



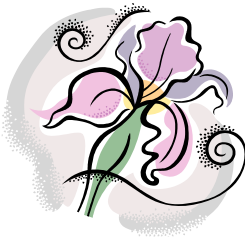
AFT Washington Retiree Chapter RETIREE NEWSLETTER

A Union of Professionals

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

Vol. 4, No. 2
April/May, 2012

Plan to attend the 2012 Annual Luncheon & Meeting



By the time you receive this issue of the *Retiree Newsletter*, you should have received notice via email or the US Postal Service about our **2012 Annual Luncheon and Meeting**, complete with instructions on how to get there. The event will be held in Tukwila on **May 15** at **635 Andover Park Avenue, Suite 105**, and will begin at **11:30 a.m.** Lunch (free) will be served at about noon. As always, the emphasis will be on conversation and conviviality, with just a wee bit of business (the nomination and election of a delegate to the national AFT Convention this summer in Detroit, if we decide to send a delegate).

Barb Van Droof, Vice President of People’s Memorial and Shoreline Community College Nursing Professor Emeritus, will discuss planning arrangements—in advance—for the death of a loved one or for one’s own death, especially in the context of what to do with remains and making arrangement for memorial or funeral services. Time will be allowed for questions and comments.

Please plan to attend. We think you’ll enjoy it! **RSVP, not later than May 11**, to **Merrilee Miron** by phone, 206-432-8083, or email, mmiron@aftwa.org.

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Lessons can be learned from another time By Ross Rieder Chapter President

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 Robert L. Petersen, Director
 Rosemary Thurston, Director

Roger Carlstrom, Editor

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I just finished reading *Left in Dark Times: a Stand Against the New Barbarism* by **Bernard-Henry Lévy** (Random House, 2008). He’s no relation to our own **Susan Levy**, probably, but the two of them are definitely similar philosophically. B-H Lévy has been described as a philosopher, a brave activist who puts himself in harm’s way, one who is adept at raising important issues and treating them with intelligence. That reminds me of “our Levy.”

In the final pages of the final chapter of the book, which is basically a history of the French Left of the last 70 years, he quotes **William the Silent (William of Orange)**: “One need not hope in order to undertake, nor succeed in order to persevere.”

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This William of Orange was the main leader of the Dutch revolt against the Spanish that set off the Eighty-Years War (we've got a ways to go, eh?) and resulted in the formal independence of the United Provinces in 1648. He was born into the House of Nassau as a count of Nassau-Dillenburg. He became Prince of Orange in 1544 and is thereby the founder of the branch House of Orange-Nassau. (April 24, 1533 to July 10, 1584).

Lévy further notes: "That was the very heart of the great biblical wisdom that anchors, if not on God's silence, then at least on the rarity of His word, the necessity for a laborious, tireless, efficient morality."

This can be a message to progressive workers and movements; Lévy's advice to the French left can apply to all of Europe and certainly the USofA. And, thanks to the internet, I found this quote, which, I suspect, many of our readers could support – also from William of Orange: "I am no Calvinist, but it seems to me neither right nor worthy of a Christian to seek, for the sake of differences between the doctrine of Calvin and the Confession of Augsburg, to have this land swarming with troops and inundated with blood."

But, that's another story. . . .

The legislature's second special session nears a close

By Mary Hale
Chapter Treasurer



As I write this article—and after one special session in late 2011, a 60-day regular session, and more than half-way through a second special session—state legislators still have not passed a revised budget that fully addresses the expected 2011-2013 budget shortfall. Washington state law requires a balanced budget, but the state legislature is approximately one-half billion dollars short of accomplishing this. The good news is that neither the Republican caucus nor the Democratic caucus supports fur-

ther cuts to K-12 and higher education funding as budget-balancing measures. *Special thanks to those who contacted their legislators and committee leaders urging "no more cuts to education funding."*

On March 30, Governor Gregoire announced that she was in the process of finishing a compromise proposal for lawmakers to consider as part of their budget negotiations. If no agreement is reached during the last days of this second special session, Gregoire will probably convene a third special session.

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) Update: The Retired Public Employees Council, Washington Education Association, and Washington Federation of State Employees joined forces last fall and filed a lawsuit to reclaim COLA benefits denied TRS 1 and PERS 1 pensioners. This COLA-denial action was taken by the 2011 legislature and was effective on July 1, 2011. A judicial hearing on this suit has now been scheduled for late April in Thurston County. The outcome of the suit will impact many AFT Washington retirees and their spouses/partners.

Committee on Political Education (COPE): On March first, AFT Washington COPE met and took the following actions:

1. Recommended that the AFT Washington Executive Board endorse **Jay Inslee** for governor. (Republican candidate **Rob McKenna's** campaign office let us know that McKenna would not be responding to or filling out the questionnaire sent to him.) In follow-up action **the Executive Board voted to endorse Inslee.**
2. Discussed the questionnaire, timeline, and interview process for candidates for Congress, District 1 (the position formerly held by Jay Inslee).
3. Discussed the need to review and update the questionnaire and evaluation process used for state legislative races.





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A Special Note

During March and into April by telephone, we have been surveying chapter members whose email addresses we know to ascertain whether they would prefer to receive the *Retiree Newsletter* via email rather than via the US Postal Service. We then have sent on to the AFT Washington staff the names of those who would like to make the switch.

It may take a little time for the staff to update our records, so if you have indicated to us that you wish to receive the *Newsletter* via email and yet have received this issue via the US Postal Service, please be patient with us. We'll get the change made!

Is government the enemy? By Larry Lowther



Characteristic of our current political landscape is a concerted attack upon government by self-styled "conservatives," who don't "conserve" anything. They are really out to destroy government as we know it—at least that part of government that provides social services to the people.

Is government the enemy? We retirees are grateful for Medicare and Social Security. We doubt that we could get as good a deal in the private sector. Before the passage of these programs, half of the elderly were in poverty. Now, fewer than ten per cent fall below the poverty level. We veterans remember how beneficial to us and to the economy the GI Bill was after World War II. Girls and young women can testify to the difference Title IX has meant for female athletics. Both the extent and quality of female participation in athletics has soared since the passage of that legislation.

Government has been and can be in the future a positive force enhancing the quality of our lives—but only if we resist efforts to demonize it. We need to envision government at its best—a means by which the collective will of the people can find expression. In this world of 7 billion people with current technology and intertwined and complicated economic relationships, the idea that the individual can be master of his or her

own destiny is absurd. We are interdependent. We are not islands unto ourselves. We do need a mechanism whereby we can avoid trampling one another. We need an instrument that enables us together to maintain a decent, civilized existence. That mechanism, that instrument, is democratic government.

Our job is to make sure that that government remains democratic. We should always be suspicious of concentrations of power, whether public or private. Sometimes, public officers, elected or appointed, pervert government to enrich themselves. Some groups, especially the moneyed powers, try to appropriate government for their own purposes. These things need to be guarded against. We need investigative journalism to probe into the deepest, most secret recesses of government. We need public financing of elections. We need to overturn the *Citizens United* decision.

All of this means constant vigilance and hard work. But vigilance and hard work are the price for democracy.

Larry Lowther began teaching in the history department at Central Washington University in 1965 and "officially" retired in 1992, though he continued to teach part time until 2003, when he retired completely.

I'd like us to consider some things By Rachael Levine



Ed. note: After the chapter executive board decided in late January to invite Barb Van Droof of the People's Memorial to speak at our 2012 Annual Luncheon and Meeting (see p. 1), fellow board member Rachael Levine and I found ourselves brainstorming on possible follow-up discussions the chapter might consider in future workshops or meetings of some sort. I had been looking at a letter from an organization to which I belong where I was asked to consider leaving "a legacy for those causes in which I deeply believe." I had also looked online at a Family Caregiver Alliance "Fact Sheet" on "End-of Life-Decision-Making." Rachael, in her turn, sent

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me two separate, very informal emails containing her thoughts. If you know Rachael, you know that she's the person in the room who always has the right questions to ask, the ones that get at what we should be thinking about. I thought you would enjoy what she had to say, and so I have presented her texts here in a form edited to fit the format of this newsletter. As for her query about the sun, well – I live in Yakima. (Rachael's letter to Senator Murray regarding the importance of Social Security and Medicare to herself, to her family and to us all appeared in the October/November 2011 issue of the Retiree Newsletter.)

Here are a few "starting points."

When you want information that affects critical decisions in your life, where do you go? (1) Google; (2) Your mother; (3) A "significant other"; (4) The magazines in the doctor/dentist waiting room.

How do you square up your own beliefs about a decision with those of (1) Your mother? (2) Your religious affiliation? (3) Your political party? (4) Your bank account?

When do you make a critical decision? (1) Never. I just let nature take its course. (2) Sometimes, when I am drinking with a buddy. (3) Often, at the last possible minute. (4) Always, after I turn out the light and stare at the ceiling.

OK, OK. It is another rainy day in Seattle. Did you again steal our sun?

Here is a paragraph that Molly Ivins wrote in 2004 to ACLU members as she was preparing her own will: "I am writing on the cheerful topic of croaking. I feel like a bit-part actor in one of those bad disaster movies: 'We're all going to die!' Personally, I'm planning to stick around long enough to help bankrupt Social Security."

Molly goes on musing about those to whom she might bequeath a "chunk of change" and concludes that the "future of freedom is going to need help."

Maybe her musings don't have that much to do with People's Memorial, but for some of us, it is a matter of what "chunk of change" we want to commit to caring for the leftovers of our life in view of giving the most we could to furthering life for those who continue. I know there are many considerations, including tradition, religion, environment, etc., but I would personally welcome a conversation about this with colleagues who have devoted their own lives to weeding out ideology from ideas.

For a short time, this afternoon, I was on a roll.

Boaters were not alone! By Roger Carlstrom, Editor



My wife **Connie** and I have been avid boaters since 2001, when we bought a 26-foot Bayliner that we named *Just Cause*. We replaced that boat in 2008 with *Cimarron*, a 34-foot CHB Europa Sedan. We cruise in Puget Sound, the San

Juan Islands, and the Gulf Islands, and we rely heavily on electronics to help us know where we are and where we are going; especially we rely on Global-Positioning-System (GPS) instruments. (Yes, we have paper charts and a compass, and I know how to use a parallel ruler, and if we had to, we could probably make our way without these electronic instruments, but just barely.) Most boaters on the water are in this same "boat," as it were.

We were therefore relieved to learn that the Federal Communications Commission recently reversed an earlier "conditional waiver" it had granted last year to a telecommunications company named LightSquared, which sought frequency bandwidth residing right next to the bandwidth assigned to GPS signal bands. Had LightSquared been able to operate its telecommunications on the desired bandwidth, it would have been possible that "GPS signals could have been overwhelmed and ineffective in some areas," while LightSquared had "the chance to make zillions in cell phone usage," according to **Kurt Hoehne**, a writer for

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Northwest Yachting magazine (“GPS survives the attack of the Giant Hedge Fund,” March 2012 issue, pp. 44-45).

Ah ha, you might think, boaters must have some kind of clout. Well, according to Hoehne, the “good guys” actually included not only boaters and the “marine electronics industry” but such “other recreational GPS users” as “Runners, bikers, [and] hikers. . . .”

There were other “good guys,” he says: commercial airlines, commercial vessels, and other transportation and delivery industries that “rely on GPS units they already have for tracking and efficiency.”

And oh, “The US military is in the good guy corner” too. As Hoehne puts it, “Yes, the very same military that brought us GPS in the first place isn’t just going to roll over and say ‘go ahead, make your zillions. We’ll get by.’”

Hoehne says, “I’m not certain we’ve heard the last of LightSquared, but I think we can all rest easy about our GPS units for the time being.”

I hope we’re safe for a good long time. Connie and I would be, as the saying goes, “lost” without our GPS.

Downward facing dog, stray dogs, & a new puppy: my venture into retirement

By Judy Kjellman



My first job out of college ended in 2005 after 37 years when I reluctantly retired from teaching biology at Yakima Valley Community College. My great fear was that I would be unable to adequately entertain myself as my children and grandchildren live far away and I would miss the routine and amusement provided by students and colleagues. Friends

laugh when I call myself a retiree because of my fre-

quent relapses—serving as interim Dean of Arts & Sciences and occasional part-time teaching.

Fear disappeared as retirement allowed an opportunity to participate in new activities and make new acquaintances. Exploring 15 countries on six trips between 2003 and 2011 with a local travel group has been the highlight. Fellow travelers have become close friends as we experience different cultures together. Never in a million years did I expect to share lunch with stray dogs after floating the Peruvian Urubamba River; hike the Inca Trail; spend hours watching an elephant herd at a watering hole; join singing and dancing students at a Namibian school; see a lion with a dead baby giraffe on safari at Kruger National Park; learn first hand what happened in Soweto in the 1970s; walk the end of the silk road at Ephesus, Turkey; run the track at the stadium in Olympia, Greece; snorkel a Brazilian river with crocodiles and piranhas; watch monkeys scampering around the ancient Angkor Wat temples; and participate in giving alms to monks in Laos.

Closer to home, volunteering has allowed me to discover the Cowichan Canyon Conservancy, dedicated to preserving the shrub steppe in the canyon and to educating the community about its importance. Who could imagine that planting bunch grass, hacking away at invasive Scotch thistle, photographing native plants, and mentoring student projects would be so enjoyable? I’ve also worked as a Master Gardener trainee, transplanting thousands of seedlings for the annual plant sale and attempting to answer questions from the public at a local call-in clinic and at a booth in the Farmer’s Market.

An unexpected benefit of retirement has been weight loss. Teaching all day and grading papers evenings didn’t allow much opportunity for exercise classes or hiking with friends in the mountains. Yoga’s downward facing dog, weight lifting, and hiking are now a regular part of my week. Chasing a new puppy this spring should also help.

If there are other reluctant retirees out there, I say, just take the plunge!

(labor donated)

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