

For Retired Club Members



The Best Years

City Retiree Associations:

DWP Retirees Association



Dolores Foley, President
Phone: (626) 445-7376
E-mail: vinmar@altrinet.com

Los Angeles Retired Fire and Police Association



James Chastain, President
Phone: (323) 283-4441
Fax: (626) 285-1461
E-mail: larfpa@pacbell.net or
9521 Las Tunas Dr. #4,
Temple City, CA 91780

Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI)



Ed Harding, RLACEI President
www.rlacei.com
Contact him: (805) 584-9417
or via E-mail:
postmaster@rlacei.com

Change of Address?

If you change your address, notify Helen Salgado, Membership Chair, at 323-728-4930, or write to her at 5423 Dewar St., Los Angeles, CA 90022. Also notify LACERS.

Have News About Yourself?

Contact Phil Skarin, 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910, or call (818) 784-0130.

RLACEI Executive Board Positions Up for Election

By Phil Skarin, RLACEI Publicity Chair



Ed Harding, RLACEI President, reports:

"I hope you will plan to attend our Annual Meeting and Elections Thursday, Oct. 12, at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Center. A free lunch will be served at noon, only if you have made reservations by calling one of the officers on the Retirees Helpline a week ahead. The meeting at 1 p.m. will have speakers who will bring you up to date on retirement benefits and health plans.

"Nominating Committee Chair Neil Ricci will present these nominations for the office of Director and our Executive Board: Ed Harding, Ken Spiker, Jerry Bardwell, Jack Mathews, Helen Salgado and David Wilkins, all of whom are incumbents. I wish to thank them all for the great service that they have accomplished during the past two years. Without them my job would be very difficult.

"Americo Garza, our Entertainment Chair, and I met with Tom Redditt, manager of the Grace E. Simons Lodge, and made reservations for our Christmas party Dec. 7. We will meet with the owner of Chris & Pitts to pick the menu for the meal.

"Be sure to call (800) 779-8328 to reserve for the LACERS Open Enrollment Fair at the L.A. Convention Center Oct. 25. Breakfast and lunch will be provided. Parking vouchers will be provided in RSVP packets.

"In September I planned to be at a Rotary Club district Safari in Bishop. Then I planned to visit my two daughters and son and their families in Minden, Nev., and then go to Lake Tahoe to visit my baby daughter and her husband. They really give me a great time and won't let me pay for anything. I have the best seven kids in the world. They give me 'a shot-in-the-arm' that helps to offset the shots I have been getting in my back."

"Special thanks go to Americo Garza, Picnic Chairman; Thomas Redditt, Simons Lodge Manager; and Ron Black, who provided the musical entertainment. Ron is available for parties (square dance). Call him at (818) 752-6810.

RLACEI Poetry Deadline Extended

The eleventh annual RLACEI Poetry Contest will award prizes totaling \$150 to the winners. The deadline has been extended to Nov. 1, any style, length or subject. Send a typewritten copy to Phil Skarin, 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910. There will be a separate category for members and spouses. Be sure to include your name, address and phone number.

RLACEI Website

Hal Danowitz asks you to visit the RLACEI Website at www.rlacei.com to find the latest retirement news. If you find it helpful, or have suggestions for improvement, call Hall at (310) 472-0224.

Moving?

RLACEI members: If you move, notify Helen Salgado, Membership Chair, at 5423 Dewar St., Los Angeles, CA 90012. Also notify LACERS and Alive!

"Our next event will be our Annual Corporation Meeting and Election of officers at 1 p.m. Oct. 12 at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Citizens Center. There will be a free lunch at noon. If you have called one of the officers a week ahead, you may bring one adult guest.

LACERS is having an Open Enrollment Retirement Fair at the L.A. Convention Center on October 25, details later in this article. Hal Danowitz, Neil Ricci and I will be there to hand out materials to those that plan to retire. If you are thinking of changing your health plan, be sure to attend the fair, they can help you. The open enrollment period is from Oct. 15 to Nov. 15.

Legislative Update:

Ken Spiker reports that the LACERS Benefits Administration Committee, which he chairs has, after five months of negotiations, finalized their report regarding the health Care Contracts effective Jan. 1.

The Committees report must still be approved by the LACERS Board of Administration. Ken hopes the Board will approve the report so that enrollment can begin Oct. 25.

Overall cost for all plans for 2007 are estimated to be increased 12.3 percent, or \$10 million. Unfortunately, increased co-pays for some offices visits (which haven't been adjusted for four or more years) and increased prescription co-pays (not adjusted for seven or more years) had to be accepted.

The Committee is recommending the following improvements:

- Increase the maximum Medicare subsidy from \$928 to \$983.
- Increase Blue Cross Dental maximum from \$1,000 to \$2,000.
- Increase Blue Cross PPO Inpatient Hospitalization out-of-network benefits from 70
- Reduce SCAN office visits co-pay from \$10 to \$5.
- Increase VSP visual frame allowance from \$120 to \$150, and contacts from \$105 to \$120.

Ken reports the plan submitted to the Board of Administration still compares very favorably with plans provided to LACERA (City active employees) and to PERS (State employees), and it's a better plan than any retiree plans he has seen.



Upcoming Events:

Oct. 2:

Second annual LAFD Historical Society Charity Golf Tournament. Look in the June and July issue of the Grapevine for the application. (LAFD)

Oct. 12:

Annual Meeting and Elections - Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Citizen Center: Lunch at noon, meeting at 1 p.m. (RLACEI)

Oct. 25:

LACERS Open Enrollment Fair

Dec. 7:

Christmas Party, Grace E. Simons Lodge (RLACEI)



Poetry Contest

The 11th Annual Retirees Poetry

Contest deadline is Nov. 1.

Send your typed entry to Phil Skarin. Separate categories for members and spouses. Everyone will win a prize.

The Best Years

ADVENTURES
with HAL!

The Grand Palace.

By Hal Danowitz,
Secretary, RLACEI

Retiree Hotlines

Who to call? Following is a list of contacts for RLACEI and for the DWP:

City Employees Retirement System: (213) 473-7200

RLACEI Retirement Counselors:

• Edward Harding	(805) 584-9417
• Phil Skarin	(818) 784-0130
• Robert Wilkinson	(818) 886-1000
• Jerry Bardwell	(818) 782-5568
• Harold Danowitz	(310) 472-0224
• Jack Mathews	(310) 762-1942
• Helen Salgado (membership)	(323) 728-4930
• Americo Garza	(562) 928-2051
• Neil Ricci	(310) 394-1971

DWP Retirement Plan Office: (213) 367-1722

RLACEI:**Officers for 2006**

Edward Harding, President
Robert Wilkinson, First Vice President
Kenneth Spiker, Second Vice President
Hal Danowitz, Secretary
Jerry Bardwell, Treasurer

Committee Chairpersons for 2006

Bob Wilkinson, Audit
Jerry Bardwell, Budget
David Wilkins, Bylaws
Ken Spiker, Legal and Legislative
Helen Salgado, Membership
Phil Skarin, Publicity
Tom Stemnock and Phil Skarin, Golf
Americo Garza, Picnic
Americo Garza, Holiday Party and Installation
Jack Mathews, Senior Citizens
Neil Ricci, Health
David Wilkins, Nominating
Neil Ricci, Special Needs for Retirees
Hal Danowitz, Parliamentarian

Directors

Thomas Stemnock
Americo Garza
Helen Salgado
Phil Skarin
Dave Wilkins
Jack Mathews
Neil Ricci



Bangkok, and Then Home



Hal and Evelyn in front of the Golden Buddha.

■ Hal and Co. say goodbye to Asia before heading home.

When we booked the cruise, we decided to spend time (three days) in Bangkok before flying home. After much discussion we decided to take the Shangri-La Hotel package, which included a three-night stay, plus transfers from the ship to the hotel and from the hotel to the airport. We could have also booked a tour package, but we decided to set that up on our own.

A couple of days before we docked, I e-mailed the concierge at the Shangri-La and asked for a quote on a half-day tour of Bangkok on the afternoon of our arrival. He booked us a private van tour to see the Grand Palace and Emerald Buddha; Wat Trimit, the Temple of the Gold Buddha; Wat Po, the Temple of the reclining Buddha; and Wat Benchamabopit, the Marble Temple. The tour would take about five hours, and the cost was quoted at \$50 per person. I found out later that Princess Cruises was charging more than \$100 per person for the same tour,



Boats to the Floating Market.

and you would be going with 40 of your closest friends.

We were one of the last groups to get off the ship, and the disembarkation was delayed because they couldn't account for all the passengers. The bus ride from the ship to the hotel was about one-and-a-half hours. We were welcomed at the hotel with cold drinks and cool towels and directed to a check-in room. We were lucky that we were first because they were not well organized. Evelyn and I were able to get our room, but the rooms for Effie and Pierre and Elaine and Lanny were not ready. We took all our carry-on luggage to our room, and just as we got there the phone rang to tell us that our guide was here.

Our English-speaking guide had an eight-passenger van with a driver. Bangkok or Krung Thep, which means the "City of Angels," was constructed in 1782 and is the capital of Thailand. The current population is approximately 10 million, and it's considered one of the biggest cities in the world.

Our first stop would be at the Golden Buddha, and driving there gave us a good understanding of the size of Bangkok, with lots of cars, motorbikes and bicycles set with a mixture of both old and new. It reminded me of Hong Kong 20 years ago.

The Sukhothai Traimit Golden Buddha image is the largest Buddha image in the world. It is made of pure gold and weighs almost five tons. The Buddha, more than 700 years old, was at one time completely covered with plaster to conceal it from invading enemies. It wasn't until 1955 that it was discovered it was made of pure gold.

The Grand Palace is the former home of the royal Siamese court and is on the banks of the Chao Phraya River. The whole area is surrounded by a large white wall and has an area of 1.5 kilometers. To enter the grounds, women must cover their bare shoulders and legs. We have

been a lot of places, but this was one of the most impressive groups of building I have ever seen. The buildings were covered with gold and jewels and carved art relief. Each building was more intricate and beautiful than the last one. The royal chapel contained the Emerald Buddha. To enter the chapel we needed to remove our shoes, and we were not allowed to take any pictures inside the chapel. Our last stop in the palace complex was the Temple of the Reclining

Buddha, built in 1688. It may seem that we are seeing a lot of temples, and you would be right – 94 percent of Thailand is Buddhist, and everyone seems to have their own temple.



The Jim Thompson House.

It had been raining on and off most of the day, and on the way back to our hotel the rain stopped and the sun came out. On the ride back our guide asked if we wanted to go to the Floating Market the next day, and we decided to book him for the day.

Our hotel was on the Chao Phraya River in a mixed retail and residential area. We had some time before dinner to walk around the area and visit the many shops selling local goods. There were a number of tailors where you could get two suits, a sport jacket, two pairs of pants and three shirts for under \$500, all made in a few hours and to your measurements.



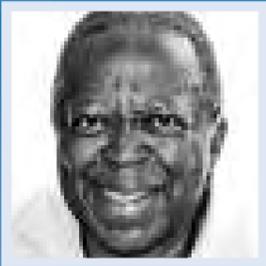
Shopping at the Floating Market.

We asked the hotel to suggest a restaurant for dinner, and they gave us directions to one that was about six blocks from the hotel. It took us a while, but we found the Harmonique Restaurant in an alley behind (what else) a temple. It looked like a converted house, with a number of dining areas. Most of the patrons were tourists, and we were concerned about the quality of the food. We had nothing to worry about. We had the owner order for us and we had a great meal. With a few beers each and dessert, the cost

Retiree Question of the Month

Alive! asked retirees...

What was your best Halloween costume?



"Myself."
- Reginald Foster, Planning.



"A headless person."
- Bill Turner, Street Maintenance.



"A pirate."
- Art Almeraz, Engineering.



"A hobo."
- David Port, General Services.



"A hippie. None of my co-workers recognized me."
- Harvey Ledesma, Building and Safety.

was about \$12 per person.

Every one of the locals whom we met were happy to help us, and we did a lot of walking in the area around the hotel and never felt threatened or afraid.

The next morning, our guide picked us up at the hotel and we drove the 50 miles to the Damnoen Saduak Floating Market. According to history, around 1866 King Rama IV ordered that a 19-mile-long canal be dug at Damnoen Saduak. The Floating Market allows tourists to see the old style and traditional way of selling and buying fruits, vegetables and other goods from small boats. To get to the market we boarded small boats and traveled up the canal, which allowed us to see traditional Thai houses along the canal. We were able to buy a lot of Thai handicrafts and local goods that were cheaper than in Bangkok. This is a tourist attraction that should not be missed.

After we left the market, our guide asked if we wanted to ride an elephant. Now Evelyn and I have done that in Africa, but she wanted to do it, so she and Elaine took the ride. It



The Night Market.



lasted only about 20 minutes, and they almost ended up falling off into the water.

Our last stop was a teak furniture factory. This was strictly a tourist place, and they had beautiful teak furniture and art items. We could not resist, and we all bought something. We picked a traditional Thai welcoming statue, which we had shipped home. It now greets visitors in our entry hall.

Our guide dropped us back at our hotel, and we felt very lucky to have gotten him.

We had been told not to miss the Patpong night market, so we asked for directions from the hotel. We thought it was a lot closer than it was, and we must have walked about a mile before we found the market. The market has the same souvenirs, fake name-brand items and cheap clothes as in any tourist area in the city, but it is a fun place and you need to bargain hard to get a good price. It is about the length of a football field, with four rows of stalls; on both sides are regular shops and seedy bars. It was a fun place to spend the evening. We took a taxi back to the hotel (\$3) and ended up eating dinner in the hotel's Chinese's restaurant, which was very good.

On our last day in Bangkok, we wanted to visit the Jim Thompson Thai House. He was the founder of the Jim Thompson Thai Silk Company and was directly responsible for developing the silk industry in Thailand. In 1967, while on vacation in northern Malaysia, he disappeared. Because he was member of the OSS (precursor to the CIA) during World War II, there remains some suspicion about his disappearance.

The house consists of a complex of six traditional Thai-style houses completed in 1959



Elaine and Evelyn on the Elephant

and is furnished as it was when Thompson lived in it.

To get to the house we took a boat from our hotel (free) to a shopping complex down river and then hired a taxi to take us to the house. To keep the taxi price low we had to stop at a jewelry store where the tax driver would get a fee for bringing us. We walked through the store and almost bought something.

We returned to our hotel to pack. We needed to buy a suitcase to pack all the stuff we bought and then took the boat again to the shopping complex for dinner.

Our flight home left at 6 a.m., so we had to leave the hotel at 3 a.m. Security was very heavy at the airport; we had to open most of our bags, but we left on time. After a brief stop to change planes in Tokyo, we made it back home.

I really liked this cruise better than the one to northern Europe because of the different places that we saw. Both Evelyn and I loved Bangkok and can't wait to return.

RLACEI MEMBER NEWS:

Member News: **Norma Schuster** wrote to thank us for the publicity that enabled her to give her organ to a friend and resulted in many phone calls that gave her warm feelings. Phone: (310) 470-0803.

Sterling Buesch decided to help his wife celebrate their 54th wedding anniversary Sept. 6 by doing the grocery shopping for her. When he got the cart to his car to unload it, the cart was empty and the checker came out to him, wheeling the filled cart. They laughed about it. Then when he went home to tell his wife about it. Call Stu at (626) 446-6675 to find out about that.

Helen Wright makes gift baskets and floral arrangement for businesses. She is also working on her second book of poetry.

These members have written or phoned expressing appreciation for our efforts: **Mark Fuller, John Powell, Jane Hansen, Eli Merchat and Bob Okuda.** Thanks for your thanks!

If you have any news about a retiree that you would like to share, or constructive comments about this column, send them to: Phil Skarin 5301 Norwich Ave. Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910 or phone (818) 784-0130.



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Role Models

*We often adopt people we admire,
Who have many of the qualities we wish we had,
To be our Role Models.*

*But, by focusing our admiration
On others, we may be trying to divert attention
From our own presumed inadequacies.*

*We each have many good qualities
And potentials. If we focused more on developing
And improving them, then maybe someone will
Adopt you as their Role Model.*

- Phil Skarin, RLACEI

Reverse Mortgages For Senior Homeowners

You've worked hard to own your own home, now let it work for you!

- Receive monthly payments instead of making them
- Make no repayment of your loan as long as you live there
- Use the money for home repairs, health care, buying a car - whatever you choose!

Please call for a Reverse Mortgage Guide.



Jerry T. Cohen
Reverse Mortgage Consultant
818-947-7865 Direct • 818-631-1110 Cell
www.wfhm.com/jerry-cohen

*Must be at least 62 years old. Call for more detailed program information. Wells Fargo Home Mortgage is a division of Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. ©2006 Wells Fargo Bank, N.A. All rights reserved. #34029 2/16/06

