



President's Message

It has been a whirlwind of things over the summer and the fall is more of the same! The Retiree Chapter Board is beginning to plan next year's Biennial Meeting. We will elect new officers to the board and set goals for the next two years, and we need you to participate! If you are interested in being kept up to date on planning, contact Cortney Marabetta at cmarabetta@aftwa.org. Obviously we will reach out to all members as we get closer to the date, so this is not your only way of learning more, but we like to make sure this is an event all our members want to be part of, so let us know what you're thinking about.

We are facing another serious election. The chapter board urges you to get out the vote in the ways you can. Talk to your friends and family, and if you know anyone who needs to register to vote, there is a lot of information about registration on the AFT Washington website. Just look for Endorsements And Elections under the Advocacy menu item. Washington state makes it very easy to register and to vote, and we want everyone's voices to be heard. If you are interested in helping register people to vote, AFT Washington is putting together some materials to help. Reach out to Richard Burton at rburton@aftwa.org for more information.

Finally, the chapter board wants to extend our congratulations to Susan Levy, who was awarded the 2024 Retiree Advocate Senior Champion Award by WSARA! We agree with WSARA that Susan's strong voice for retirees is worth celebrating – join us in congratulating her!

Enjoy your Autumn Season!

Merrilee Miron, Chapter President

In Memoriam: Al Brisbois, Former WFT President

By Joanne Marcoe

Alfred LeRoy Brisbois, a Spokane Indian Tribal member, was born on 8/24/32 to Bertha Finley and Nazaire Richard Brisbois of Fruitland, WA. Al passed away at home in Tacoma, WA on 7/26/24 from COVID-19 complications. He was buried on 8/2/24 in LaFleur Cemetery on his Rez at Fruitland, WA.

Al graduated from Columbia High School in 1949 in Hunters, Washington. He received his teaching certificate from Eastern Washington University in 1957 and his Master's degree in geography from Oregon State University in 1959. He served in the Navy and was stationed on Tacoma's Foss Waterway as a tugboat pilot during the Korean War, from 1951 to 1955.

His wife, Joanne Marcoe, cherishes the time they had in their 40-some years together. They gave lots of time to understanding one another and worked on finding a balance between each other's independence and providing mutual support when needed. The most touching thing he ever said to her was that he was happy in his life with her, saying he loved the home she had created for him.

He saw things through a prism of service to others. He employed this prism as a teacher, a labor-union leader, and a community activist. He loved his family-man roles and just being a good neighbor. His friendliness was his super power; and it was infectious, as he made each person feel seen and acknowledged. Age did not close his mind. Instead, he strove to avoid narrow

mindedness and add inclusivity to any encounter. His mind remained sharp to the end.

Al was well known in the AA community, which helped him to grow personally and spiritually. He loved this community, and his 43 years of sobriety was an inspiration to many. These connections encouraged acceptance, in service of the greater good of health and healing that comes one step at a time, something we all can live by.

He was also known for his great athletic life, including biking from Orcas Island to San Francisco and his ride to the Continental Divide in Montana. His graceful athleticism was always apparent the minute he touched any type of ball, especially a baseball. At one time, in fact, he actually signed with the minor-league Spokane Indians baseball club, but he wasn't able to play because the franchise folded.

Al's daily walks on the waterfront at Pt. Ruston filled in the boring pandemic years, when he got to chat with many new people and their dogs.

Al loved teaching and referred to it as a "noble profession." He was inspired by his mother's advocacy for education on the Reservation. He taught at Mason Junior High School in the Tacoma School District from 1958 to 1975, and became active in the Tacoma Federation of Teachers, Local 461, of which he served as president, from 1966 to 1977. He was president of the Washington Federation of Teachers from 1975 to 1985, and was secretary treasurer of the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO, from 1985 to 1993. He and Joanne subsequently moved to Orcas Island, where he was Athletic Director and a substitute teacher at the high

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school from 1997 to 2002.

They then returned to home base Tacoma, where both their families lived. Al continued to substitute teach in the Tacoma district from 2003 all the way until the day the pandemic shut down the schools in 2020. By then, Al was nearly 88 years old and had dedicated a total of 38 years as a “noble teacher.”

He also was a member of the Eastern Washington University Board of Trustees, from 1990 to 1997. In that time, Al was able to pull together a dynamic connection between EWU president Mark Drummond and the Spokane Tribe’s Salish Language creator and instructor, Pauline Flett. This led to the addition of that language to the university’s curriculum. Additionally Al established the Bertha Finley Brisbois Memorial Scholarship in the College of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics at EWU.

This scholarship is intended to provide full tuition and book scholarships to Spokane Tribal Members majoring in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics at EWU. What an advocate Al was for equal rights, be they worker rights, women’s rights, gay rights, civil rights, tribal rights, and especially voting rights. Al taught people that our single voices to vote could join with others to give strength to those less powerful. He wanted badly to vote in the upcoming general election, so please be inspired to get out and vote this November.

Al is survived by his wife of 39 years, Joanne Marcoe, as well as his six children from a former marriage with Jane McIntire Brisbois: Patty, Don (Arsenia Yucker), Kate, Sheila Price

(Scott), Rich, Tom (Shannon); ten grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. He was very deeply loved, by both the Marcoe and the Brisbois families along with his multitude of friends.

In lieu of flowers please consider donations in Al’s name to the Bertha Finley Brisbois Scholarship, in care of EWU Foundation, 102 Hargreaves Hall, 616 Study Lane, Cheney, WA 99004.

A Memorial for Al will be held on Saturday, 10/19/24 at VFW Hall, 4741 N. Baltimore St., Tacoma, WA, from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Please come to this ceremony and share your thoughts as we say goodbye to a wonderful man who was, as Dode Newbill says, “a buddy to everyone.”

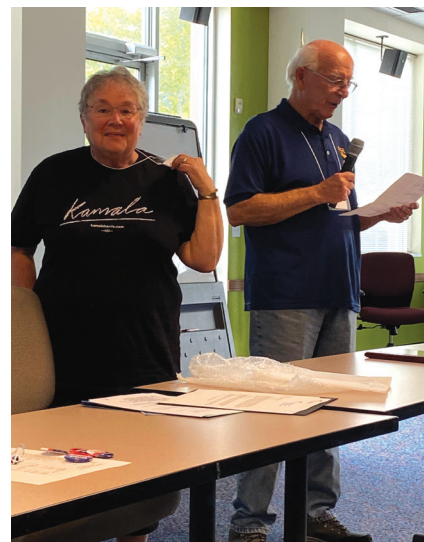


Photo by Roger Carlstrom

WSARA Senior Champion Award Conferred To Susan Levy

At the 2024 WSARA convention, held on September 10th, Retiree Chapter Director Susan Levy received the WSARA Senior Champion Award for her long and powerful tenure as an advocate for retirees. Jackie Boschok, WSARA President, noted that Susan is a founding member of the AFT Washington Retiree Chapter, and a founding member of the WSARA executive board when it was founded in 2001. The Senior Advocate award is given to any Washington resident who has contributed substantial time and effort to improving conditions for senior citizens within our state, and it is very hard to determine what Susan does that does not meet this requirement! Susan is active in multiple retiree-focused coalitions and is heavily involved with Social Security Works.

We appreciate Susan’s work for retirees, and are very pleased that WSARA recognizes her efforts. Congratulations, Susan!



Steve Kofahl presents Susan Levy with the WSARA Senior Champion Award. Photo by Karen Strickland