

For Retired Club Members



The Best Years



By Phil Skarin,
RLACEI Publicity Chair

City Retiree Associations:

DWP Retirees Association



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E-mail: vinmar@altrionet.com

Los Angeles Retired Fire and Police Association

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Phone: (323) 283-4441
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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:

Dec. 3: RLACEI Christmas Party, Grace E. Simons Lodge, 1025 Elysian Park Dr. Lunch at noon. Courtesy taxi rides from the parking areas, courtesy of the Independent Taxi Owners Association. Call for reservations.

Call (800) 678-4145, ext. 701,
for reservations to these events.

RLACEI:

Early Retirement Talks Are Already Increasing Numbers

President Ed Harding reports:



Ed Harding

"Our annual corporation meeting and elections were held Oct. 8 at the Friendship Auditorium. Attendance was low because of a conflict with a LACERS Open Enrollment Meeting in Van Nuys. Next year we will try to coordinate our schedules better.

"Alex Rabrenovich, Chief Health Benefits Administrator, talked to our members about what is new on our health plans. Several members of his group talked to our members about their individual

problems. Thanks to LACERS and Alex for providing 20 door prizes.

"Nominating Chair Neil Ricci moved for approval of his committees recommendations for RLACEI Directors. Receiving unanimous approval were Hal Danowitz, Americo Garza, Neil Ricci, Phil Skarin, Tom Stennock and Michael Karsch. They are all being reelected for two-year terms beginning Jan. 1. I know that they will all continue doing a great job for our members.

"Mark Dec. 3 on your calendar

for our holiday party and board meeting for officers at the Grace E. Simons Lodge in Elysian Park, 1025 Elysian Park Dr. The entertainment committee, headed by Americo Garza, met with Chris & Pitts and ordered a menu of roast beef or turkey on buns, cole slaw, fruit salad, carrot cake and drinks.

"Linda Hayek will entertain us, and Gary Mattingly, retired GM of the Fire and Police Pension System, will install our new officers. See you all at noon Dec. 3."

Legislative Update, Ken Spiker reports:



Ken Spiker

"On Sept. 30, the City Council voted to approve an Early Retirement Incentive Program (ERIP). Under the ERIP, up to 2,400 active LACERS members would be eligible to retire with enhanced retirement benefits. Before the ERIP goes into effect and the 45-day opt-in period starts, the proposed ERIP would need to be ratified by the Coalition of Unions and the Council (this action can be taken no sooner than Oct. 30), and the mayor would need to give final approval.

"For the last several months, LACERS staff has been busy planning for successful implementation, assuming ERIP adoption by the City Council. Those preparations have begun to pay-off as, in August, LACERS recorded its busiest month of retirements ever, with 128 members retiring! In the last three months, LACERS has processed the retirements of more than 300 members. In a typical year, LACERS retires about 500 members, so we successfully retired 60 percent of the members we typically retire in a year in just three months.

"If the ERIP is approved and the maximum 2,400 members decide to participate, LACERS would be

expected in just seven months to retire almost the same number of members that have retired over the last five years combined.

"Here's a graph with the retirement numbers:"

Active Service Retirements by Fiscal Year	
Fiscal Year Ending	Number of Retirements
June 30, 2005	554
June 30, 2006	507
June 30, 2007	477
June 30, 2008	463
June 30, 2009	404
Five-year total:	2,405

"Correction to a previous article: In 2010, Secure Horizons (in California, Nevada and Arizona) will no longer offer dental and vision benefits. Dental benefits are provided to LACERS members through MetLife and SafeGuard, and members enrolled in Secure Horizons already receive vision benefits through Vision Service plan. This change will save the fund \$92,000 annually."

Richman Initiative on Public Pensions

Michael Karsch, RLACEI Board Member, writes: "The Orange County Register's OC Watchdog Sept. 30 reported that Keith Richman's California Foundation for Fiscal Responsibility is dusting off its 2007 initiative to rein in public pensions' soaring costs. Revisions are being made to update the initiative and to include and 'anti-double-dipping clause' to prohibit a public official who retires from being hired back in the same agency, thereby receiving both a pension check and a new job paycheck. They hope to submit a new text to the Attorney General by the end of October, and then to circulate a petition shortly thereafter for qualification on the November 2010 ballot. The initiative, if similar to the older one, would not affect public sector members who have already retired. The Foundation's president, Marcia Fritz, advised me by email: Please tell your subscribers to check out this Website, www.californiapensionreform.com, where the foundation will post the draft. The more who give constructive criticism the better.

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!



Everyone heads for the zip line.



By Hal Danowitz,
Secretary, RLACEI

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

• R.S.V.P.	Ext. 701
• 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



Zippering Along in Costa Rica

■ Part 2 of Hal and Evelyn's trip to Uncle George's place.

Last month I told you about the first part of our trip to Costa Rica. Taking the trip were Evelyn and I; Michelle and JP; the three grandkids Maddie, Isabelle and Coco; and JP's parents, Effie and Pierre. We stayed in the Central Pacific area at a house owned by Michelle's Uncle George. Here's a link to the house, owned by George and Katrina Murdoch: www.costaricavacationhomesandrentals.com

We left LAX Aug. 12 and returned Aug. 17.

On Friday morning, Aug. 14, we were scheduled for an aerial activity called zip-lining, but we made a mistake on the time, and the tour was already gone when we got there. So instead, we drove into *Jaco* (pronounced ha-co) to look around. This is the main tourist town in the area and reminded me of Cabo San Lucas 10 years ago.

There are a number of good hotels and restaurants in Jaco. One of the town's major attractions is surfing. A yearly international surf contest is held nearby at Playa Hermosa. We walked around, and Evelyn brought a very nice beaded bracelet. We had to get back to our house because Evelyn was taking the girls horseback riding, something I have done only once or twice and care not to do it ever again. Anyway, Evelyn and the girls had a great time, and for the two-hour ride it was only \$30 for all of them. The dollar is accepted all over Costa Rica, so there is no need to change money.

That evening, the adults rode into Jaco to have dinner at a restaurant called Pili Pili. The name comes from the Swahili word for chili peppers, which were in a special spicy sauce the chef uses. The food was outstanding, but the service was way too slow. There must have been a problem in the kitchen because we waited almost 45 minutes to get our first course. The price was right, though; with wine and drinks, the bill was only \$30 per person.

I was a little apprehensive about our zip-lining experience, rescheduled for Saturday morning. I just didn't know what to expect, but I figured if an eight-year-old (Coco) could do it, so could I. We showed

up at the Chiclets Tree Canopy Tours to take the 9 a.m. tour. The cost was \$39 each, about half of what is charged in Mexico. You first put on a harness, helmet and gloves. The instructor gave us a 10-minute demonstration of hand signals and what to expect. We piled into an open truck and drove about a mile to the start of the tour and climbed a staircase up about 80 feet. We were with three other groups, but ours was the first to go. They attached us to the wire with a pulley and snapped us onto a safety line, and off we went. The first zip line was short, just to give us the feel for the ride. We didn't have the sensation of falling, and it was very enjoyable. We controlled our own speed, and the only thing we needed to remember is to stop before we crashed into the tree. A guide was waiting for us at each stop to "catch us" and made sure we didn't hurt ourselves. There were 13 platforms and 12 lines, the longest of which was 1,000 feet. It was a great experience and I would do it again.

After our zip-lining experience, our host, George, showed us some new homes he is building just across from the Chiclets trees. At the construction site, they have adopted a young whiteface monkey, whose

mother was electrocuted by accident. The monkey is not in a cage, and it has the run of the site. How this will work out in the future is not certain.

We stopped to have lunch at a small restaurant on the beach and, while we ate, we watched the surfers. The food was very good and again inexpensive at \$10 per person.

Our host made dinner for all of us that evening, and we spent the rest of the evening playing cards and watching a movie.

Sunday was our last full day in Costa Rica, and we decided to spend it at Manuel Antonio National Park. The park is just south of Quepos, about 45 minutes from our house. It is a combination of rain forest, beaches and coral reefs. The beaches are white sand and have very good snorkeling. The forest is home for sloths, iguanas, the rare squirrel monkey and the whiteface monkey, and we saw all of them up close and personal. We parked our cars near the beach entrance and walked back to the ticket booth (\$10 for adults, children under 12 are free). We walked about a half-mile into the park and reached the southern-facing beach, Playa Manuel Antonio, a



Evelyn on the zip line.



half-mile long white sand crescent beach with foliage to one side and a secluded cove to the other. When we got there it was pretty empty, so we had the choice of all the good spots to spread our towels. We all headed into the water, which was very warm, and we spent about two hours just relaxing. We were going to meet George's family for lunch and needed to leave time for the walk back and to drive to the restaurant. We wanted to walk the trail that winds around Punta Cathedral, and we were told it was an easy 30-minute walk. Well the walk took over an hour and, while it wasn't hard, I wouldn't classify it as easy.

We had lunch at El Avión, built around a Fairchild C-123 cargo plane that was part of the mid-1980s Iran-Contra scandal. Part of the profits was used to purchase two C-123 cargo planes, one of which is this plane. This plane was abandoned at the San Jose, Costa Rica, airport, and in August 2000 it was purchased for \$3,000, disassembled and shipped in pieces to its present location. The inside was converted



Isabelle and Evelyn on the ride.

into a disco bar, which is open in the evenings. It's a real piece of history. This was my chance to try a native Costa Rican dish, and I chose the chicken and rice, which was very good, though a little spicy, and long on rice and short on chicken.

After lunch, we stopped by the local flea market, and Evelyn picked up a few souvenirs. While the kids stayed on the beach, we drove back to the house. I made a few wrong turns before finding the main road, but we got back without problems. Part of the problem with driving in Costa Rica is that there are no street addresses and in some cases very little signage to tell you where you are or where you are going.

On Monday, we left for home. Our flight was at 5:15 p.m., and we left the house about 11:30 a.m. for the ride to the airport. We wanted to stop at the market to pick up some coffee to bring home and leave enough time in case of a problem. On the way to the airport it rained very hard, and I was glad we had a driver.

To leave Costa Rica you need to pay a \$26 exit visa tax, and after we did that we checked in for our flight. We stopped in El Salvador, but we didn't need to change planes. The flights were uneventful and we got into LAX about midnight. It took a while for our luggage to come, and we didn't get home until after 2 a.m.

I really enjoyed Costa Rica and would like to do another trip to see the parts we missed.

RLACEI MEMBER NEWS:

Patrick Nanson, grandson of **Americo and Ella Garza**, graduated from the Naval Officers School in Newport, RI, and was commissioned as an ensign Sept. 11. He was one of five distinguished cadets of the graduating class. He will report the naval base in Coronado to receive special naval warfare training.

Phil Skarin was invited to speak to a group of ladies at the Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles, where he recited many of his "Thought of the Day" poems, including "Be My Friend."

Barbara Hunt, daughter of **Phil and Miriam Skarin**, was named the customer service

employee of the month for August by the Monrovia City Council. She is a volunteer at the Canyon Park Nature Center. This is her second award.

Jess Bailey and his wife have just returned from Canada in their RV. After a few months at their home in Burbank, they'll take off for Mexico. They're real Roads scholars!

Mary Beetz spent eight days in Puerto Rico, visiting the rain forest, museums and rum factories.

Are you planning to retire soon? If you are, Membership Chair Helen Salgado invites

you to join the Retired Los Angeles City Employees, Inc. (RLACEI), the only one exclusively serving the interests of L.A. City retirees, for only \$1 a month. Call one of our officers for more information.

Do you have a poem for this year's Retirees' Poetry Contest? Send it to Phil Skarin by Dec. 1 (new date). Poems can be on any subject or style, and there are member and family member categories. There will be valuable ash prizes.

Also, if you have news about yourself or other retirees that you'd like to share, send it to Phil Skarin at 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411-3910.

RLACEI HOLIDAY PARTY

Thursday,
Dec. 3, 12 noon

Grace E. Simons Lodge
1025 Elysian Park Drive
(near Dodger Stadium)

You're Invited!

The RLACEI's annual Christmas Party and Installation of Officers is scheduled for noon Thursday, Dec. 3 at the Grace E. Simons Lodge. The Lodge is at 1025 Elysian Park Dr., near Dodger Stadium. There will be a light lunch (sandwiches, salad and

drinks), entertainment and valuable door prizes. You must make reservations at least a week ahead: (800) 678-4145, x701. Guests welcome. Call one of the officers on the Retirees Helplines. Free taxi service can take you from the parking lot to the lodge.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

Who Gets the Credit?

The sports pages always report who made the most runs, baskets or touchdowns. The players want to get the credit.

But in the game of life, there are other kinds of credit for your good deeds or accomplishments. One kind is when people recognize your accomplishments and chose to openly compliment you. But, your goal in life should not be to seek approval or praise from others.

Your goal in life should be to do things you enjoy doing and do them with enthusiasm to the best of your abilities.

The personal satisfaction you will receive is the most meaningful kind of credit to wish for.

But, it's still nice to get a sincere compliment for a job well done.

— Phil Skarin



LACERS

■ Open Enrollment Thru Nov. 15

LACERS has announced that the open enrollment period for health plans lasts until Nov. 15 to make any additions or changes to your health plans.

The Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System is at 360 E. Second St., second floor, Los Angeles, Ca 90012. Phone: (213) 473-7200 or (800) 779-8328. E-mail is www.lacers.org. Contact them to arrange direct deposit; change your tax withholding or beneficiary; or for questions about your health plans.

