



AFT Washington Retiree Chapter RETIREE NEWSLETTER

A Union of Professionals

AFT Washington Retiree Chapter, Local 8045R
625 Andover Park West, Suite 111
Tukwila, WA 98188
1-866-992-3892

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We had a very good time at the annual meeting! By Ross Rieder Chapter President



Hey, you missed a really good party – if you weren't there, of course!

On May 18th, AFT Washington Retiree Chapter, Local 8045R, held its annual meeting. Sad to say, most of you missed it.

I know we've all been to a lot of meetings in our lives. Faculty meetings, committee meetings, union meetings, maybe a "corrective" meeting or so, even. Eh?

Well, not only did we have good fellowship in the May 18 band; we had good food! Not just a box lunch, by golly. Real good food that required plates. Hot food! Well, pretty warm. Thanks, **Merilee Miron!**

And a truly inspiring program. Two years ago our program was a folk singer singing songs from Woody Guthrie. It was a well-received performance.

Ross Rieder, President
Susan Levy, Vice President
Roger Carlstrom, Secretary
Mary Hale, Treasurer
Bernal Baca, Director
John Guevarra, Director
Rachael Levine, Director
Robert L. Petersen, Director
Rosemary Thurston, Director

Roger Carlstrom, Editor

Merrilee Miron, AFT WA Staff Liaison

This year we went "in house" for our entertainment and inspiration. (Last year, we had a picture-identification contest, pictures coming from the WSFT/WFT/AFT Washington archives.)

Don and Sandy McVay, Shoreline CC Local 1950 retirees, and **Anne McCartney** (retired Local 1950) and **Norm Lindquist** (retired Local 2084) gave inspiration, at least to me. Both couples have been fluttering about the planet a month at a time doing volunteer work on archaeology projects, ecological projects, historical research projects, you name it. All in conjunction with **Earth-watch**. They showed us pictures and told us stories and anecdotes that made more than one of us consider dropping everything and making plans to get out of Dodge and do some good.

And, of course, we held elections. You may know some of these people. The following hold the position of Director: **John Guevarra**, SCCFT 1789 retiree; **Rachael Levine**, SCCFT 1789 retiree; **Robert L. Peterson**, Shoreline 1950 retiree; **Rosemary Thurston**, Renton 3914 retiree; and **Bernal Baca**, Yakima 1485 retiree. **Mary Hale**, Edmonds 4254 retiree, is Treasurer; **Roger Carlstrom**, Yakima 1485, is Secretary; **Susan Levy**, Shoreline 1950, is Vice President; and I, Everett 772, am President.

Now, don't you miss next year's opportunity. Pencil it in now for May sometime.



A good time at the meeting!

Inside this issue

- Stepping Down: Ann McCartney
- Mary Hale Sings the Budget Blues
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K. Ann McCartney steps down from executive board

After eight years of serving on the chapter executive board, K. Ann McCartney has stepped down. It will be a strange feeling for board members who have served with her since the chapter was born not to have her present.

Ann is a charter member of the chapter and brought her considerable parliamentary skills and knowledge to bear on the formation of the chapter in 2003. You'll see her influence in every word of our bylaws.

She served as the chapter's first secretary and became our third president in 2005. Most recently, she has served as a director on the board and as the chapter's representative to the AFT Washington executive board.

Fortunately for both that board and ours, she has agreed to continue serving in this representative capacity, even though she has stepped down from her director position.

At the annual luncheon and meeting on May 18, she was presented with an award expressing our appreciation for her roles as a founder, leader, and supporter of the chapter from 2003 to 2011.

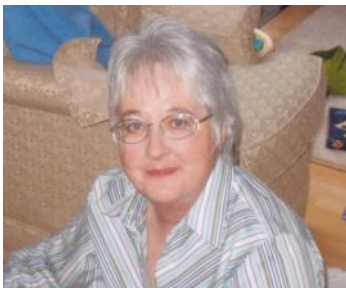
Best of luck, Ann. We shall miss you.



Ross presents award to Ann.

The biennial budget brought much pain to many

By Mary Hale
Chapter Treasurer



It was, indeed, a "brutal" budget session! To balance the biennial budget, legislators made \$4.6 billion in spending cuts and added \$459 million in budget transfers to address an anticipated budget shortfall of \$5.1 billion for 2011-2013. As we all know, K-12, higher education, social services, and health care were particularly hard hit. Many AFT Washington retirees and their spouses will also share directly in the pain: COLA increases for retirees in TERS 1 and PERS 1 are--at least for now--a thing of the past. It's possible, though, that this COLA elimination may not stand up under court challenge. (The **Retired Public Employees Council** has consulted with an attorney who believes that a challenge can be successful. The group will decide in July

whether to pursue legal options.)

Olympia Rally: On April 8 AFT Washington retirees and their friends participated in the "We are One" rally, joining an estimated 12,000 participants (most of whom were associated with labor unions). Thank you **Craig Costa, Elizabeth Robinson, Julie Clarke, Ross Rieder, Susan Levy, Garett Munger, and John Guevarra** for being there.

Committee on Political Education (COPE): I encourage you to make a contribution to **AFT Washington COPE**. Through voluntary member contributions, COPE was able to donate over \$30,000 to endorsed legislative candidates during the last state election period. In addition, our international (The American Federation of Teachers) donated thousands more to federal candidates. If you didn't receive a recent COPE mailing and can help, contact **Richard Burton**, political organizer for AFT Washington, at rburton@aftwa.org for more information.

Legislative Update Publication: Finally, to receive a re-cap of legislative session issues of particular interest to AFT Washington members, contact **Bernal Baca**, AFT Washington lobbyist, at bbaca@aftwa.org. Bernal will add you to the *Legislative Update* listserve.

Mary Hale is the chapter executive board's liaison to AFT Washington COPE.



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NWLC speaks to the importance of Social Security to women and families

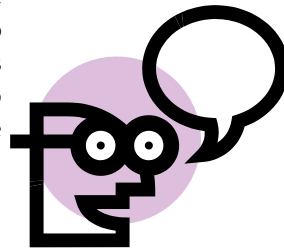
We have posted on our retiree webpage a one-page flyer put out by the **National Women’s Law Center** that outlines the benefits of Social Security to women and families. Here are the basic contentions to be found in the flyer:

- ◇ Social Security is a family insurance plan that provides retirement benefits and life and disability insurance to Washington’s working families.
- ◇ Washington women depend on modest Social Security benefits to get by.
- ◇ Social Security is a critical anti-poverty program for Washington women and families.

It’s an effective flyer. Check it out by going to the AFT Washington website (<http://wa.aft.org>) and then clicking on “Retiree Members” in the left-hand column.

Perhaps “character words” are in order for retirees

The Yakima school district each month posts on school reader boards a “character word” for the month. They’re wholesome things, like “honesty,” “tolerance,” “integrity,” and so on. Students who understand these ideas surely will be better citizens than those who don’t understand them. We think that’s the assumption underlying the practice.



Retirees, of course, don’t have reader boards, but if we did, what “character words” might we consider posting? “Arthritis”? “Pharmacy”? “Maybe”? “Travel”? “Medicare”? (of course). We might even have “character phrases,” like “Joint Replacement” or “Social Security” or “Regence Backlog.” We’d post character words and phrases that reflect our understanding of retirement.

Submit your nominees for “character words” or “character phrases” to the Newsletter editor (carlstromr@q.com), and we’ll publish ‘em in the next issue. Maybe we’ll even have a little contest.

Make your own retirement recipe!

By Millie Stenejem
Retiree from Local 1485



Retirement constitutes a way of life unlike working life in that there are few recipes. Rather than follow one, in fact, retirees are encouraged to invent their own. Therein lies the challenge for many, led by a chorus of colleagues facing a new retirement. “But what will I do? I’ve always gone to work!”

No wonder then that almost the first comment people make to new retirees reads something like “Congratulations on achieving (as if it were an award). . . . What are you doing with all that extra time?” That question, for me, has become an irritation, a conversation stopper, a challenge, an assessment, a putdown—you get the picture. I am not a new retiree (15 years now), so why should that question irk me? Maybe because I’m still working on my personal recipe. Maybe because I fear appearing non-productive? Lazy? Random?

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Retirement recipe, continued

Perhaps contemplating some of the ingredients I choose to include in my retirement recipe can reduce my defensive posture and encourage others to refine their own recipes.

TRAVEL: Allow time each year for travel as your health and budget permit. Include places near and far. One weekend across the state is sometimes as satisfying as two weeks across the globe.

VOLUNTEER: Find a match with your interests, say, The Nature Conservancy, Hospice, Habitat for Humanity, Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), and so on.

FIND A NEW HOBBY: Try photography if you've never been "into" it before. Take up cycling. I've always used a sewing machine but never sewed a quilt. Voila! A new hobby!

READ: Now you have the time.

SIGN UP FOR EARTHWATCH OR ELDERHOSTEL: Pay to volunteer and travel; either work or take classes.

WRITE YOUR MEMOIR: Your grandchildren will someday appreciate it.

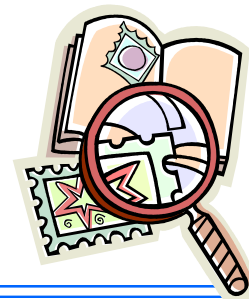
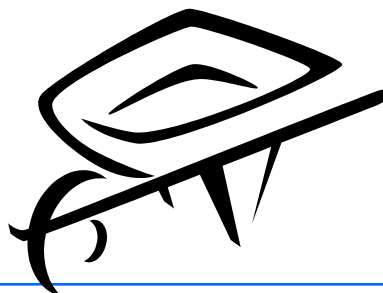
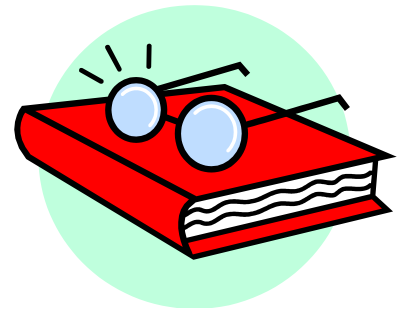
GARDEN: More than 3 tomato and 2 zucchini plants.

EXERCISE/FITNESS: All retirement recipes should be devoted to being on the move. If you don't move, you won't be able to.

GRANDCHILDREN/PARENTS: Grandchildren are delightful, and parent care may be a necessity. But keep enough time for yourself. It's *your* retirement.

So there you have it: my suggested list of ingredients for a retirement recipe. I'm still working on the portions. I hope that next time someone asks me what I'm doing with all my extra time I remember to smile mysteriously and reply, "No extra time at all, as I'm perfecting my recipe. It'll be done when I am done."

Millie Stenehjem began teaching full time at Yakima Valley Community College in the fall of 1968 and retired at the end of 1995, though she continued to teach part-time for the next six years. She taught drama and humanities and speech and directed the Readers Theater. Throughout her career, she fashioned costumes for theater productions at the college directed by George Meshke (now deceased).





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A granny rages

By Marcia Barton
Retiree from Local 1789



Outside, there's sun and the garden is in full mid-spring bloom. I am happily sitting at my table with the first cup of coffee of the morning, unfolding a fresh *New York Times*.

Reed Abelson's lead story on the front page catches my eye at once: "Health Insurers Making Record Profits as Many Postpone Care." This is riveting. I read on:

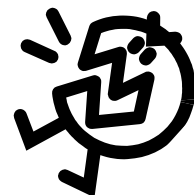
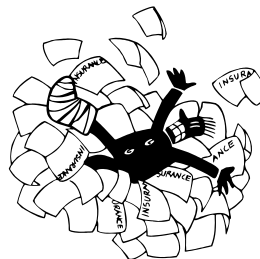
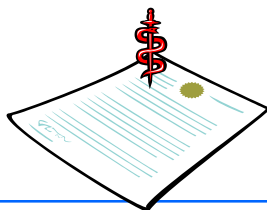
The nation's major health insurers are barreling into a third year of record profits, enriched in recent months by a lingering recessionary mind-set among Americans who are postponing or forgoing health care.

Having lived through my children's coming of driving age, I feel I have surely understood the basic ethos of the insurance business: sell a service people must have, but penalize them if they use what they have paid for.

So I am not surprised shareholders do well when customers don't actually get what they've paid for.

Abelson quotes industry representatives, as well as doctors and patients. One doctor in rural Tennessee says patients "are deciding to put some of their health care off." He adds that they are being "more thoughtful about their needs."

One patient has had her hours reduced at work, and so she has no spare cash to see the doctor or have dental work done. Though she has insurance, she says, she "can't afford to use it."



A nurse says the high deductible for his policy means he defers seeing a dermatologist, although he has a history of skin cancer.

I suppose these examples do constitute being "more thoughtful" about health care, as contemplated by the Tennessee doctor. And as premiums rise, and health insurers "barrel into" yet another year of record profits, I imagine that folk fortunate enough to be able to maintain their coverage will become more meditative still.

I'm feeling thoughtful, too. I've recently had hip replacement surgery and two weeks at rehab, and to say it's changed my life is an understatement. Just standing up straight still seems miraculous, not to speak of walking without pain. I think about how Medicare and my medical insurance made the transformation possible.

And I think about this: we don't know how to cure everything, but a lot of skilled people have knowledge and techniques to make our lives a lot better and healthier. I think that, in a good society, we'd be sure to use those abilities for the common good – and for the public health.

And I wonder: how is it good news when an insurer's "reserve coffers are flush with profits" and shareholders receive great new dividends while the insured neglect their health and hope for the best?

In what universe is this a good idea?

This is the second of two articles that Marcia Barton has written for the Retiree Newsletter. In the April issue, she explained that the lives we live are stories.



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Whither the telephone? By Roger Carlstrom, Editor Chapter Secretary

"Are you the party to whom I am speaking?"

—Lily Tomlin as Earnestine on
"Laugh In," long ago

Shortly before spring began this year, I emailed a column from the online *New York Times* to several friends and asked them to respond. In "Don't Call Me, I Won't Call You" (March 18), Pamela Paul outlined the general demise of the telephone in our culture. We rely on email and "texting" and "tweeting" and Facebook instead.



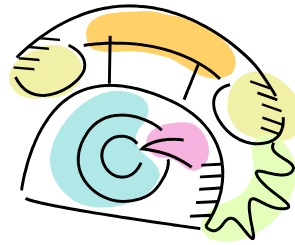
To my surprise, I received more than a dozen replies. Of greater surprise, one friend actually replied *by telephone* to tell me what she thought. I had expected responses by email, of course. And then another friend called to tell me what he thought of the proposition. ("Most of the time," he said, "we call someone to say that we've sent an email.")

No one disputed that the telephone is not the presence in our lives that it once was. Some lamented the fact: "I being of old fart status like the personal touch of the phone call. I also like handwritten notes," said one. Others rather celebrated the demise: "Never have liked the telephone much," said another.

A contrarian friend, having had experience with family emails gone bad, spoke of a rule in his house: "If there is the slightest possibility that a subject will involve emotion or conflict, I insist that people talk face to face or by phone."

Yet another contrarian friend, unwilling even to give up the land line, pleaded with me to hang on to my phone: "When you call someone and he or she answers you know you have said what you have to say and you have been answered. Period." She also asserted that "for gauging people's state of mind or emotion, there is nothing like the voice to give us away."

She put me in mind of my mother, who died in 1995 at age 81. An excellent typist and wonderful letter writer, my mother would have loved email, and I would have loved exchanging emails with her. But then, if I *really* wanted to know how she were doing, I would have called. There are limits to what type-face can tell us.



Miscellany

We hope you are enjoying the *Retiree Newsletter*, and we'd like to hear from you about it. We would especially like to **receive articles from you** that we may include in subsequent issues. If you would like to submit an article (max. 350 words) or have comments about the *Newsletter*, please let **Roger Carlstrom** know by telephone (509-966-5815) or email (carlstromr@q.com).

Also, **Michael Kischner**, who contributed an article on his short-lived flirtation with merit pay in the February 2011 issue, has suggested that a **Letters to the Editor** segment might be an interesting addition to the *Newsletter*. We think that's a good idea. If there weren't room to print them in the *Newsletter* itself, we could provide a link to our webpage where they could appear in full.

If you have a letter to submit, please submit it to Roger by email or let him know by phone.

For back issues of the Newsletter, go to <http://wa.aft.org>
and click on "Retiree Members"

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