

For Retired Club Members



# The Best Years

## City Retiree Associations:

### DWP Retirees Association



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

### Los Angeles Retired Fire and Police Association



**Robin J. Welborn, 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: (800) 678-4145 Ext. 703  
or via E-mail:  
postmaster@rlacei.com

### Change of Address?

If you change your address, notify Helen Salgado, Membership Chair, at (800) 678-4145 Ext. 713, or write to her at 5423 Dewar St., Los Angeles, CA 90022. Also notify LACERS.

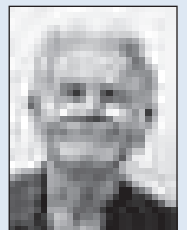
### Have News About Yourself?

Contact Phil Skarin, 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910, or call (800) 678-4145 Ext. 709.

## Upcoming Events:

- April 12: RLACEI General Membership Meeting, Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Center.
- June 6: RLACEI Golf Tournament
- June 6: Fire and Police Pensions Annual Picnic and Barbecue
- Aug. 9: RLACEI Picnic
- Oct. 11: RLACEI Annual Corporation Meeting and Elections
- Dec. 6: RLACEI Christmas Party

## RLACEI Joins Fire, Police In Spouse Ballot Measure



By Phil Skarin,  
RLACEI Publicity Chair

### President Ed Harding reports:



Ed Harding

"I recently created a special committee to look into obtaining benefits for the survivor when a retiree dies and he had married after his retirement. Committee members are Hal Danowitz, Chairman, and Neil Ricci, Jack Mathews and myself.

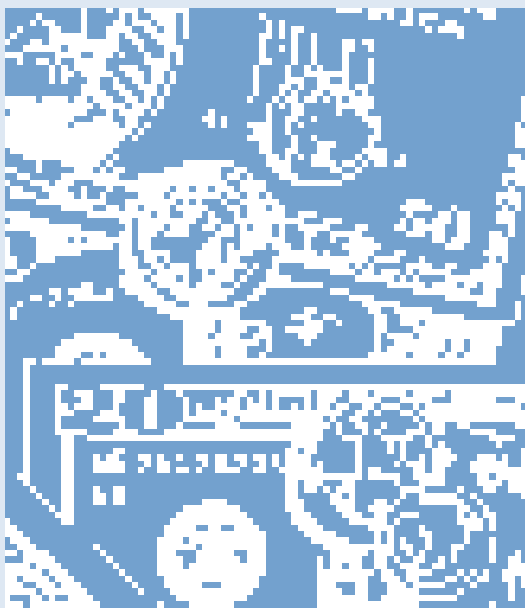
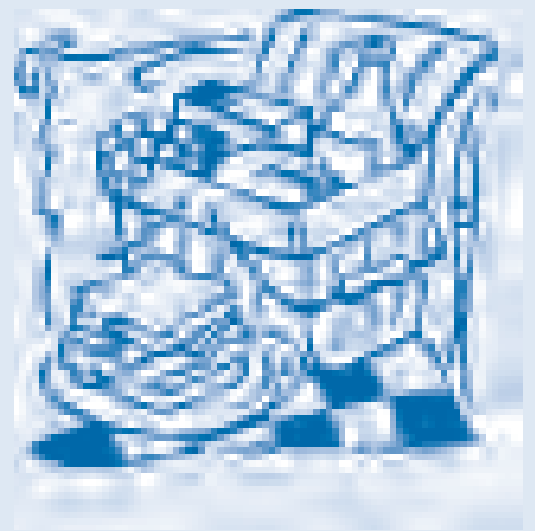
On March 8, this committee met with Lee Kebler, Director of the L.A. Retired Fire and Police Association. Kebler said that his association plans to have a charter amendment put on the ballot for the February 2008 State election. It will be titled Post Retirement Marriage Survivor Benefit Option.

Kebler said that they have no objection to our joining them on the ballot. Our special committee, with the help of Greg Spiker and Rick Tuttle, plans to go forward with this proposal.

Please call for reservations for lunch a week ahead of our April 12 membership meeting at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Center. A free lunch will be served at noon, followed by a 1 p.m. meeting. Call one of the officers on our toll-free 800 number. Reservations are essential to help us order enough meals!

The L.A. Fire and Police Retirees will be having their annual picnic and barbeque June 6 at the Grace E. Simons Lodge. They charge \$5 per person and always fill the lodge.

Our picnic will be Aug. 9 at the lodge, and we serve a free meal to those who have made a reservation. We can fill the lodge, too.



### Legislative Update:

Ken Spiker reports the LACERS Board of Administration unanimously approved the annual cost of living (COLA) adjustment at their Feb. 27 Board of Directors meeting.

The 2006 CPI increased by 4.3 percent, thereby proving for the maximum allowable adjustment of 3 percent, as well as 1.3 percent to be banked for all retired members.

The 3 percent adjustment will be effective July 1, 2007.

Some examples of the adjusted bank benefits as of July 1 are:

| Date of retirement:  | Adjusted back benefit: |
|----------------------|------------------------|
| Before July 1, 1978: | 28.1 percent           |
| May 1, 1980:         | 20.9 percent           |
| July 1, 1981         | 11.0 percent           |
| April 1, 1983        | 5.1percent             |
| June 1, 1985         | 4.5 percent            |
| July 1, 2001         | 3.1 percent            |

### 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 (800) 678-4145 Ext. 707.

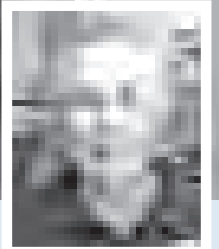
### Contact LACERS

The Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System is at 360 E. Second Street, second floor, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Phone (213) 473-7200 or (800) 779-8328. Contact them to arrange direct deposit of your retirement checks, change your tax withholding or beneficiary, or for questions about your health plans.

# The Best Years



The gang with the Mayor of Burnie, Tasmania.



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 and Retiree Helplines: (800) 678-4145**

|                              |          |
|------------------------------|----------|
| • Edward Harding             | Ext. 703 |
| • Phil Skarin                | Ext. 709 |
| • Robert Wilkinson           | Ext. 704 |
| • Jerry Bardwell             | Ext. 706 |
| • Harold Danowitz            | Ext. 707 |
| • Jack Mathews               | Ext. 712 |
| • Helen Salgado (membership) | Ext. 713 |
| • Americo Garza              | Ext. 710 |
| • Neil Ricci                 | Ext. 714 |

**DWP Retirement Plan Office:** (213) 367-1722

## RLACEI:

### Officers for 2007

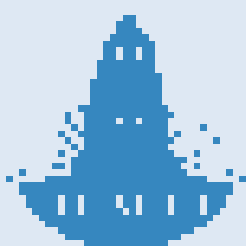
Edward Harding, President  
Robert Wilkinson, First Vice President  
Kenneth Spiker, Second Vice President  
Hal Danowitz, Bylaws  
Jerry Bardwell, Treasurer

### Committee Chairpersons for 2007

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, Nominating  
Phil Skarin, Parliamentarian

### Directors

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



# Down Under, the Cruise Begins

■ Hal and entourage begin their cruise over rough waters.

Our travel group -- Myrna, Don, Pierre, Effie and Evelyn and I -- completed our two-night stay in Sydney, Australia, and prepared to board Holland-America's *MS Statendam* for a 14-day cruise from Sydney to Auckland, New Zealand.

The ship was docked at Circular Quay (pronounced key), a short cab ride from our hotel. The check-in process proceeded smoothly as we had submitted all of our documentation on-line prior to leaving Los Angeles.

The *MS Statendam* is the sister ship of the *MS Rydam*, upon which we sailed around South America, so we were familiar with the layout of the ship. The ship weighs about 56,000 tons and is 720 feet long, carrying 1,258 passengers and a crew of 557, with a maximum speed of 22 knots. The ship was renovated in the spring of 2005, which updated its staterooms and public areas.

We boarded before noon and had lunch in the Lido Buffet while we waited for the crew to finish preparing the cabins. We booked a verandah suite, which had a queen-size bed, whirlpool bath and shower combo, a seating area, mini-bar, refrigerator, a flat-panel TV and lots of closets, which we needed. We found our cabin and met our room steward, who turned out to be excellent. He had found our luggage and we were able to unpack.

On this trip we brought a laptop, and I went to the Explorations Café to sign up for



Effie, Don, Myrna and Evelyn in the Gunns Plains Caves.

the wireless Internet service. The cost for 250 minutes was \$100 US, and because I booked the first day we got an extra 20 minutes free. I liked the fact that they had a number of hot spots around the ship, and Evelyn used the computer to keep in touch with her office. While we were docked in the harbor, I was able to use the free wireless network, compliments of a coffee house next to the ship.

After the mandatory 5 p.m. lifeboat drill, we all met in the Crow's Nest for cocktails and to watch the ship sail out of Sydney Harbor.

Holland-America has the traditional cruise food service, with the Rotterdam Dining room, Lido Buffet, a Lido Deck grill, and one specialty (\$30 per person) restaurant, the Pinnacle Grill. All dining is open seating, except for dinner in the Rotterdam Dining room and lunch and dinner in the Pinnacle Grill. There were four seatings in the Rotterdam, and ours was at 8 p.m.

In general, the food and the service in the dining room were very good; the Lido food was fair but the service was poor. I enjoyed the hamburgers at the Lido Grill, and the bar service was as good. I thought that supervision of the ship's food service was lacking everywhere except in the dining room.

After dinner we went to the Welcome Aboard show where the staff was introduced, and then there was a show. Overall I liked the ship's entertainment, which offered a variety of production shows, singers, comedians and

specialty acts.

Our first day at sea was spent sailing toward our next port, Geelong, Australia. When I booked the cruise, the port was to be Melbourne, but about six weeks before we were to leave I got a notice that we were stopping instead at Geelong, about an hour's drive from Melbourne. We had not booked any tours on the ship. I used the Internet to book some tours, and in other ports we used the local tour guides. So we had no way of getting into Melbourne. The ship offered a \$40 bus ride, but when we tried to book it we told it was sold-out. We were a little upset, but we decided to spend our day in Geelong.

Sailing towards Geelong, the sea was calm, with temperatures in the low 70s. We awoke early and used the gym and then met everyone for breakfast in the Lido. After breakfast, I checked the Internet and Evelyn attended a cooking demonstration. After lunch we played team trivia, where we were beaten badly. Evelyn went off to check her e-mail, and Pierre and I attended a lecture on World War II battles given by a former Australian General.

The ship spent a lot of time reminding us that shipboard illness is a concern, and they have Purell dispensers all over the ship for cleaning your hands. The new etiquette is that you don't shake hands.

Tonight is the first of three formal nights. I put on my tux, and we all meet in the Ocean Bar for a drink before having our picture



Evelyn holding a wombat



taken with the Captain. After dinner, we saw the show, which was very good.

We awoke to rough seas and temperatures in the mid-50s. We were anchored off Queenshead, and we found out that because of high winds we would not be docking at Geelong. This was somewhat of a problem as a number of passengers and luggage had missed the ship in Sydney and had been sent to Geelong for boarding. There were also a few sick passengers whom the officers wanted to take off the ship. In the end they were able to use a ship's tender to get passengers and luggage on and off the ship, but Geelong was canceled for us.



Evelyn with a snake.

The seas were very rough and the winds were now a force 9, which is a strong gale. That didn't stop us from having our first cocktail party in our cabin. I ordered a cheese plate and extra ice, and Don made his best martinis.

As we finished dinner, the ship lurched badly, and the free glasses of champagne that the Captain had provided (because we missed Geelong) tipped over, and Effie and Pierre got a bath. We decided to skip the evening show, which was a juggler; with the ship bouncing around, he must have been fun to watch.

The seas had calmed down during the night, and we awoke sailing into Burnie, the fourth largest and most westerly city in Tasmania. Burnie was famous for mass-producing high-quality paper, but now it is a busy container port and tourist area.

As we left the ship, we were greeted by the mayor; we had our picture taken with him. Cruise ships bring a lot of revenue to the local economy, and each port wants to make sure that the ship will continue to stop there. We took the free shuttle bus to the information center, where we were to meet our tour guide, Howard Smith. This is the first of the tours I had booked using the Internet.

The weather was sunny and 75 degrees; the ship's forecast was for rain and 64 degrees. You have to wonder how they get the ship from place to place if they can't even do a good forecast.

Our first stop was at Fernglade, about a five-minute drive from the information center. We were hoping to see the platypus. The area has a

temperate climate and looked very green even though the area was in the middle of a drought. We walked about a half-mile along the river, and we think we saw a platypus.

Before we reached our next stop we made a brief stop at a local cheese making shop to sample the local cheese.

Making paper was a large industry in Burnie, until it was driven out of the market by the Chinese. We stopped at one of local specialty stores that makes paper from Kangaroo dung. Very interesting business, but not one I would enjoy. While the paper products were very nice, they were also very expensive. I guess they learned how to turn dung into gold.

We drove along the coast and then turned inland for the 45-minute drive to Gunns Plains Caves. The caves were discovered about 100 years ago and developed into a tourist attraction. We walked down 54 steps and walked 300 yards into the cave. There were a lot of interesting rock formations (stalagmites and stalagmites), but the highlight was the glow worms. They turned out all the lights, and the ceiling of the cave lit up with glow worms (fly larva).

We drove to the Wing's Wildlife Park, where we had a quick lunch before walking into the park. We saw the Tasmanian Devil and wallabies (small kangaroos) and we got to hold a wombat and pet a koala. The park also had a large number of fish, reptiles and snakes. Evelyn was brave enough to have a snake draped around her neck.

Our last stop was the Fern Gorge, where some of us -- Evelyn, Effie, our guide and I -- walked about a half mile up a trail to a lookout with a wonderful view of the mountains and river below. It was a little like a smaller, greener



Effie, Evelyn and Hal at the Fern Gorge Lookout.

version of the Grand Canyon.

It was about a 50-minute ride back to the ship. We felt that our guide had done a very good job, and we had received good value for our money.

We were tired when we returned to the ship and decided to have dinner in the Lido Buffet. The food selections were same as in the dining room, but I enjoyed the dining room more. We watched most of the show and then hit the sack. The seas were becoming rough again, and we had a two-day sail to reach Milford Sound on the South Island of New Zealand. Which I'll tell you about next month.



Evelyn with a koala.

## RLACEI MEMBER NEWS:

**Tony Mafrika**, past president of RLACEI, just turned 90. He works the daily crossword puzzle with a pen.

**Jane Hanson**, Hemet, writes, "I thank you, Phil, for all the uplifting thoughts you share with us."

**Joe Bondar**, Simi Valley, writes, "I have 15 grandkids. I do oil painting and wood carving."

**DiDi Chambers**, Cottonwood, Ariz., writes, "Thanks to you and all the board members for all you do for us. Your 'Thought for the Day' is such an inspiration. As a surviving spouse, I could really use the Medicare Part B reimbursement. Keep working for it." She sent me a beautiful book of photos of the Sedona area.

**Jess Baley and wife, Marie**, just returned from Mexico in their R.V. He did some windsurfing near La Paz.

**Charles Wray**, Whittier, is planning to take his children and grandkids on a seven-day cruise of the Caribbean.

**John Hill**, Reseda, often visits the One Generation Center on Victory Boulevard for lunch.

**Clayton Todd** does meals-on-wheels every Friday.

**Marty Rashoff** is a volunteer tutor at Monterey Vista Elementary School.

**If you have news** about yourself or other retirees that you would like to share, send it to Phil Skarin, 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411, or call the number on the Retirees Helpline.

**If you move**, notify Helen Salgado, Membership Chair, at 8372 Arnett Dr., Huntington Beach, CA 92647. Also notify LACERS.

Visit [www.rlacei.com](http://www.rlacei.com) to find out the latest retirement news.

**Don't forget to call** one of the officers for luncheon reservations for our Membership Meeting on Thursday on Thursday, April 12 at the Van Nuys/Sherman Oaks Senior Center. Lunch at noon, meeting at 1 p.m.



### THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

*Are You a Wise Guy?*

*A wise guy is someone who brashly asserts his views, pretending to know more than he really does.*

*Wisdom is defined as "knowledge and good judgment based on experience."*

*But, being wise also means acknowledging that some of our views and opinions could be fallible; and that there could be*

*Some uncertainty and instability of the things we count on most.*

— Phil Skarin



## RLACEI's Toll-Free Number

RLACEI — The Retired Los Angeles City Employees Inc. group has established a new toll-free helpline number that can be accessed free of charge throughout the United States.

**The number is: (800) 678-4145**

Call the Helpline to reach the officers of RLACEI. For information on problems, activities, meetings or membership, call the helpline. Each officer's extension is listed.

|                      |                       |                    |
|----------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Edward Harding x703  | Jack Matthews x712    | Americo Garza x710 |
| Harold Danowitz x707 | Robert Wilkinson x704 | Neil Ricci x714    |
| Phil Skarin x709     | Jerry Bardwell x706   | Helen Salgado x713 |