on May 17th. All of us should get out and vote. The anti-teacher forces are alive and well and organizing

the angry, disgruntled folks who are anti-union and anti-child as well. They're like a neighbor we heard of who has a license plate that states: IGMFU. (I got mine \_ you).

This year, according to Dick Iannuzzi, NYSUT vice president, "local and regional issues have tainted the voting public." Think Roslyn and the theft of millions of dollars of taxpayer's money, and the many other districts where administrators have illegally siphoned off funds.

These situations become an excuse for many to decide to make schools the scapegoat for everything they see wrong

with government. Voting down budgets is the closest they can come to getting revenge for everything.

NYSUT members are a significant bloc of voters, and if they seize the opportunity on May 17th to go out and vote, and cast around for other pro-education and pro-teacher voters and bring them to the polls, perhaps the vote will be for the children.

Voting is a privilege, a strength, and an obligation. We can make a difference by passing sound budgets and electing pro-education board candidates. Check your teacher local for the scoop.

### FISCALLY IRRESPONSIBLE ?

The AFT is calling on members of Congress to reject the Bush administration's proposals for the fiscal year 2006 budget, which would reduce funding significantly for education, Medicaid, job training and numerous other domestic programs "critical to helping millions of Americans become productive members of society."

In a March 3 letter to Congress, AFT president Edward J. McElroy notes that at the same time the administration is calling for sharp cuts, it also is advocating additional unpaid-for-tax cuts "at the

expenses of disadvantaged Americans least able to endure these program reductions."

The president's budget claims to reduce the rapidly expanding federal deficit, but many of the costs associated with the war in Iraq, the administration's proposal to privatize Social Security, and new tax reductions are not reflected in the budget. Together, these omissions "only serve to mask the true size of the public debt," says McElroy. "An honest budget must be based on realistic assessments, and any cuts must be

fair and balanced. It should also take into consideration the current and future needs of all Americans - not just the beneficiaries of the administration's tax giveaways." (Inside AFT, March 14)

And we hope you didn't miss the 3/16/05 story about Fed chief Alan Greenspan telling a Congressional Committee that he was "wrong" about rosy budget surplus forecasts that led him to support the president's tax cuts in 2001, saying they would stimulate the then ailing economy. "It turns out we were all wrong," he conceded. Senator Hillary Clinton shot back, "We were not all wrong, but many people were wrong." She went on to say: "We just saw a historic moment. I've never heard Chairman Greenspan admit being wrong before. It is long overdue and welcome."

# PHYLL'S FORUM

Phyllis Goodwin, President – (631-673-2971)



Dear Colleagues,

## ON TIME BUDGET POSSIBLE

The State Legislature and the Governor have the best chance since 1983 to pass the state budget on time. The joint Assembly-Senate conference committee met this morning, chaired by Senate Majority Leader Bruno and Assembly Speaker Silver. Subcommittees covering issue areas will meet beginning today. The Health Subcommittee meets on Wednesday at 1:00. Subcommittees are expected to continue working daily to achieve agreements. Bruno and Silver hope to have the budget passed by 3/24.

Obstacles remain however. The Assembly-Senate agreements would then have to

be negotiated with the Governor. Pataki reserves the right to veto parts of it unless the three can agree. The Legislature has agreed to spend more than Pataki wants and both houses will delay the suspension of an income tax surcharge for higher income New Yorkers that expires this year. Pataki is opposed to the added spending and tax increases, however the Governor is eager to get an on-time budget. He has two choices: compromise to get an on-time budget or veto parts of the budget and set up an on-going battle in April or longer.

In health issues, both houses have agreed to restore \$695 million. Changes in Medicaid eligibility which would extend the three year look back period for qualifying for Medicaid and

eliminating spousal refusal have been rejected by both houses. Changes in the EPIC program were not addressed because both houses are awaiting further language from the Governor whose original plan to allow auto-enrollment of EPIC beneficiaries into the Medicare drug benefit was not allowable in Medicare regulations released after Pataki's budget.

Also, the Assembly budget resolution includes a Preferred Drug List for Medicaid despite strong opposition from Black and Hispanic lawmakers and the drug companies. The Assembly language includes strong consumer protections while the Governor and the Senate have not gone as far.

In Harmony,  
Phyllis Goodwin

## A NEW "SCHOLARSHIP"

*Did you know that our newsletters have been printed in Albany on whatever time table they had available? Did you know that our president was taking care of all the sorting and mailing in addition to her other responsibilities? I'm sure you know that many times your newsletter came late...announcing events that had already taken place.*

*Well, we made a few changes. We hope you noticed that you're getting your newsletter in a timelier manner and that it is printed well, collated, folded and put carefully in each envelope? Your ROBS Board of Directors voted unanimously to contract our newsletter's printing and mailing preparation to AHRC located in Bohemia. The disabled people who work for AHRC are truly devoted to providing us with a terrific product. In turn, we feel very confident that we are providing them with work that enables them to feel a sense of accomplishment. We, on the Board, consider it just another scholarship we offer people in need.*

Marge Kirchner, Treasurer

**BRENTWOOD HOMEMAKERS** are having a silent Chinese Auction on May 18 to benefit scholarships, hospitals, children, soup kitchens and other social needs. It will be at the K of C on 2nd Avenue, Brentwood from 10 - 2. Gift or money donations are gratefully accepted. For more info, or to donate contact: ROBS Executive Board member **Adrienne Eastman**, 700 Broadway, Brentwood 11717, 631-273-3716.

### ROBS NEWSLETTER

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There is no psychiatrist in the world like a puppy licking your face.

-Ben Williams



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## THE M-T CORNER

"What does not destroy me makes me stronger."

— Friedrich Nietzsche

**NYSUT NOTES**

Dorothy Zuckerman, NYSUT Retiree Services Consultant (631-273- 8822)

(e-mail: [dzuckerm@nysutmail.org](mailto:dzuckerm@nysutmail.org))**SOCIAL SECURITY - THE RHETORIC AND THE REALITY - PART II**

President Bush has put forward a plan to "reform" Social Security. His proposal is to allow young people under the age of 40 to divert up to 4% of their Social Security payroll tax and to use that money to open private investment accounts. In exchange for this money that they borrow from their Social Security account, when they retire they will receive a reduced, smaller guaranteed Social Security benefit, minus administrative fees and the interest that would have accumulated if the government had invested that money in Treasury Bonds. At retirement, workers will have to trade in their investment portfolios for an annuity which would be added to their reduced guaranteed Social Security benefits. If the investments yield more than 3% (the return on the US government bonds) they may come out ahead. If the return yields 3% or less, their combined Social Security payment would be equal to or less than what they would have received under traditional Social Security.

At this time this is the only plan that has been presented to the public. There are many unanswered questions about the President's proposal that have yet to be discussed:

- Will the program be voluntary or mandatory? Will workers be able to switch in or out at will? Will their decision to invest be irrevocable?
- Will workers be able to borrow on their investments? What if they become terminally ill or disabled (Social Security presently provides disability coverage.)
- Will there be any protection for survivors? Will there be any protection for spouses and children? What will happen to the investment in the case of divorce? (Social Security now provides benefits for survivors and children.)
- What will happen if the money runs out before the worker dies? The investments are not adjusted for inflation (Social Security has a COLA). There would be no inheritance for the survivors.
- How would market fluctuations affect retirement benefits? The value of a worker's retirement income would be determined on whether the stock market is up or down at the time of retirement. (Remember Enron!)
- Will there be a safety net for those who don't have enough investment returns? How much will a 40 year old be able to acquire by retirement age? What will happen to those workers who are part time or who receive minimum wage or who drop out of the work force for a period of time?

The discussion focused on privatizing Social Security is one based on ideology. The President has admitted that his plan does nothing to protect the future solvency of Social Security. Rather it is designed to starve the government program with insufficient funding so that it will eventually die off - even as was done with Medicare in 2003. There has been an attempt to create a crisis and to confuse the issue with misinformation and a distortion of facts. The Baby Boomers will be in their 80's before Social Security funds will begin to run short. In order to insure the solvency of Social Security 50 years from now only slight adjustments are needed. **Social Security was designed to be an insurance program, NOT an investment program.**

**BRENTWOOD IDOL**

by Martin Hochheiser

Erin Furey, who graduated in 1998 from Sonderling HS, was a semi finalist on TV's American Idol reality show. Out of 20,000 hopefuls in August, Erin was one of 12 who were invited to perform in Hollywood. More than 100,000 auditioned nationwide, and Erin made it to the final group of 44.

Erin is a social worker studying for a Masters Degree in social welfare at Stony Brook University and lives in Selden. She has taken voice lessons since elementary school in Brentwood, performed in local theatre groups, including Creative Ministries Performing Center in Oakdale. She also sings with a local jazz band and hopes to audition in New York City to be a performer on Broadway.

In addition to performing, Erin runs a program that collects books and journals for homeless children on the Island.

We can all be proud of Erin. As her counselor at North Middle School, I remember her as an outstanding honor student and a high quality person. We hope to hear about her future success in show business!



**ROBS History Project lends its support to Restoration Project of Modern Times School House scheduled to begin this summer.**

**Volunteers are needed to guide the Memory Garden they have proposed along with publicity, fund raising, and education.**

Contact John Sherin at 516-931- 2971 or [jmsherin@optonline.net](mailto:jmsherin@optonline.net)

**IF YOU HAVE A CAMCORDER, LIVE IN FLORIDA for all or part of the year, and would like to conduct ROBS interviews for our History Project.** contact John Sherin at 516-931-2971 or [Jmsherin@optonline.net](mailto:Jmsherin@optonline.net) for particulars.



# NEWS NOTES

**Marilyn DePlaza** forwarded this info from **Phyllis Baumann** (Sond. '92) "George and I just returned from Kissimmee. I called **Jim Varien** (Guid.) and had a nice chat. He has been in Kissimmee since 1988. Enjoys playing golf. Both daughters live close by. He misses getting the ROBS Newsletter. His address is: 7651 Indian Ridge Trail, South Kissimmee, FL 347747; phone: 407-396-8138." FYI – One has to join ROBS in order to receive this newsletter. Pass it along to Jim.

Another new address, since 2/03, for retired member **Clem Stancik** (HS English) is: 12 Media Lane, Stony Brook, NY 11790. His phone is: 631-751-2566. **Clem** and wife **Clione** are loving retirement.

**Charlotte Curto**, secretary at Oak Park will be retiring on July 30. Best wishes! **Fred Schieferstein**, a voice from the past, soon to join all of us in retirement, says "June cannot come fast enough!" **Fred** will be moving to Ft. Lauderdale sometime in the fall. Anyone interested in attending the Annual Brentwood High School Retirement Party at Captain Bill's in Bay Shore on June 9, 2005, at 7 PM please contact Laura Paris at (631) 434-2201 or (631) 589-1170. The cost is \$65 per person.

This editor ran into **Miriam Couch** (So. Middle 00) at the LI Regional Committee of the NYS Coalition Against Domestic Violence Conference on 3/21. She is with **Suffolk Women's Services** and **Chris Veech** was a workshop presenter for the Community of Faith Task Force on Domestic Violence (Faith Communities & Agencies) on "The unexplored Piece: The Broken Soul." We ROBS members are certainly busy retirees!

**Jim Watson** (Sond. '95) had surprise, and welcome guests in January in his Arizona condo. **Pat Hucke** (HS '95) and husband **Richard** spent the time seeking the sun, which has been hiding behind the clouds there this winter. **Jim** also let us know that fellow English teacher **Rick Edwards** (Sond. '98) had gall bladder surgery down in sunny Florida where he lives. Be well, **Rick!**

**Lou Cairo** (Ross Guidance '93) is facing heart surgery. And **Jean Elarde** (Ross -MT '84) informed us about the grave illness of **Josephine Schimpf** (sec'y MT). She has been in a Care Center since March 13th. To contact her daughter **Carole**, call 727-942-6558. **Marianne Gruskin's** (Sond. '95) husband **Matt** has just had brain surgery in Venice Fl.



Continued good wishes to the following members who are recuperating: **Joe Carson** (Elem. Music '89), **Peter Cerullo**, **Bernie Heller**, **Ivy Rosenthal**, **Alma Murray**.



In January we lost **Jeanne Scholl**, (Sp. Ed E. Middle '03) who lived in West Islip, and in February we lost **Mary Conroy** (Village) who was active with the Sayville Village Improvement Society and the Congregational Church. Memorial tributes to the Improvement Society at 39 Edwards Ave., Sayville 11782. **Oney Spencer**, 83, a long time activist and volunteer in Wyandanch died in January. Condolences to **Cora Spencer** (Phys Ed. Sond. '83) his wife, and **Frank Spencer**, his brother, as well as to **Vern**. And to **Tony LaScala** (Sci/Centr) on the passing of his mother, **Frances**.

**Martin Hochheiser** wrote the following about **Ruth Rosenthal** (sci Admin. Bd. Member) who passed away on February 22nd.

"A woman of valor is worth more than rubies." This quotation aptly fit **Ruth Rosenthal**. **Ruth** was active in the Brentwood schools and community for over 50 years. She was a skilled, caring teacher of science when I began my teaching career in 1961 and was a mentor to me. She was an early BTA activist, a retirement delegate, a curriculum innovator, and an outstanding administrator.

When she retired, **Ruth** became a trustee on the Board of Education where she advocated for children, teachers and parents. For many years, she served on the Board of the Brentwood Public Library. Her continued love of science resulted in her helping students in several schools with science fairs and Olympiads. She gave even more to the students of Brentwood by giving a number of annual scholarships to both middle and high school youngsters.

All the hours devoted to her activities did not detract from being a loving wife to **Henny** as well as a mother, grandmother and great grandmother. Someone like **Ruth** comes along infrequently. She will be missed, but will remain in our thoughts and hearts.

## MINNESOTA AFT MEMBER AMONG DEAD IN SHOOTING RAMPAGE

Education Minnesota member and English teacher **Neva Rogers**, 62, is among the 10 people, including five students and a security guard, who died in a shooting rampage by a teenage gunman at a school on the Red Lake Indian Reservation on March 21. **Rogers** had been a member of Education Minnesota, a merged state affiliate of the NEA and the AFT, since 1998.

## ROBS PET PROFILES: **ETHEL MURMUR AND HER FRIENDS** Sheila & Letty Sustrin

Chris Veech, our ROBS Newsletter editor, has a touching story to relate to all of us. As you can see, the compassion and love she has for people extends itself to her precious animals.



EM, a small black bubble of fur was offered to us free some seven years ago because she had a heart murmur. She was to join her two year old half brother Tuxedo Too, also a black Cocker Spaniel. Due to the heart murmur, she became EM for Ethel Murmur. Our vet said that many puppies are born with murmurs and then outgrow them. We had our fingers crossed, especially since she could cover the backyard and still be ready to run again. She was the apple of everyone's eyes because she was so small and adorable. Tux had to be convinced however, because he was losing #1 status, but very shortly he warmed to her just as everyone else had.

As the weather warmed, our family took off for the mountains of Vermont and our lake house. Tux tried to show EM everything there was to love about the place, especially running up and down the stone stairs to the lake. But quite soon, EM began to get short of breath, and too soon she began to fall over when she walked a few feet.

When this happened, Tux would get agitated and I would run to her, pick her up and rub her all over to revive her. Pretty soon I stuck to her like glue. The vet surgeon who examined her said there was a faulty flap in her heart valve and there was a way to save her, but she would have to grow a little and be at least 5 months before they could operate and put in a new Teflon flap. Very cutting edge. So cutting edge that he had interns volunteering to do 24 hour care after the operation, and another vet volunteering to assist in the operation.

But the waiting was difficult, especially on poor EM...and Tux. She got frailer and frailer. When the time finally came, it was fall and she of the beautiful shiny coat and glistening eyes, had spiraled down to listless eyes, a dull coat and constant sleeping.

When it was time, we brought her to the hospital, and when the intern carried her into the back, she sat upright in his arms and just stared longingly at me. I almost cried. The operation was the next day, and it was successful, as the first call indicated. But then, more than an hour later, the doctor informed us that they had been working on her for the past hour and the heart was refusing to cooperate and start again in earnest. We lost her.

We went back to Vermont for the fall colors. Tux was heartbroken and lonely. I couldn't believe how much those four months of having cared for and loved her, had resulted in such grief in all of us. Little EM had wormed her way deep into our hearts and her loss was devastating. It took quite a bit of time for us all to get over it.

Tux wound up with another puppy to attach himself to when he was three. A buff Cocker Spaniel joined our family six years ago. He was a pet store reject at 6 months and was half price. The grandgirls had been visiting him in the pet store and wanted him to have a good home. So, one of the girls decided we should buy him and he should be called Lucky.

And lucky he is. Spoiled, pampered, and a delight. While he hadn't gotten his coat in the pet store, with us he has grown into a very beautiful and agile member of the family. It's like the story of the Ugly Duckling.

And now I have two "hip huggers" who follow wherever I go. They color my days and nights and give me great joy.



## LETTERS TO THE EDITOR:



We received a letter (with picture to the left) from **Millie O'Neill**, retired HS aide: "Loved your article. "Snow What!" One observation: invent your own words - eventually when used enough, they'll get into the dictionary. Also, put a skirt on the snowman by piling snow at the bottom and then you have a "Snowlady." Don't let anyone say It's no lady. Your granddaughters, like Hillary, are headed in the right direction. Thanks for the newsletter and the big write up given me.

*Marilyn DePlaza forwarded us this letter on the Empire Prescription Plan:*

On January 1, Empire increased co-pay and encouraged us to fill prescriptions by mail. Some drugs were placed on a very high co-pay. Last year, 90 synthroid tablets cost \$15 co-pay; this year the same 90 tablets cost \$60 co-pay. My endocrinologist told me that I could get the prescription filled cheaper at COSTCO. I just checked with my local COSTCO Pharmacy and 100 synthroid tablets sold for \$42. I was further informed that you do not have to be a member of COSTCO to utilize their Pharmacy. Something is radically wrong when I must pay \$60 co-pay by mail and I can receive 10 additional tablets at COSTCO and save \$18. Incidentally, for those of us who do not have prescription plans, COSTCO pharmacy can save you money.

*Larry Sommers, (W Jr. H '91) Coconut Creek, FL*



## LIONS of TSAVO

by Donna-Marie Ragonese

In 1897 maneless lions captured and ate 135 of the railroad workers who were building a bridge in Southeast Kenya. Dr. Bruce Patterson is now studying these unusual felines in their natural habitat.

Pat Landry and I joined with him and eight other volunteers on an Earthwatch Expedition in December of 2004 to study the man-eating lions of Tsavo. We were based for two weeks at Galla Camp, a rustic tented camp in the Taita-Rukinga Wildlife Conservancy, with more than 65,000 hectares of pristine savanna woodlands adjoining Tsavo East. In this drought-prone region, lions kill hundreds of cattle, sheep and goats on the ranches surrounding Tsavo. They sometimes attack and kill people as well. If Kenya is to maintain safe havens for wildlife, reserve managers must find ways to mitigate lions' conflict with humans.

Working with the Kenyan Wildlife Service, Dr. Bruce Patterson, Samuel Kasiki, and Roland Kays are learning how lions live in the dense woodlands outside Tsavo. This knowledge will be able to reduce ranchers' losses to lions, enhancing profitability while still preserving intact predator communities. Scientific knowledge is the lions only hope for survival in an ever increasing and crowded world.

By paying our own way and a bit more for project costs, we Earthwatch volunteers helped collect and analyze data. We searched for lions, unused to humans and difficult to locate, as we rode in Land Rovers during four hour shifts in the early morning, evening and late night. Five volunteers, a scientist and a driver all had specific jobs to do during these rides. These tasks were:

1. SCRIBE-- kept track of the number of animals and made hourly notation of mileage (paper records)
2. PALM DATA RECORDER--got a global positioning reading and identified all animals as to genus, species, type, sex and number of animals seen.
3. ANTENNA ROTATOR -- manually rotated a 2 by 2 foot antenna 360 degrees for each of three readings on the receiver every five minutes.
4. RECEIVER OPERATOR--worked with person using the antenna, to check on the whereabouts of the three lions that are currently radio collared.
5. TRANSECT OPERATOR--alternated between right & left side of vehicle, continuously scanning the farthest point where the landscape meets the horizon.
6. TRANSECT NOTATOR--every 30 seconds recorded the reading that the operator calls out.
7. SPOTTER--(during the pre-dusk to post-dawn rides) rotated a one million watt lamp 180 degrees while sitting on the edge of the frame of the roof of the Land Rover (roof came off in three pieces)

The highlight of the 'work' was during our 1<sup>st</sup> game drive. The Spotter highlighted FIVE LIONS ! We were all so excited. There was Diana, a collared adult female with two of her cubs, and two additional cubs. The cubs were about 30 feet from Mom, and they were eating from a zebra carcass. The vehicle was far away so we had to wait for the spotter to shine the lamp on the activities. The excitement in each vehicle was palpable. We were in the dark, most of us had new digital cameras, AND we could not make noise!!



Digital cameras are 'instant' gratification! WOW!!! No one wanted to leave this scene. Our driver radioed the camp and they held dinner for us 'until 9:30 PM so that we could continue our adventure.

Near the end of our two weeks, while Pat was the spotter, she "whispered" very loudly, "LIONS!" She saw four lion cubs, and for a split second also spotted an adult. In case of just such a happening, the veterinarians and their 'dart guns' were traveling with us. The unknown female never showed herself during the next couple of hours. The cubs were too young to collar so we enjoyed taking pictures as we watched them move about looking toward their Mom.

The Expedition began and ended with lions that were all females. Perhaps another trip to Tsavo will allow a first hand view of Tsavo's maneless "Man-eaters."

## FATHER OF THE MACINTOCH: a Brentwood Grad: *(With thanks to John Sherin)*

Brentwood graduate Jef Raskin, ('61 or '63) became a computer technology pioneer and started the team that created the Macintosh computer. He died on February 26, 2005 at his home in Pacifica California, at the age of 61.

Jef, who named the Macintosh after his favorite Apple but altered the spelling for copyright reasons, left Apple in 1982, but eventually earned the title of "father of the Macintosh" by providing a personal vision for the highly accessible and affordable computer that hit stores in 1984. He devoted much of the rest of his life working to simplify computers. To that end, he published *"The Humane Interface"* in 2000. He had just put the finishing touches on "Archy", his latest computer innovation, when he succumbed to pancreatic cancer.

Those who use computers will think of Jef Raskin for his pioneering use of the word "font" to refer to digital type faces. He was one of the creators of the "click and drag" method of manipulating icons on a computer screen. Linda Blum, his wife of 23 years, said he never stopped learning and teaching up to the end.

**Frank Spenser** and **Marty Hochheiser** remember him. **Joseph Purcell** had him in class and attests to several examples of his ability. Read what Jef himself wrote about one field trip and one outstanding teacher he had in Brentwood during his formative years.

"My life would have been very different, if it were not for a gym teacher who switched over to mathematics; **L. Roland "Ronnie" Genise**. ... When I e-mail to my former classmates, he is the one teacher that stands out in all their memories. (It was **Ron Genise** who gave us Cuisenaire rods, a pilot program in new math).

"He moved up in teaching grades much as I progressed, so that his influence and support were present for more years than is usual between a student and a math teacher. I was a geek and a hacker before those terms were invented, and got little emotional support from my fellow students. Mr. Genise (as I then called him) was my life preserver. In a class of mostly unruly students, I was one of the few that gave teachers little concern. On field trips, I would show up for the bus on time, never got lost, did not pull pranks, did not fight or throw things, and in general was a reliable little nerd. On one field trip, we went to Brookhaven National Laboratory, then a hotbed of the latest in atomic physics and all things futuristic, and I met Merlin the giant computer ... It was most likely 1956, when I was 13. We looked at this or that, and a docent explained things at a level that I found condescending and which my classmates variously found irrelevant, dull, or incomprehensible. We were led into a computer control room and just a few of us made a side trip to see the innards. I remember someone opening a door so that we could see an array of dots on a screen, making a kind of fat cross. It was a "William's tube" we were told, and each of the dots was one bit of information. The tube could hold 1,024 bits. "Why 1,024" asked a classmate and I blurted out that it was a power of two.

"Ron Genise taught the 'new math' that is, for some reason, still called the 'new math.' Its promise has become tarnished and ridiculed, mostly by those who do not understand it or have seen it misused. While it will always remain true that to do arithmetic by hand swiftly and accurately takes practice (to be blunt: drill), understanding does not come from that. Now that four-function (with square root!) calculators are throw-away cheap, there is no reason for a student to be snappily proficient at long division, but if you can do it, however haltingly, in various bases you understand division and will never forget it. I had learned to do arithmetic in any base, and Mr. Genise would ask tantalizing questions that were outside the book: what would it mean to use base zero, how about base -5, or base 1/2? "Useless questions" the detractors would cry, and if I were to have a career as a clerk making change, it might be useless. But it was intriguing, inspiring, and opened vistas. Thinking about base 1/2 leads quickly to thinking about infinite sequences, which is pretty heady stuff for a kid (how would you express 1/3 in base 1/2?). And not everybody in class was as excited as I was, **but Mr. Genise had invented "nobody left behind" a long time before the Bush administration made up the phrase (and then forgot to fund it).** Genise was somehow able to induce understanding in even the thickest head. He is still my model as a teacher, and when I remember to follow his techniques when I am teaching, I do especially well for my students. Do not denigrate the "new math". It leads to thinking instead of drudgery. I was inspired to begin to learn calculus while my peers in 9th grade were tackling elementary algebra. Mr. Genise was always encouraging, putting me in contact with college professors when he couldn't answer my questions.

"That day in the dark cage of the computer, the programmer showed me the first few incantations. I understood that each was a step that the machine would follow, and I raced to learn each new command (in "machine" language). Hidden away from any windows, we lost all sense of time. Programmers keep long hours, and work late into the night. This happens to me still when I am programming. It happened to me for the first time then.

"The bus left, but nobody thought to check to see if I was aboard because I was the faithful student who was always on the bus, never causing trouble, never running off. I normally rode my bike home after school, so the first person who missed me was my mother. She called the school — it was closed. She remembered that I was on a field trip and called Mr. Genise. He was sure I had been on the bus. I was always on the bus after a field trip. But he hadn't looked specifically for me, he had to pay attention to the spitball throwing herd and keep them in their seats. I was probably in the back corner as always, - where nobody could sneak in behind me,- reading a book. "My bike was still at school when my mother drove to see if I had gotten hurt. Had it been daytime, she would probably have stopped at the library, where I had been known to get lost forever in a book. (Just ask Joe Purcell). Finally they called Brookhaven. The guards there followed the tour path and finally found me, at 11 PM, totally unsleppy, not at all hungry, and programming away. A call to my parents let them know that all was well, and they somehow knew when they came to get me that a display of anxiety was in order, without anger. I didn't get into trouble, nor did the programmer or Mr. Genise. Things might be different today, but there was an assumption of good will all around back then."



## ROBS NEWSLETTER

April 2005

RETIREES OF BRENTWOOD SCHOOLS

ISSUE 59

April 7 Foxwoods Trip cancelled

**Instead, join us April 14**  
for

**THE GAMES**  
**PEOPLE PLAY**

**MAY 12**

**History Video**

**Bay Shore Library**

**10 AM**

**JUNE 3**

**LUNCHEON**

**Riverview Restaurant,  
Oakdale**



Keep that commitment to start exercising with some help from AFT PLUS Member Benefits. AFT PLUS health club discount program offers pre-negotiated 20 to 60 % discounts on monthly fees at more than 1,500 health clubs nationwide. Your membership can be canceled at any time and you will have the ability to freeze your membership and reactivate it later. The program lets you transfer membership between participating health clubs for just \$10. More info & to find participating health clubs in your area, call 888 294-1500 or visit <http://www.unionplus.org/healthclubs>.

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### **BUDGET, SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS MAY 17**

The day when "the people" have their say on the most local of elections is fast approaching: Tuesday, May 17th. (FYI - Norway will be celebrating its 100th year of independence from Sweden that day too.)

Last year, only 85% of the state's budgets passed on the first vote. On Long Island the rate of passage was substantially lower. Part of the reason was low voter turn out, as it is every year.

For all of us there will be a school vote on May 17th. All of us should get out and vote. The anti-teacher forces are alive and well and organizing

the angry, disgruntled folks who are anti-union and anti-child as well. They're like a neighbor we heard of who has a license plate that states: IGMFU. (I got mine \_ you).

This year, according to Dick Iannuzzi, NYSUT vice president, "local and regional issues have tainted the voting public." Think Roslyn and the theft of millions of dollars of taxpayer's money, and the many other districts where administrators have illegally siphoned off funds.

These situations become an excuse for many to decide to make schools the scapegoat for everything they see wrong

with government. Voting down budgets is the closest they can come to getting revenge for everything.

NYSUT members are a significant bloc of voters, and if they seize the opportunity on May 17th to go out and vote, and cast around for other pro-education and pro-teacher voters and bring them to the polls, perhaps the vote will be for the children.

Voting is a privilege, a strength, and an obligation. We can make a difference by passing sound budgets and electing pro-education board candidates. Check your teacher local for the scoop.

### **FISCALLY IRRESPONSIBLE ?**

The AFT is calling on members of Congress to reject the Bush administration's proposals for the fiscal year 2006 budget, which would reduce funding significantly for education, Medicaid, job training and numerous other domestic programs "critical to helping millions of Americans become productive members of society."

In a March 3 letter to Congress, AFT president Edward J. McElroy notes that at the same time the administration is calling for sharp cuts, it also is advocating additional unpaid-for-tax cuts "at the

expenses of disadvantaged Americans least able to endure these program reductions."

The president's budget claims to reduce the rapidly expanding federal deficit, but many of the costs associated with the war in Iraq, the administration's proposal to privatize Social Security, and new tax reductions are not reflected in the budget. Together, these omissions "only serve to mask the true size of the public debt," says McElroy. "An honest budget must be based on realistic assessments, and any cuts must be

fair and balanced. It should also take into consideration the current and future needs of all Americans - not just the beneficiaries of the administration's tax giveaways." (Inside AFT, March 14)

And we hope you didn't miss the 3.16.05 story about Fed chief Alan Greenspan telling a Congressional Committee that he was "wrong" about rosy budget surplus forecasts that led him to support the president's tax cuts in 2001, saying they would stimulate the then ailing economy. "It turns out we were all wrong," he conceded. Senator Hillary Clinton shot back. "We were not all wrong, but many people were wrong." She went on to say: "We just saw a historic moment. I've never heard Chairman Greenspan admit being wrong before. It is long overdue and welcome."