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We had a delightful annual meeting!

A small but attentive group of retirees attended the chapter's annual meeting on May 2 in Tukwila. AFT Washington President **Karen Strickland** gave an update on the activities of the organization, with special emphasis on the Solidarity Event scheduled for Friday and Saturday, May 16 and 17, in Seattle. AFT Washington Political Organizer **Kristin Elia** reported on the organization's efforts to educate and mobilize voters for the upcoming legislative elections, and **Rosemary Thurston** reported on the results of the chapter's recent membership survey (see below). The highlights of the meeting, however, were undoubtedly conversations among friends, delicious food arranged for by **Merrilee Miron**, and the performance of folksinger **Carl Allen**, who last performed for us at the annual meeting in 2009. Why, many of us even sang along, tentatively at first, but then with more gusto as he continued. The sun was even out.



Photo by Roger Carlstrom

Carl Allen

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Merrilee Miron, AFTWA Staff Liaison

Here are the results of our membership survey By Rosemary Thurston



The survey was sent out initially to 214 members for whom we had email addresses and a couple of executive board members in addition whose email addresses somehow weren't on the list. Thirty-six members responded, a 17% return.

The following is a summary of the responses:

Eighty-four percent wanted to stay in touch with other retirees, and 72% were actually able to be in touch.

Eighty-eight percent were interested in Educational Issues-- mostly Higher Education.



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A Union of Professionals

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National Issues were important too, with Social Security leading the way, followed by Medicare.

Respondents listed Income Inequality and Taxation as important areas of concern to them, followed by climate change and gun rights and gun violence.

Areas of concern for State issues were headed by higher education, followed by finding out what positions candidates running for election have taken.

Respondents indicated that they'd like to tap into available resources for retirement finances, and they were concerned about immigration and LGBT issues. Many expressed an interest in participating in and supporting Social Security and retirement systems and in just having fun. Nine members said they would be interested in a workshop devoted to how to "preserve your legacy." (See "SAVE THE DATE" note below.)

These results will give those of us on the executive board an idea of the direction in which we want to go in working on the goals set forth for the future.

We would like to hear from you, so take the opportunity to let us know what your thoughts are. Send an email to AFT Washington staff member **Merrilee Miron** (mmiron@aftwa.org), and she'll send your message on to us. If you haven't yet taken the survey but would like to, here is the link: <http://www.quia.com/sv/660415.html>.

Politics in Brief By Mary Hale, Treasurer



This year AFT Washington received 90 questionnaires from state legislative candidates seeking a 2014 campaign endorsement. Of those received, we endorsed 62. From

those 62, the Committee for Political Education (COPE) and the Executive Board approved contributions to 32 candidates for their primary election campaigns. Through a new political action program ("Labor's Voice"), we will be working during the 2014 election period with the Washington State Labor Council and all of its affiliates to communicate, not only with our union members, but with the general public as well (a departure from previous "Labor Neighbor" election efforts).

Please consider making a contribution to AFT Washington COPE, 625 Andover Park West, Suite 111, Tukwila, WA 98188. Voluntary COPE contributions support the election/re-election campaigns of our endorsed state legislative candidates. Four-thousand dollars of our available COPE funds this year are being held in reserve for possible contributions to state-wide ballot issues (support or opposition).

SAVE THE DATE!

**An Interactive Workshop on
How to Save, Show, and Share Your Personal Legacy
October 21, 2014, 12:30 to 2:30 p.m.
Details will be coming soon!**



Remarkable progress on the Social Security front By Robby Stern, PSARA President

Ed. note: The following article is the first part of a two-part article appearing in the May 2014 issue of The Retiree Advocate (page 3) under the title "Remarkable Things." The excerpt, with a new title, is reproduced here with Robby's permission. To read the entire article, go to <http://psara.org/2014/05/01/remarkable-things/>.



Photo by Garet Murrer

Supporters of strengthening Social Security have hit a milestone. More than half of all Democrats in the U. S. House of Representatives are now co-sponsoring H.R. 1318, the

Strengthening Social Security Act.

According to the national Social Security Works Coalition in Washington D.C., for years the supposed "serious people" in D.C. were promoting cuts to Social Security. President Obama proposed cuts to Social Security including the nefarious chained CPI. The "Cat Food Commission," led by corporate Democrat Erskine Bowles and notorious Republican right winger Alan Simpson, were promoting cuts to Social Security as a way to eliminate the deficit despite Social Security having no relation to the deficit.

But as Sen. Tom Harkin, original co-sponsor of the Strengthening Social Security Act in the Senate, said: "the serious people are seriously out of touch."

The Strengthening Social Security Act was

introduced in the Senate by Senator Harkin and in the House by Rep. Linda Sanchez. S.B. 567 and H.R. 3118 would modestly increase Social Security benefits; apply a different cost of living formula, the CPI-E (i.e. the Consumer Price Index for the Elderly) and allow the program to pay the enhanced benefits by gradually scrapping the cap on Social Security taxes. The cap unfairly favors the top 5% of income earners who are above the cap and therefore do not pay their fair share into the Social Security system.

Now more than half the Democrats in the House, including Washington Representatives Jim McDermott, Adam Smith and Rick Larsen, have signed as co-sponsors of H.R. 3118, indicating they support these changes in our Social Security system. The number of supporters has grown, and we will work to make the numbers continue to increase. The 2014 election is an opportunity to seek the support of Representatives DelBene, Kilmer and Heck and our two U.S. Senators. We also do not plan to ignore the Republican representatives even though they just voted, again, for Rep. Ryan's budget that would cut both Social Security and Medicare while protecting and expanding tax cuts for corporations and wealthy individuals.

We know that strengthening Social Security by increasing benefits and scrapping the cap is good policy and smart politics in any district in the country. It is time for the rest of our congressional delegation to co-sponsor and support strengthening Social Security, requiring those earning over the cap to pay the same percentage of income that all the rest of the working population pays into our Social Security program.



Land mines in the presidential electoral college landscape By Burt Weston



Photo by Darlene Weston

I like analyzing events numerically to see what truths I can glean from the numbers to compare against the verbal hype. One such event is the Electoral

College vote. One strong objection to the Electoral College is that it allows the election of a candidate who loses the popular vote.

LAND MINE 1

In 1911, Congress froze the number of congressional seats at 435. With each census the 435 seats are reapportioned among the states. States with increased population get additional seats and electoral votes (ELV). States with decreases get fewer. Since 1982, Washington's ELV increased from 10 to 12. Overall, Republican states increased by 11 while Democratic states lost 18. "God willing and the creek don't rise," I will be around to see if this trend continues after the 2020 census.

LAND MINE 2

Presently, 48 states allocate their ELV by winner take all (WTA). Nebraska and Maine use the Congressional District Method (CDM). The CDM allocates the 2 senatorial votes by WTA. The representative votes are allocated by congressional district winners. If Washington used CDM, **President Obama** would have won 9 (instead of 12) and **Romney** 3.

With the Congressional District Method, Democrats would have an opportunity to win votes in Republican states and Republicans

an opportunity to win votes in Democratic states. The unstated assumption being it would be a wash.

Logically, since a state's Electoral Votes would be split, it should more closely match the state's popular vote; therefore, if all states used CDM, the Electoral Vote should more closely match the national popular vote.

2000

Al Gore won the popular vote by 0.5% but **George Bush** won the winner-take-all vote by 1%. If CDM is better at matching the Electoral Vote, the popular vote then, at a minimum, should be less than 1%. Or better, it should have reversed the outcome. In fact, Bush won by 11.7%.

2004

President Bush won the popular vote by 2.0% and the winner-take-all vote by 6.5%. With CDM, Bush would have won by 18.4%. (which would have been an 11.9% easier win for Republicans.)

2008

Barack Obama won the popular vote by 7.3% and the winner-take-all vote by 35.6%. With CDM, Obama would have only won by 12.4% (a 23.2% harder win for Democrats).

2012

President Obama won the popular vote by 3.8% and the winner-take-all vote by 23.4%. With CDM, *Mitt Romney* would have WON by 1.9% (a 25.3% harder win for Democrats).

Clearly, switching to the Congressional District Method would be an advantage for Republicans (easier wins 10.7%, 11.9%, overturn loss) and a distinct disadvantage for Democrats (harder wins, negative 23.2%; negative 25.2%, overturn win).

Clearly, the Congressional District Method would not more closely match the popular vote.

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A Union of Professionals

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Winner-Take-All has only elected the loser of the popular vote three times in the last 45 presidential elections. The Congressional District Method would have elected two (2) in the last four (4) elections.

Burt Weston retired from Shoreline Community College in 2000, after 32 years of teaching classes in a two-year electronics technician vocational program, in computer education, and in math.

Of spies, the CIA, and intelligence history By Ruth McCormick



A few years ago, I attended a conference in Oxford about Intelligence work, focused on WW2, the European theatre. It was an exciting conference, as most of the speakers were active in intelligence work or were

former spies. One of the more interesting speakers was a KGB officer who had defected during the war and was now living in London. I also enjoyed the older women who had done underground work, some in Russia, some in Africa.

My favorite part was the trip to Bletchley Park, the secret decoding center. It was here where many English women worked in secret. Even their families did not know what they were doing when they went to work. After the war, **Churchill** referred to them as the "geese that never cackled."

It was my privilege to meet **Mavis Bately**, an elderly woman who had been very successful in decoding an important message that prevented the Italians from sinking one of the British ships. Her work in decoding was extraordinary. And it was my privilege to share dinner with her at Christ

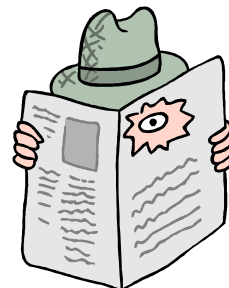
Church College. I enjoyed her British sense of humor and her more current interests in the history of English Gardens. Sadly, she died a year ago. She left behind several books and a rich history of her work in WW2.

This was all brought to my mind again when the Pacific Science Center recently opened the exhibit on Spies and the CIA. The exhibition traces the history of intelligence work throughout the years, primarily by the CIA. Lots of spy gadgets and tools, hidden meeting places for "drops," and information on some of the infamous spies who often were double agents. They also have an Enigma machine, a prototype of the first computer.

One of the fun follow ups to this experience was a ham radio operator in Illinois, who decided to send me a message via short wave radio. He put it on a national network of radio operators and a man in Olympia, WA, got it and called me. When I told some friends at a senior center, one woman asked, "Doesn't he know about the internet?"

Go see the fun Spy exhibit at the Seattle Science Center. It will be there until Sept. 1, 2014.

Ruth McCormick joined the faculty at Edmonds Community College in 1974. Her assignment was to develop a program for returning women students, counseling and teaching. The most successful venture was a program called Access, which united returning women students with faculty in English and math. The students made their selection on the basis of which subject met their needs. These blocks of students stayed together in their course of study and received additional support from the faculty. She retired in 1994.





Living with Alzheimer's disease (Some thoughts from a caregiver)

By Mary Hale



Photo by Tom Palata

When my husband **Don** was diagnosed as suffering from Alzheimer's disease three+ years ago, at age 73, we decided to be up-front and open about his diagnosis. For the most part, Alzheimer's is still considered to be an embarrassment, not something to be discussed, and is often still the butt of jokes.

At least for us, our disclosure decision has been the right decision. For the most part, our family, friends, and close acquaintances have rallied around, offering support and understanding. Some have also decided to learn more about this disease that now afflicts millions of elderly Americans, as well as some much younger (Early Onset Alzheimer's).

Don began to have some signs of out-of-the-ordinary memory loss in 2007, as well as difficulty handling our family finances. As is very common, he and I chose to ascribe both to the "normal aging process" and his life-long propensity as an absent-minded professor. Denial, denial, denial – so comforting initially! And so, we **may** have lost some years when medications **may** have slowed down the progress of this disease. (There are currently only two medications available that **may** slow down the

progress of Alzheimer's; however, the disease is inevitably degenerative, progressive, and fatal.)

We are now seven years beyond discernible (in retrospect) signs of the disease's onset (but Alzheimer's would have begun its ugly and brain-destructive process before that). Don is "Still Don" in some ways but now lacks his former brilliance and a number of cognitive skills that this terrible disease has deprived him of.

I write, in part, to urge you to

- Consult with a dementia/ Alzheimer specialist or memory-loss clinic right away if your loved one shows signs of out-of-the-ordinary short-term memory loss or confusion (early signs of Alzheimer's). A gerontologist may or may not have the skills needed to diagnose Alzheimer's, and so I recommend consulting specialists.
- Consult with an attorney to make sure that various documents are in place: powers of attorney, will, physician's instructions, asset shielding, etc.
- Contact the Alzheimer's Association for available resources, including the sites and times of care-giver meetings. Also consider getting additional help from a knowledgeable Alzheimer's counselor to guide and support you through Alzheimer's long journey.
- Read as much as you can about Alzheimer's. (I'd be happy to send you a list of books that have been particularly helpful to me: hale50047@msn.com).
- Be open and up-front with others about an Alzheimer's diagnosis.

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About Don Hale

- U.S. Navy veteran (1959)
- Bachelor's degree in history and political science and U. of W. Law degree, 1965
- Chief Deputy Prosecuting Attorney for Snohomish County for a number of years
- Corporation Counsel for the Snohomish County PUD for some years
- Member, Board of Trustees, Everett Community College
- An executive director for the City of Everett and then director for the Everett Arena project
- Father of two and grandfather of two
- Community activist, and
- Mary's husband.

—MH

What I feel like doing today By Rachael Levine



The question "what do you feel like doing?" whether asked of another person or of oneself is one of the challenges of "retirement." Since retiring from teaching at SCCC 23 years ago, I have visited this

question many times. Opportunities presented themselves, as in becoming a volunteer CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocate), or slipped away, as in never taking that Machu Picchu hike. Now, I see those juxtaposed activities as clues to my real nature. I loved the endless possibilities of new learning, which my 16 years of going to court with troubled children and families certainly provided. The imagined challenges of

climbing in Peru were to be slowly replaced by the here and now demands of caring for grandchildren, a home with a large yard, and becoming part of what was happening in my neighborhood's four-mile radius.

During my retirement years, I quite literally have turned to my back yard and by extension my immediate community. There was the need to help save the Evergreen swimming pool, built with Forward Thrust funding. Saving it from closure required getting to know more people and their problems, whether it be veterans who had no place to go at that time for water therapy (Kayaks were put into the pool at times to calm those with PTSD) or respecting the needs of Muslim women to have a "women only" swim time. With the help of our elected officials, we forged a public/private partnership to keep the pool open.

Along the way, the people who had worked on this pool project became those who would help thwart the King County Library System's plan to consolidate the White Center and Boulevard Park libraries. This plan would have greatly limited foot and bicycle access for kids in these neighborhoods.

In 2004 we had voted for expansion and improvements of both libraries. The KCLS consolidation plan was unacceptable and demanded vigorous response. Many trips to the Issaquah KCLS headquarters, many letters to elected officials, and years later, we are still at meetings. We have not been alone. Others have had serious concerns about how this powerful system moved away from listening to the needs and aspirations of neighborhoods that libraries were meant to serve.

Today (June 23), I am celebrating birthday #82.

What do I feel like doing today?

I feel like living in the "present" (which includes my past), and so I shall. Does that make sense?

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Rachael Levine is a frequent contributor to this newsletter.

The NRA takes holy orders **By Marcia Barton**



I was once given a tea towel, meant, I imagine, for a guest suite, since it contains St. Benedict's rule of monastic hospitality: visitors are welcome.

The saint even allows for a visitor to point out flaws in the community's conduct,

provided he does so *"reasonably and with the humility of charity."*

But there are limits; if the visitor is disruptive and *"contumacious,"* he must go. If he resists, the saint says, *"let two stout monks, in the name of God, explain the matter to him."* The accompanying illustration shows two burly men escorting a struggling visitor off the premises.

The tea towel, framed, is still with me, and the prescription for bumptious behavior has entered my family's language. We need only to invoke "two stout monks" or say that someone must "explain the matter" to indicate that patience is subdued and plain speaking and action are called for.

Recently, I have felt that, leaving aside ordinary small irritants that plague personal life, two stout monks could hardly be sufficient to address all the public instances of rude utterances and disturbing behavior contained in a single day's news summary. One outrageous example follows another, until the spirit rebels, the brain threatens meltdown, and the only available relief is the Mute button.

A constant source of aggravation has been the guerilla theater tactics of Open Carry enthusiasts. The spectacle of sizable groups of heavily armed people trooping into chain restaurants, asking to be seated among families with young children and other patrons, seems to me indisputably threatening. The explanation offered by one participant, that the aim was to accustom the public to the presence of loaded assault weapons in their midst, is simply surreal, as if the ideal environment were a war zone.

What a pleasure, then, to hear that last week (June 2 or 3), the NRA rebuked the participants, calling their tactics "weird" and conceding that even patrons previously open-minded about gun control might find them distasteful.

Petitions, chiefly from Moms Demand Action, to the restaurants in question have had their effect. The threat to the companies' bottom lines have been sufficiently clear that national chains have politely asked patrons to leave their firepower outside. Evidently the same calculation—fear of diminished support—influenced the NRA to ask the Open Carry enthusiasts to observe a little decorum.

I'd never have imagined the gun lobby in the role of my beloved stout monks, but in this case, they seem to have explained the matter with admirable clarity.

(Ed. note: A day after criticizing the indecorous behavior of these Open-Carry zealots, the NRA issued a retraction. Somewhere, two stout monks wept, as did many of the rest of us.)

Marcia Barton is a frequent contributor to this newsletter.



Speech & privacy too private to be protected?

By Roger Carlstrom, Editor



In late April, a very good friend and I exchanged emails about **Donald Sterling**, the owner of the LA Clippers, whose cell-phone conversation with his girlfriend was secretly recorded.

Sterling had told her not to bring black people to the team’s games and disparaged **Magic Johnson** because of his race. Before the NBA barred Sterling for life from any of its activities and demanded that he sell the team and fined him \$250 million for his remarks, my friend asked, “Can you really be penalized for such remarks when they are picked up by a snooping microphone? What if he’d said them in a bugged bedroom? I’m sorry; I can’t join in the finger-wagging.”

Subsequently, he referred me to a *New York Times* letter to the editor by a **David L. Brown** (April 30), who argued that notwithstanding the repugnance of Sterling’s remarks, “they were uttered in a private conversation. To hold him publicly culpable for private remarks violates his rights to free speech, privacy and association.”

That got me thinking about “rights” and whether there has to be some nexus between our conduct and the conduct of the state. Because this was an entirely private affair and because no governmental action was involved, was there any “right” to free speech at all?

A little search-engine work regarding the source of “rights” led me to **Alan Dershowitz’s** 2004 book, *Rights from Wrongs: A Secular Theory of the Origins of Rights*. There, I found a discussion of the 2000 case where Major League Baseball

suspended a pitcher named **John Rocker** for “making bigoted remarks in an interview” (176). Dershowitz describes the First Amendment as “a restriction on government power, not a right to say anything without fear of all consequences” (emphasis added). The Amendment “says nothing about the power of private employers, universities or sports leagues to censor or punish speakers who express views with which they disagree” (177).

It seems clear that Sterling did not consent to the recording. Was his “right” to privacy thus violated? I’d guess “no,” because the NBA, not a government, has exercised its power against him. I’d guess the NBA hasn’t granted him a “right to privacy.”

Sterling intends to sue the NBA because “my rights to privacy and the preservation of my rights to due process should not be trampled” (*Seattle Times*, June 10, C2).

I don’t think he’ll win.





How I joined the union

By **Ross Rieder, President**



On the Tuesday after Labor Day, 1962, I began what a couple future teacher friends called the Ed Biz. At that point, my father was in his 32nd year of teaching junior high students – 30 of those

years in Yakima.

Earlier in the 1960s, my brother, ten years my elder, had helped charter an AFT local at Cappuchinoa High School in San Bruno, CA.

AFT was “big” education news in the late 1950s and early 1960s. Local 1, of course, had, I believe, chartered in 1916. Local 2 came along in the late 1950s. People like **Al Shanker** and **Dave Selden** had amalgamated a variety of NYC teacher organizations into one union called the United Federation of Teachers, Local 2, AFT.

I read articles in *The Saturday Review* by **John Ciardi**, editor, about the revolutionary union. Ciardi seemed to prefer AFT Local 2 as a great option to the older NEA organization, often viewed as dominated by school administration.

Our parents considered the NEA more “professional.”

Back in Everett in 1962, I discovered there was already an AFT local as well as an education association. Everett 772 was chartered in 1943 and had equal pay for women teachers as its *raison d’etre*.

Being of “fair mind” (a stage I went through), I attended meetings of both organizations. I even was prepared to pay dues to both.

The AFT held its dinner meetings in an Everett Buffet Restaurant.

The EEA held its meetings in the same room as the Everett School Board. At one point during the first meeting I attended, the superintendent of schools wandered in, looking surprised to see us. He said “hello” and walked out.

I felt a great tightening of neck muscles, shoulders, mouths – any spontaneity disappeared from the tone of the meeting.

I was shocked also. My parents taught me a certain and, I think, proper disrespect for certain authority and being looked at as underclass.

I left the meeting, walked across the large central room in the middle of this old elementary school, reborn as the Everett School District Administration Building. I found the right person to take my request that the payroll office not take any more dues out of my \$252 take-home salary for that organization.

Now, I recognize that things have changed a lot in the Ed Biz organizations in the past fifty years, but that’s my story . . . and I’m sticking to it.

Ed. note: Ross Rieder was president of Everett Federation of Teachers, Local 772, from 1964 until 1968, and served as president of the Washington State Federation of Teachers from 1968 until 1975. He is, of course, now president of this chapter, and has been since October of 2009.



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