

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

**James R. Wilke, 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:

**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:

# Two Commissioners Leave Due to State Conflict Act

### President Ed Harding reports:



Ed Harding

"On Oct. 27, Neil Ricci and I attended a luncheon for Sara Hill, given by LACERS. Sarah Hill, a Senior Management Analyst at LACERS overseeing the Planning and Research Section of the Health Benefits Administration and Communications Division, recently left City service to get married. Immediately after her wedding, Sara will be relocating to New Jersey to be with her new husband, Michael. Sarah has been an integral part of LACERS, working with LACERS retirees and assisting them with their health benefits for the past six years. LACERS staff thanks her for her dedication to the department and wish her well in her future endeavors.

"RLACEI and I join with the LACERS staff in thanking her for her dedication to her job and wishing her well in her future. Whenever I needed help for one of our Retirees, Sarah was right there to help solve our problem. I will miss her for all her help and for her friendship.

"I wish to remind you of the Retirees' Christmas Party at noon Thursday, Dec. 3, at the Grace E.

Simons Lodge at 1025 Elysian Park Dr. Gary Mattingly will be installing our newly elected Directors. Chris & Pitts BBQ will serve lunch, and Linda Hayek will provide entertainment. John Hawkins and Robert Larios from the City Employees Club will be there with some great door prizes. There will be more than 50 door prizes plus boxes of See's Candy. Call the RSVP number for reservations.

"Nominating Chair Neil Ricci noted that all of the Directors elected at our October Annual Meeting are reruns and are not to be confused with the character 'Rerun' in the Peanuts comic strip. If you want to be considered for a nomination for a future office of Director, send a resume to Neil and 458 21st Place, Santa Monica, CA 90402.

"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) which is the only one exclusively serving the interests of L. A. City retirees for only \$1 a month. Call Helen or one of our officers for more information."

### Director Mary Beetz reports:



Mary Beetz

"Tax Dependent Certification Forms: If you received a mailing from L A C E R S requesting you to complete a Certification of Dependent Status for Health

Coverage form, it is important that you do so and return it to LACERS as soon as possible. LACERS would have mailed this form to you if you are enrolled in a LACERS medical plan or participating in LACERS Medical Premium Reimbursement Program and are a:

- retiree that is covering dependents, or
- a surviving spouse/domestic partner.

"If you believe you should have received this mailing, but did not, or if you need another form, please contact LACERS immediately. A copy of this form can also be found on page 47 of LACERS'

LACERS Update,  
continued Page 27

### Legislative Update, Ken Spiker reports:



Ken Spiker

"Board President Eric Holoman and Vice President Moctesuma Esparza have both resigned as Commissioners. Neither resignation is the result of, or had any connection to, current or pending investigations. Newly signed state legislation prohibits anyone to serve on a pension or retirement Public Board of Administration if they are selling or providing any investment product that would be considered an asset to a public retirement system. Both commissioners felt their personal employment may fall

under the provisions of the act. Both were extremely well qualified to be pension commissioners and will be a loss to our board.

"Board elections were held, and Roberta Conroy, our newest Commissioner, was elected president. She is retired after serving as senior vice president of Capital Guardian Trust Co. She has a Bachelor's degree and a law degree. Richard Rogers was elected as the board's vice president. He was elected by the current employees as their one of two members of the Commission. He

currently is employed by the City's Fire and Police Pension System as an investment officer.

"Our retirement fund is holding its own at \$9.3 billion. Checks are guaranteed each month.

"The early retirement program has finally received City Council and mayoral approval and is in full effect. LACERS staff is processing 200 to 300 applications per month compared to 500 per year. As many as 2,450 current employees are covered by the provisions of the ordinance and are expected to retire.

### 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

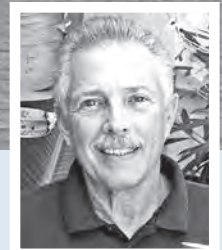
The Los Angeles City Employees Retirement System is at 360 E. Second Street, second floor, Los Angeles, CA 90012. Phone (213) 473-7200 or (800) 779-8328. Contact them to arrange direct deposit of your retirement checks, change your tax withholding or beneficiary, or for questions about your health plans.



The Best Years

ADVENTURES  
with HAL!

The Oosterdam.

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



## The Big Cruise

## ■ Part 1: Hal and Evelyn prepare for a long cruise to Europe.

Last year when Evelyn retired, we took a number of week or two-week trips, except for our road trip to my 50th high school reunion. This year, we decided to take a trip to places that we had not seen, and we wanted to do it by cruising.

We had not been to Europe for at least three years, and Evelyn had never been to Italy. While I had been to Italy (41 years ago), neither of us had been to Spain, Portugal or Greece. I did a little research and found what I thought was the perfect cruise. It was a 28-day re-positioning cruise from Venice, Italy, to Fort Lauderdale, Fla. At first it was a little hard to convince Evelyn that we could do a 28-day cruise and still stay married, but in the end we both agreed that it would be a great trip.

I didn't want to book too early and figured that if I waited a while, the price would come down. I also figured that the cruise line Holland America (HAL) might offer better prices as it got closer to the sailing date. The ship was to sail from Venice, Italy, Oct. 5, and I was started looking at it last January. We talked to our cousins, Don and Myrna, about going, and I couldn't get them to commit until Evelyn and I promised to learn how to play bridge. After that was settled, I waited until mid-May before I started to check on prices. When you book a cruise you give them a small deposit, which is normally refundable up to the date when final payment is due, which is usually 90 days before sailing.

I decided to book directly with HAL and not use a travel agent. The only advantage to this is that I controlled my own reservation and could deal directly with HAL on any questions or concerns. Like us, Don and Myrna have status with HAL, which means that we would get the best pricing available. If you like to cruise, then it can be helpful if you pick a line that you like and stick with them, because the more you cruise with them the better they treat you.

I had been checking the HAL Website and knew what the best price was for the type of veranda staterooms we wanted. I called HAL and talked to a reservation

agent and was assured that if we booked then, that any reduction in price would also be given to us. What I didn't know then (but was told by the agent) is that you need to ask for the new price; they won't just give it to you.

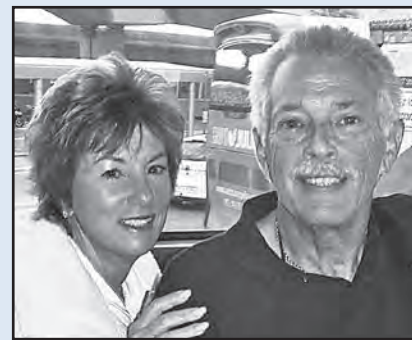
With that understanding, we booked the cruise. The 28 days consisted of two separate cruises: a 12-day cruise from Venice to Barcelona, Spain, and a 16-day cruise from Barcelona to Fort Lauderdale. By booking as two separate cruises the price was cheaper than if we booked one 28-day cruise. No one could explain the reason for this. We booked veranda staterooms (category VE) for both couples. The price was less than what I had found on the Website, and two weeks later they dropped the price again and we were able to get the lower price. We couldn't book a specific stateroom and we didn't know if we would

have to change staterooms in Barcelona. We asked that the two staterooms be next to each other, as this makes it easier to have our cocktail parties. About two weeks before we were to sail, we got our stateroom assignments, and we were upgraded to a category VB (same-size stateroom on a higher deck). They were next to each other, and we did not have to change in Barcelona.

Because Evelyn had not been to Italy, I felt it was important for us to go there a week before the cruise to see Rome and Florence. The ship would stop at both, but neither is on the water, and the ports are a one-and-a-half to two-hour drive one-way to the cities. Our ship, the Oosterdam, was to sail from Venice Oct. 5, so we decided to fly to Rome a week early and stay three nights there, two nights in Florence and one night in Venice before we boarded the ship. The ship would stay overnight in Venice so we would have two nights there.

I decided not to use the air option offered by HAL (Myrna and Don did), so I booked my own reservations. I found that Air New Zealand had the cheapest fare to London, and that we could book Premium Economy for only \$790 one-way. We had flown with them in that class before and it is like business class except the seats are not as large, but it is very comfortable for an over night flight. We left LAX Sept. 28 at 4:30 p.m. and arrived in London at 11:15 the next day. I then used American Express points to fly British Air to Rome in Business Class; I did that to use the British Air lounge at Heathrow. On the way home, I booked American Airlines from Fort Lauderdale to LAX in first class using mileage.

One of the problems I had was to decide how to get from Rome to Venice, either by train or driving ourselves. We were going to gone for 35 days, so I was concerned about the amount of luggage we would be taking. We both agreed that we could not take enough clothes for the whole trip and that we would do laundry on the ship. In the end, we took three large bags and two carry-on bags. I didn't want



Hal and Evelyn.



Don and Myrna.





to have to haul the luggage on and off a train, so we decided to drive. I booked our car with Hertz and requested a GPS that spoke English.

With that decision made, I made sure that the hotels in Rome and Florence had parking

available. We would drop the car off in Venice, and I found a hotel just a short way from the Hertz office, but more about all that later. I also booked a car to pick us up at the Rome airport and take us to our hotel.

After that was settled, I began to research each city we would visit to decide whether to take our own tours or to use the ship's tours. It would be just Evelyn and I on the first part of the trip to Rome and Florence; Don and Myrna would join us in Venice.

I reviewed all the tours that HAL offered and then used the Internet to see which tours we could do ourselves and which we would use the ship's tours. I also used [www.frommers.com](http://www.frommers.com)

to print out walking tours of each city, and this helped me decide if what the ship was offering was good or not. I also took into consideration the distance from the ship we would have to travel and how safe we would be on our own. In the end, we did most everything right except for a few places where we used a ship's tour and we could have easily done it ourselves. We seem to repeat learning this lesson.

I set up a blog so our friends and readers could follow our trip – [www.halandevelyn.blogspot.com](http://www.halandevelyn.blogspot.com)

The last thing I did was buy euros and also traveler's checks to take with us.

Our itinerary was as follows: before the

cruise, Rome (three nights), Florence (two nights) and Venice (two nights). We boarded the ship in Venice, and then visited Dubrovnik (Croatia); Corfu (Greece); Argostoli (Greece); Santorini (Greece); Cantana (Sicily); Naples (Italy); Civitavecchia (Rome, Italy); Livorno (Florence and Pisa, Italy); Barcelona (two nights, Spain); Alicante (Spain); Malaga (Spain); Casablanca (Morocco); Cadiz (Seville, Spain); Lisbon (Portugal); Funchal (Maderia, Portugal); then six days at sea; Half Moon Cay (Bahamas); and Fort Lauderdale.

Next month we will begin with our flight over to Rome.

## RLACEI MEMBER NEWS:

**John Powell's** wife, Annabelle, had a hip replacement, and is hopping around just fine.

**Leo Rosen** is getting treatments for lymphoma and is feeling better.

**Frances (Cota) Schulz** is an officer in the Kern River Valley Poets and Writers Club, which publishes an annual book of their member's writings, a copy of which she sent to me. Frances is a frequent winner in our Retiree's Poetry Contest.

**Not Faster Than A Speeding Bullet...** Retired runner extraordinaire **Ken Kochakji** is bested by a man named Bullet. Retired Traffic Officer and frequent *Alive!* contributor **Ken Kochakji** reports that, in a recent race, he was bested by a man named Bullet. **Kochakji** came in third in his age group during the recent Westlake Village City Celebration Run 5K. A 67-year-old man named Bullet finished second in the age group. But knowing **Ken**, he's probably gaining on that Bullet!

**If you have news about yourself or other retirees**, send it to Phil Skarin at 5301 Norwich Ave., Van Nuys, CA 91411.

## THOUGHT FOR THE DAY:

### The Best Gifts

*The best kinds of gifts you can give to your friends aren't things, but some of the following:*

- ◆ *The gift of listening.*
- ◆ *The gift of affection.*
- ◆ *The gift of laughter.*
- ◆ *The gift of a written note.*
- ◆ *The gift of a compliment.*

– *Phil Skarin*



## LACERS Update

■ **Mary Beetz, continued from page 25**

2010 Health Benefits Guide.

"State Taxation of Retirement Allowance to Increase: As a result of the passage of Assembly Bill X4 17, the 2009 California Withholding Schedules for Personal Income Tax was to be replaced effective Nov. 1. The withholding rates for regular and supplemental wages, which include LACERS retirement allowances, will increase. For more information, consult your tax advisor, visit the Franchise Tax Board (FTB) website at [www.ftb.ca.gov](http://www.ftb.ca.gov), or call FTB at (800) 852-5711.

"The LAFCU Board Election and Annual Meeting will be Tuesday, Feb. 23. Many of our retirees hold office in the Credit Union, which is also a contributor to our Golf Tourney."



The Dinosaurus logo.



Dinosaurus members, back row from left: Al Duvall, James Norville, Oscar Smith, Jerry Hayes, Charles Gleason, Clarence Franklin, Azell Scoggins and Alfred Turner. Front: Will Hildreth, Anita Kincherlow, Glendon Jeffers, Betty Bailey, Mattie Thompson, Phyllis Massey, Clifford Kennish, Vincent Shepherd, Clyde Williams, and John Hamilton. Not pictured: Alex Bernard and Elva Bufford.



Leonard Valentine.



Donna Grimes.



## These Dinosaurus Are Alive

■ **Airports Retiree group has a motto about helping others.**

*Story and photos courtesy the Dinosaurus*

**AIRPORTS** — The Dinosaurus, formed in 2002, is a group of retired Airport Police, Operations and Security Officers. The idea and concept of the Dinosaurus developed over several years and came to fruition through the effort and leadership of Sgt. Alfred Turner.

The Dinosaurus' mission is to promote and maintain a close personal relationship with fellow law enforcement officers, retired and active, while sustaining and perpetuating the growth, stability and well being of the group through various initiatives and undertakings.

The Dinosaurus have set some goals and objectives that include:

- Research and document the history of the Airport Police for the benefit of past, present and future officers. The Airport Police has a rich history that began in the 1940s.
- Establish and develop a counseling program for active and retired Airport Police personnel.
- Establish a scholarship fund for the children and grandchildren of Airport Police personnel (active and retired).
- Develop and maintain programs, i.e. seminars, lectures, etc., which will provide assistance to the Dinosaurus members who may need information and assistance relating to items include estate planning and healthcare issues.

*Special thanks to Phyllis Massey for the information.*

