

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



Warren B. Braun, 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 8372 Arnett Dr. Huntington Beach, CA 92647. 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:

Aug. 13: RLACEI Retirees Picnic, 11:30 a.m. at the Grace E. Simons Dodge in Elysian Park. Call (800) 678-4145, ext. 701 for lunch reservations a week ahead.

Dec. 3: RLACEI Christmas Party, noon at the Grace E. Simons Lodge. Courtesy taxi rides from parking area thanks to Independent Taxi Owners Association.

For reservations to RLACEI meetings and lunches, RSVP to (800) 678-4145, ext. 701.

RLACEI Corner:

State Budget Shortfall Might Affect Retirees

President Ed Harding reports:



Ed Harding

"It is with sadness that I report the passing of Ross W. Seton, a very good friend and coworker. Ross was the President of the City Service Truck Owners Association of Los Angeles. I have known Ross for more than 50 years. He was always a nice guy and a lot of fun to be around. After retirement, he started a group of retired Supervisors and Superintendents to meet for lunch once every month, one group in downtown Los Angeles, and another group at the Coffee Shop at the City Golf Course in Encino. Ed Longley, Past Director of Street Maintenance, and I attended often. "Ross died on April 18 from a heart attack. He lived most of his

life at 2225 S. Catalina Street in L.A., the same house that belonged to his father. He was born in May 1921, and is survived by Sarah, his wife of 13 years, and Cindy and Sandra, daughters by a previous marriage. I will miss him and I know that all who knew him will, too.

"By the time you read this, our annual Retirees Golf Tournament and Awards Banquet in Alhambra June 2 will be history. Read about it next month. Tom Stemnock, Phil Skarin, Americo Garza and Bob Okuda do a great job arranging it every year.

"I hope to see you all at our Retirees Picnic Aug. 13 at the Grace E. Simons Lodge in Elysian Park."



By Phil Skarin,
RLACEI Publicity Chair

Director Mary Beetz reports:



Mary Beetz

"On April 16, LACERS hosted a *Your Health Matters* workshop on the topic of emotional wellness. LACERS medical plan carriers brought experts to lead presentations on:

LACERS Update,
continued Page 34

Legislative Update, Ken Spiker reports:



Ken Spiker

"The kickback scandal you may have been reading about involved the New York Retirement Fund, not LACERS. The two City Commissioners who have been asked for related information are Fire & Police Retirement Fund Commissioners, not LACERS. One LACERS Commissioner has resigned, but for personal reasons not related to the New York scandal.

"Commissioner Shelly Smith, who has served for 15 years as the active employees elected representative, did not run for reelection. The Board will miss Shelley as our vice president, but the retirees will welcome her when she selects her retirement date.

"The mayor's proposed budget is now in the hands of the City Council. It contains \$363,450,045 for the LACERS fund. This amount is the full required 19.4 percent of the estimated City pay-

roll. All City departments are to cut their budgets by 10 percent by one method or another. The City Council will definitely make some changes that will affect the final City payroll and thus the City contribution to our retirement and health benefit fund.

"Your RLACEI Board will be monitoring Council's and the mayor's actions and will take what ever measures necessary if our fund or benefits are adversely affected.

"As your elected Commissioner, I expected and will urge full payment to the fund and not partial payment as attempted last year.

"At the state level, there is turmoil over the growing deficit in the state budget and the likelihood of the defeat of the six measures on the May 19 special election ballot proposed by the Legislature and Governor to help carry out the budget reforms for 2009-10. [The budget portion of the measures were

defeated. —Ed.] To begin with, the February passage of the budget has already been overshadowed by an estimated \$8 billion deficit due to falling sales, tax, property tax and income tax receipts. In April, the state received \$1.8 billion less in tax collections, thus pushing up the deficit to \$10 billion in 2009-10. On May 5, the State Department of Finance proposed taking \$2 billion from local government, which is 8 percent of local government property tax revenues. The state gave as an example what the impact would be on the City of Los Angeles, nearly \$68 million.

"If the state measures are defeated, all government budgets will have to be drastically revised in May and June. Meanwhile, the Paul McCauley initiative to reduce local pension-plan benefits is circulating for signatures; its deadline to submit the minimum number of signatures of 694,000 is June 22, 2009.

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 Hal 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

ADVENTURES
with HAL!

#123284

Retiree Hotlines

Who to call? 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 below.

City Employees Retirement System:

(213) 473-7200

RLACEI Retirement Counselors and Retiree Helplines: (800) 678-4145

• Edward Harding	Ext. 703
• Phil Skarin	Ext. 709
• Michael Karsch	Ext. 704
• Jerry Bardwell	Ext. 706
• Harold Danowitz	Ext. 707
• Jack Mathews	Ext. 712
• Helen Salgado (membership)	Ext. 713
• Americo Garza	Ext. 710
• Tom Stemnock	Ext. 708
• Mary Beetz	Ext. 711
• Neil Ricci	Ext. 714

DWP Retirement Plan Office: (213) 367-1722**RLACEI:****Officers for 2009**

Edward Harding, President
Kenneth Spiker, First Vice President
Tom Stemnock, Second Vice President
Hal Danowitz, Secretary
Jerry Bardwell, Treasurer

Committee Chairpersons for 2009

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

Directors

Michael Karsch
Americo Garza
Helen Salgado
Phil Skarin
Jack Mathews
Neil Ricci
Mary Beetz

Effie, Isabelle, Evelyn and Coco pose on board with *Alive!*By Hal Danowitz,
Secretary, RLACEI

Christmas at Sea

■ The conclusion of Hal's holiday cruise with his family.

After Christmas 2007 I felt that it might be fun for the whole family to take a cruise during Christmas Week 2008. With all of the money my family was spending on presents for each other and the grandkids, and the stress of the holidays, everyone felt that a week's cruise would be a welcome change. The decision was made, and I began looking for the right ship. There would be Evelyn and I; son-in-law, JP, and daughter, Michelle; JP's parents, Effie and Pierre; granddaughters, Madeline, Isabelle and Caroline; and friends from San Francisco, Mike and Katharine, and their two boys, Timmy and Alex.

We booked a Norwegian Cruise Lines seven-day Mexican cruise on the Norwegian *Star*, which left from San Pedro Dec. 20, made three stops in Mexico: Cabo San Lucas, Mazatlan and Puerto Vallarta; and returned Dec. 27.

In last month's article, we sailed from San Pedro and spent our first day at sea. The story continues:

Dec. 22 – Cabo San Lucas

Cabo San Lucas was once a tranquil fishing village and a hangout for pirates. Located at the southernmost tip of the Baja peninsula slightly more than 900 miles from Los Angeles, Cabo has been blessed with what many describe as the perfect climate. Average year-round temperature is 78 degrees; it is a little cooler in the winter and a bit warmer in the summer.

Cabo is still small and charming by any standards, with a population of fewer than 40,000. And with the number of activities available to the visitor, you could easily imagine that you are in a giant amusement park. Golf has become a major factor in the Cabo San Lucas equation, with five championship courses. The Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Cortez provide a large area for water sports and great fishing, and Cabo has the largest private marina on the west coast of Mexico.

The ship didn't anchor in the harbor until 11 a.m., so we had time to sleep in and have breakfast in an Aqua dining room, one of the perks of being in a balcony cabin. While the breakfast was good, I think the breakfast fare in the Market Café was just as good.

In Cabo, we had to tender in (take a ship's life boat to shore), so we needed to get tickets for the boat. By the time we got to the ticket desk, they had already signed up more than 500. The ship started to unload at 11 a.m., and we didn't get called until noon. We hired a glass-bottomed boat/taxi to take all of us to the beach on the outside of the Maria in front of the Office restaurant. At the Office, we got a table and ordered a bucket of beer, some chips and guacamole, fish tacos and some fruit and quesadillas for the kids. The water in front of the Office is great for swimming, and the kids played while we ate and drank. After two hours we moved to the sand, and the kids took a ride on a banana boat (a big yellow tube pulled by a boat). Our taxi picked us up at 4 p.m., and we spent a few minutes shopping in the flea market by the dock before reboarding the ship.

Everyone was on their own for dinner. We tried to get into both main dining rooms (Aqua and Versailles) but we didn't want to wait for a table, so we ended up at the Endless Summer, one of the specialty restaurants (an extra \$15 per person). The food was Tex Mex and was pretty good.

After dinner, we picked up our three grandkids and took them to the show, the Magician Murray. He said he performs in Las Vegas, but I don't remember hearing about him (I Googled him, and he has performed in Vegas at the MGM Hotel). He



Hal and Evelyn in Puerto Vallarta.

put on a good show, and all the kids enjoyed it. It was mixture of magic and humor. Some of the humor was a little raw, but our kids had no clue.

The next stop was the Stardust Room, where a troop of Chinese acrobats was performing. We didn't know about this until the cruise director mentioned it at the end of the magic show. I'm glad we heard about them because they were great, and the kids really enjoyed themselves.

The communication on the ship could be better. The daily information sheet contained mostly ads for things to buy, and in my view, there was little info on what was happening on board.

Coco asked to sleep in our cabin that night, and I had called the front desk to have them tell our steward to make up the sofa bed. When we got to the room it hadn't been done. I called the front desk and they sent a steward to make it up.



Madeline and Isabelle on the banana boat in Cabo San Lucas.



Dec. 23 – Mazatlán

Mazatlán is on the Pacific coast of Mexico, just across from the southernmost tip of the Baja California.

The city was founded in 1531. By the mid-1800s, a large group of immigrants had arrived from Germany. These new citizens developed Mazatlán into a thriving commercial seaport, importing equipment for the nearby gold and silver mines. It is the home of Pacifico Brewery, my new favorite beer.

Mazatlán has a population of approximately 350,000 and has Mexico's largest commercial port. It is also a popular tourist destination, with its beaches lined with resort hotels.

By the time we awakened, the ship was docked in Mazatlán. We all met in the Market Café for breakfast and decided on when and who was leaving the ship.

Our friend, Mike, and his two kids and our granddaughter, Maddie, decided to stay on board, so seven adults and two kids left the ship. We were docked in a commercial area, and we needed to take a free tram to the cruise terminal. Our plan was to hire a van to show us a few sights and then drop us off in the shopping area.

The first people to approach us were selling timeshares, and it took a while to get by them. In the end we couldn't get a good price for a tour and took a taxi van (\$3 per person) to the Golden Zone, the tourist area by the beach. The zone is the location of most of the tourist hotels, many of the finer restaurants and most of the local night life.

We stopped in a few shops and then started walking on the beach. After a while we stopped at one of the hotels and had some drinks. By this time the kids were boarded, and we weren't in much better shape. We hired two mini-cabs, called *pulmonia*, to take us back to the ship. These handy, open-air cabs are unique to this area and are seemingly everywhere. They will take you wherever you want to go in the



Pierre, Effie and Katharine at one of our cocktail parties.

city very reasonably. Our diver gave us a tour on the way back to the ship, and I think we would have been better off hanging out by the old part of Mazatlán than in the golden zone.

The first cab got back to the terminal before us, and when we got there we couldn't find them. Isabelle, who was with us, didn't have her room key/ID, which you need to get back on the ship. We waited a while, and when they didn't show we took the tram to the ship to see if they were waiting by the gangway. They weren't, but we asked the security officer if they had checked in. At first they said no, but then they changed their mind and said yes. We were able to get Isabelle on board without her key, but it turns out the other group was still waiting for us in the terminal. No one was very happy about the confusion.

We headed for the pool area and had a quick lunch and laid out for the rest of the afternoon. The weather was clear skies and temp in the mid-80s.

We had our cocktail party that night; the kids were on their own for dinner. All the adults had dinner in Cagney's Steakhouse (\$20 per person), which was very good.

The entertainment tonight was the Second City comedy troupe, which put on a very good show. We hit the 10 p.m. show, and it was much less crowded.

Dec. 24 – Puerto Vallarta

Located on the western Pacific coast of Mexico in the state of Jalisco, Puerto Vallarta has a charm that makes the resort famous around the world. Along with its cobblestone streets, beaches, plentiful marine life, and the Sierra Madre Mountains, Puerto Vallarta is a vacationer's paradise that has maintained its unique Old Mexico charm.

Stretching from the south end of Old Town to central downtown, a newly extended and refurbished boardwalk along the ocean, called the *malecon* passes by any number of shops, restaurants and hotels. The residents of Puerto Vallarta are very friendly and generally willing to help with directions and other requests. Old Town Vallarta (or the *Zona Romantica* district) south of the River Cuale is more like a Mexican town and less like a tourist trap.

Puerto Vallarta is only about 100 miles from Mazatlán, and we dropped anchor at 7 a.m. We didn't get a dock, Holland-America and Carnival took up the available space, so we had to take a short tender ride to the shore. At this point we split up. JP and Michelle took the kids and went looking for the zip line adventure. Mike and Katharine took their kids on a ride around town – they rented a small gas powered golf cart (\$50 for the day) and toured the city.

Evelyn and I and Effie and Pierre took a taxi into town (\$3 per person) and walked around for about four hours. The main parts of Puerto Vallarta are along the water, and it was nice to shop and see the beach at the same time. We crossed over the bridge to the old part of town; we sat on the beach and drank beer and ate guacamole and chips. On the way back we purchased some native art, which was very nice. We took a taxi back to the ship and relaxed until dinner.

The ship had made a big deal about a Mexican buffet on the pool deck and was it a waste of time. It wasn't worth the calories. After a while, Evelyn and I went down



Katharine and Mike at the Christmas dinner.

to one of bars to hear a coffeehouse singer who was great (Jana Seales). We were early to bed because Santa Claus was coming tomorrow.

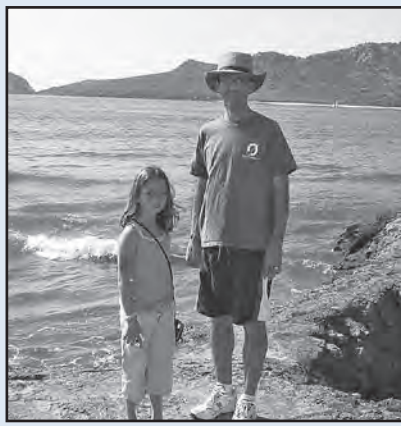
Dec. 25 – At Sea

Our cabin phone rang a 7:30 a.m., and we had to get up so the kids could open what presents we had brought on board. They each got one present from the grandparents and a present from their parents; the grandparents gave each one a certificate good for a new bike.

After breakfast, we stopped to see Santa Claus, and the kids had their picture taken with him.

The rest of the day was spent just lounging around the pool and reading. That night we had a family Christmas dinner in the Aqua dining room.

I was disappointed in the meal, I had roast turkey and it was not very good. I did think the appetizer and desert were good. The others who had the short ribs liked



Coco and JP in Mazatlán.



Shopping in the Golden Zone in Mazatlán.

their meal. The kids had a kid's menu, and they seemed to like the food.

We got to the showroom late and had really had bad seats. The show was a review of all the entertainers and again was good.

We had Isabelle sleeping in our cabin. I told the cabin steward in the morning to make up her bed, and when we got to the cabin everything was fine. She had ordered a snack of brownies and potato chips, and we also received two plates of cookies from the hotel director.

Dec. 26 – At Sea

This was our last day at sea, and the weather has turned rough. The sky was partly cloudy, and the seas had five-to-seven-foot swells (it got rougher later in the day). A large number of people got sea sick. The boat operators closed the pool because it was too rough, and we played board games most of the day.

We needed to pack to get our bags outside our door by 1 a.m. I received VIP luggage tags, which allowed us to be the first people off the ship with luggage. I asked for enough tags for our whole party.

We had our last cocktail party, and then



Michelle, Coco and Evelyn on the beach in front of the Office restaurant in Cabo San Lucas.

Evelyn and I and Effie and Pierre had dinner at La Trattoria, the Italian restaurant (\$10 per person). It featured excellent food and service.

We skipped the regular show and watched the Second City group perform at 9 p.m.

Dec. 27 – Back in LA

We got up around 6:30 a.m., and the seas had calmed during the night. We had our last breakfast.

We waited with the other "VIPs" in the Soho restaurant before getting off the ship around 8:45 a.m. We got in our cars (\$12 per day for parking), loaded the bags and were home by 10 a.m.

I would take the family on Norwegian Cruise Lines ship again. They do a great job overall and provided a good value for our vacation dollars.

RLACEI MEMBER NEWS:

Hilton "Pat" Brodie teaches navigation to Sea Scouts in Washington State. Pat and Aileen celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary Jan. 15. Pat was a Gunner's Mate in the United States Navy in the South Pacific from 1942 to 1945. Aileen just broke her hip. Call them at (425) 744-1111.

Charles and Marie Tichenor celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary March 10 with family and friends in Tulsa, Okla. Chuck passed away April 21, and had a military funeral. He served in the United States Marine Corps in the South Pacific in World War II, and then did counterintelligence work. Chuck and Marie were members of the Tulsa Historical Society and put on a program titled "Cattle Ranches of 1880s" for schools and libraries.

Sam Furuta took ski trips to Jackson Hole, Wyo.; Yellowstone National Park; and Whistler, British Columbia; and summer trips to Cabo San Lucas, Mexico; Maui, Hawaii; and an Alaskan cruise.

John Cockayne bowls in a league and went on several cruises. He now rides a motor scooter instead of a motorcycle. He visited Ralph Kennedy while passing through Salem, Ore.

Anita Moore is working as a volunteer at Rancho Los Amigos Rehabilitation Center. She will be traveling to Ohio to meet their new grandson, born in January.

William J. Thomas was installed as president of the Russian Heritage Club at the Magic Castle. They hold an annual Scholarship Awards banquet. He is active in several travel and computer clubs in the Canyon Lake area.

Hal Danowitz asks you to visit our Website at www.rlacei.com to find the latest news. You can e-mail us at rlacei@verizon.net

An information sheet entitled "What to Do Upon the Death of a Retired City Employee" is available by sending a stamped self-addressed envelope to Phil Skarin.

The annual **Retirees Poetry Contest** will be held again. There are separate categories for Retirees and family members. Valuable prizes will be awarded. Send typed poems on any subject of interest to retirees to Phil Skarin by Nov. 1.

If you have news about yourself, or other retirees, that you'd like to share, send it to Phil Skarin at 5302 Norwich Avenue, Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910, or call him at (818) 784-0130, or fax it to (818) 906-3722.

The new bylaws for RLACEI were adopted at the April 9 General Membership meeting without change. If you need a copy, contact Hal Danowitz, Bylaws Chairman.

Our annual Corporation Meeting and Election of Officers will be held at the Friendship Lodge Oct. 8. If you are interested in being considered for a Director position, contact Nominating Chair Neil Ricci and send a resume of your qualifications to 458 21st Place, Santa Monica, CA 90402 or call him.



Ken Kochakji, Retired, Rec and Parks, and his fellow runners with the Basin Blues Running Club participated in the Northridge Hospital Center for Assault Treatment Services 5-K walk and run. The event was a fundraiser for the hospital's children's assault treatment services.

On the Move



Alive! catches up with Retirees who are active, involved ... *Alive!*

Are you On the Move? Write to us and tell us what you're up to! It's even better if you send us a photo. We'll print what we can! talkback@cityemployeesclub.com

LACERS Update

■ **Mary Beetz, continued from page 31**

- Tips to Boost Your Mood (Kaiser);
- Secrets to a Good Night's Sleep: Discover Your Internal Fountain of Youth (SCAN); and
- Aging and Emotional Vitality: Overcoming the Challenges (Secure Horizons).

"Due to high demand, all available spaces were booked within a week of the mailing of the invitations and many members were placed on a waiting list. However, on the day of the event, about 25 of those who reserved a space did not show up. If you RSVP for a future LACERS event and find out later that you will not be able to attend, LACERS asks that you call to cancel your reservation so that those members placed on the waiting list have an opportunity to attend.

"Many door prizes were awarded throughout the event, but the Grand Prize was two lower level section tickets to a Los Angeles Lakers playoff game, courtesy of Anthem Blue Cross. Feedback from the workshop satisfaction surveys indicated that overall, the event was successful with most people rating it as 'very good' or 'excellent.' The next workshop is scheduled for this summer.

"As of Jan. 1, LACERS changed its dental PPO plan from Anthem (WellPoint) Blue Cross to MetLife. LACERS notified all mem-

bers who were enrolled in Anthem of this change, but many members are still surprised when they visit their dentist and find out they are no longer enrolled in Anthem. If you were enrolled in the Anthem dental PPO plan in 2008, you were automatically transferred to the MetLife dental PPO plan for 2009. For questions, retirees can contact MetLife at the toll free number dedicated to LACERS members: (866) 526-0981. Dentists can access www.metdental.com or call the toll-free number to verify PPO coverage. Although MetLife does not issue dental plan I.D. cards, LACERS can issue you a generic dental I.D. card by request.

"LACERS is always updating its Retired Membership database because our Retirees are always on the move! If you have recently changed phone numbers, gotten a new mobile phone, added an email address or simply moved, please let us know.

"LACERS sends important communications about your benefits. With holidays, natural emergencies and sudden changes, we may need to send you essential messages. So it is important that we have every possible means of contacting you. To update your contact information, please call our Member Information Support Service Center (213) 473-7200, (800) 779-8328 or (888) 349-3996 (TDD).



THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Debate vs. Dialogue

In meetings, the difference between these two processes becomes obscured. In dialogue, we want to be listened to and affirmed.

Dialogue is important when understanding is needed.

In debate we seek to convince others of our point of view.

We expect to be challenged.

We want to win and reach a conclusion.

In your meetings or organizations, there is a time to recognize and use the appropriate process.

— *Phil Skarin*

For Retired Club Members

Get a Starbucks Card ... Free!

Just refer a friend to be a Club Member.

(800) 464-0452

See the Story on Page 15