

BELLTEL RETIREE

The Official Newsletter of NYNEX and Bell Atlantic Retirees

Winter 2001-2002

Volume 20



President's Message

by C. William Jones

The chain of events that commenced on September 11, 2001 has changed all of our lives. Our hearts go out to all of the victims, their families and friends. We lost members of our Association, active employees and relatives of both. It is my understanding that two of our members were on the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania. Our country has now had to turn its attention to finding and punishing those who are responsible, rebuilding our lives and our buildings. We must improve our security and bolster our economy.

Immediately following the events of September 11, the Board of the Association paused to reexamine our mission and the strategies that are in place to achieve our goals on behalf of retirees. The horrible terrorist attacks on our country and the unbelievable

loss of life that those attacks caused make our issues appear insignificant when compared to the grief many families live with and the devastation of property and businesses in Washington and New York. However, following our review, we concluded that we need not weigh the importance of our issues against others. Our issues are just as important to thousands of retirees today as they were on September 10th. As a matter of fact, there are reasons to believe that, given the new climate in the world, it is even more important for us to work hard to protect retiree pensions and health benefits.

The proof of this can be seen in the most recent material for the annual enrollment of health benefits and company-sponsored life insurance. While not everyone is affected to the same extent, many co-payment amounts have been increased for prescriptions as well as office visits. The rules have been changed on how company-sponsored life insurance coverage is reduced once a person reaches the age of 66. There may be other changes that we do not yet know about. It suffices to say

that the buying power of our pensions continues to decline because of a policy that chips away at benefits, increases their cost to us and denies cost of living increases.

We would like to challenge the company to do the right thing for retirees and the right thing for our country during its hour of need. This would be a perfect time for Verizon to give an across the board increase in pensions. It would show the nation that they are making a real commitment to help heal the economy by putting money in the hands of the people who need it and will spend it on products and services. What better way is there to take a leadership position in corporate America than by demonstrating that Verizon is showing compassion for those who have been hurt by the economic downturn as well as the faithful former employees who helped make Verizon the company it is today. Certainly this is a more productive use of the funds in our pension plans than leaving them there waiting for a rainy day. Mr. Lee and Mr. Seidenberg, **it is already raining!**

To all our members I offer my most sincere thanks for your support this year and I hope that your internal wounds, caused by the recent devastating acts, heal in the months to come.

God Bless America!

Verizon Donates \$1 Million on Behalf of Retirees

In the name of its retirees, the Verizon Foundation presented \$1 million to the American Red Cross disaster relief program to aid families affected by the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

Proceeds from the program will help the families pay for food, clothing, utilities, mortgage or rent and funeral and other related expenses.

"Verizon retirees have responded to the disaster with urgency and dedication," said Ivan Seidenberg, president and co-chief executive officer. "We're making this donation on their behalf to acknowledge and encourage their efforts to help."

Immediately following the disaster, the board of the Association of BellTel Retirees

communicated with Verizon leadership and volunteered to help in getting the Verizon system back in full operational order. The company responded immediately, thanking the Association for the "spirit" of the offer.

C. William Jones, Association president, extended his prayers and thoughts on behalf of the Association to the victims and their families, especially the telephone people who worked in and around the World Trade Center.

Verizon has more than 178,000 retirees, and the \$1 million donation will boost contributions already made by retired employees.

The company has given more than \$8 million to the relief efforts so far, including

\$6 million in two weeks through the Foundation's employee three-to-one matching gift program. It also donated a total of \$1.125 million to the New York Police and Fire Widows and Children's Benefit Fund, The American Red Cross in Washington, D.C., and the American Red Cross in Somerset, Pa.

Verizon had more than 8,000 employees across the nation staff phones for the Sept. 18 telethon, "America: A Tribute to Heroes."

The company's employees can contribute by donating food and clothing through the Salvation Army and by giving blood through the local Red Cross. For more information on how to help, go online at www.redcross.org/donate/donate.html.

Bell Atlantic "Orphans" Speak Out

By Ida Bitetti & Renee Lefex
(NYNEX 1992 Retirees)

Many retirees were excluded in April 2000, when Verizon distributed a lump sum payment to current service and disability pensioners who retired before Feb. 1, 1995 and who were receiving a monthly pension check. In the time period since, many have been left to wonder why they were not given proper consideration and equal treatment with others who they labored side-by-side with for decades.

These retirees, who feel they have become Bell Atlantic's orphans, are individuals not unlike the rest of the retirees in this Association. They dedicated 20, 30 and some 40 years to the company, giving their all. Where they differ is that they elected to take a lump sum pension distribution upon retirement.

In a communication sent to retirees upon the announcement of the lump sum distribution, Verizon said the payment was a THANK YOU for the company's success. To quote the company, "success today would not have been possible without the contributions made in years past by the thousands of NYNEX and Bell Atlantic retirees."

One of us began our service with New York Telephone back on August 31, 1953, leaving the company for a few years to have a family, returning full time from 1971-1992. Upon retirement, the total time with the company was 34 full years.

Why did we accept the lump sum pension option? In 1992 many management

employees through out the company were declared "at risk" due to the implementing of the Forced Management Plan which was designed to aid in downsizing. All management employees at all levels were assigned by their 3rd, 4th and 5th level to a category of being "safe" or "at risk". If you were declared "at risk" then you were eventually separated from the company. If someone in your department that was not "at risk" (like us) decided to take the lump sum incentive and retire, that would then "save" a person who was at risk.

There were some in our department who had less service with the company and had families that were declared "at risk." The two of us along with numerous others decided to take the offer that saved the jobs of our peers.

In the NYNEX Management Severance Plan agreement it is stated "this Separation Agreement and Release in no way affects any rights I (the worker/retiree) may have for benefits under the NYNEX Corporation Management Pension Plan or any other applicable NYNEX Corporation benefit plan."

On the front page of the January 29, 1992 NYNEX Employee Communication, entitled Forced Management Plan Update one of the lead articles on the cover page states "Lump Sum Payments Do Not Affect Benefits For Service Pension Eligible Employees." It goes on to explain, "If you are service pension eligible and retire, the fact that you choose to receive your pension benefit in a lump

sum rather than an annuity will not affect your medical, dental or life insurance benefits.... In addition, payments for certain benefit coverage or credits for the company contribution will continue for those employees selecting to receive the lump sum pension option."

Looking back on our years of service we now realize how much we sacrificed of our own personal lives to help the company when it was in need. How many of you worked endlessly during the blizzard of '66 or the floods in the southern tier of the 70's? Yes we were compensated for these extra hours but how did we explain to our families when we could not be there for junior's little league game or for grandma's 80th birthday party? Yet we still made the sacrifice and gave our dedication to our Bell family.

Now the company has turned its back on us. We did them a favor and they have since then divorced us because of it. Is this fair?

We were excluded from the 'thank you' lump sum that was given to all retirees including the beneficiaries during the month of April 2000. This was called a benefit. What about us? Were our contributions any less? Did we not deserve a thank you? Why were we excluded when the company promised us almost 10 years ago that we would not be excluded from any future benefits!

We went along with everything we were told by the company and trusted the written and verbal assurances given to us by our supervisors and human resources, because we felt it was for the good of the company. As loyal and longtime employees, we knew at the time, that what was good for the company, would be good for us. It seems now that we were mistaken in placing too much trust with them and now they have made us Bell Atlantics orphans!

If you are a retiree who was also ignored in the April 2000 thank you, we want to hear from you. Together maybe we can have our collective voices heard. Contact the authors of this article at: 301 Brookland Drive, Syracuse, New York 13208.

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Note: Herb Manna is a *Bell Atlantic Retiree*.
Discounts are offered to fellow retirees.

THE 140 WEST STREET STORY

By: Bob Rehm

The first object that my eyes focused on, when looking at this fantastic 1923 Picture postcard of 140 West Street, was the bi-plane as it innocently passed below our building's roofline, flying south to north on the Hudson River side of this former Headquarters building of the New York Telephone Company.

Many of us worked at, attended meetings in, and/or certainly are familiar with this architectural prize of a magnificent stone, masonry and steel, and maybe some cast iron, structure of yesteryear. It was constructed decades before anyone envisioned the World Trade Center as its "across the street" neighbor or flanked by WTC building #7. Our Company, now known as Verizon Communications Corporation, had equipment, facilities, offices and employees in both WTC complexes.

Proudly (and fortunately), 140W will continue to stand and serve NYC and our nation in the future. It is an extremely well designed and strongly built structure, anchored many stories below street level into the Manhattan bedrock that has existed for millions, if not billions, of years. While incurring significant damage, and equipment and service losses, "good old" 140W will remain as a previously designated NYC historic landmark, complete with its grand and magnificent lobby - that is complemented by ornately designed and fabricated highly polished bronze, brass and various hues of grained marble and granite antiquities.

As the NYNEX Division Manager for Building Management and Real Estate, it was always my pleasure to visit 140W as it was an historic piece of NYC as well as a showplace of Telephone growth and accomplishments. In the mid to late 1980's, before my retirement, I was very proud to have MR. (and I mean Capital MR.) Joe Giampiccolo as the Building Manager of 140 West Street. Joe had the strong ability and strict determination to make 140W sparkle and run smoothly and without interruption; he and his people knew how to properly maintain its infrastructure in a finely tuned manner with the surgical acuteness and diplomatic skills necessary to please and make its telephone tenants comfortable and safe. Many of us retirees remember this well! Joe, District

Manager John Chapman and I were like proud parents of this giant skyscraper in its day. And Mr. Joe Giampiccolo was the ultimate gentlemanly captain in charge of running this grand Telephone building.

Who can forget the yellow rope lifelines that were strung pole to pole, up and down the street, during the "winds of West Street", and icy inclement weather, in order to provide safer passage and to guide and support 140W's occupants to the front door in the morning and back to the subways at the close of business? The WTC Towers helped narrow, confine and multiply the force and speed of these fierce, relentless winds that had gusted East across the open and flat New Jersey Meadowlands before swiftly surfing the chilly waters of the Hudson River. Who can forget the years of construction, land fill and the opening day of the new world's tallest Towers, monuments to business, to the World and to mankind's accomplishments? Who can forget being a street level spectator watching the Frenchman, Philip Petite, climb the corner of the WTC Tower in the late 70's? It was like watching an insect slowly gaining access to the top of the World, on a building that pierced through the clear blue sky with its brilliant billowing white clouds.

Now for the rest of the story - AND WHO WILL EVER FORGET the two innocent space age jetliners we saw pictures of on TV on September 11, 2001. Only those aircraft were commandeered by a handful of madmen, bent on death for themselves and causing the death of over 100 innocent passengers.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if I could return to the feeling of safety I initially had viewing



EARLY NYC SKYSCRAPER: A 1923 photo depicting the Barclay Vesey building located at 140 West Street was the original home of the New York Telephone Company. It was the closest neighbor to the Twin Towers. The building sustained heavy damage in the September 11th tragedy.

that 1923 bi-plane pass 140W and the property of our future neighbor, the WTC?

GOD Bless all those lives lost, injured and affected by this tragedy!

GOD Bless the firefighters, police and all other true blue Americans who raced to the scene.

GOD Bless 140 West Street, Verizon, its employees and retirees.

And, GOD BLESS AMERICA



GOD BLESS AMERICA

After retiring from VERIZON in 1991,

I STRETCHED my pension check by relocating to "Paradise South", Wilmington, NC. Now I am a REALTOR, ACCREDITED BUYER'S AGENT & SRS. REAL ESTATE SPECIALIST working exclusively with newcomers to our south-east Atlantic shore. SO CALL ME "Y" AL".

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It's All In The Family For Lou Miano

When retiree Lou Miano of Needham, Mass., began as a 16-year-old stock boy at "Ma Bell" in 1946, little did he know that choice would take him through the company spanning parts of six decades.

His story is one of working his way up through the ranks of New England Telephone and later NYNEX. As he went on - with a few years off to serve with the United States military in Korea - he made stops in the public coin department, collecting the money from payphones and installing outdoor booths, in the commercial business office and in the marketing department as a salesman, sales instructor and sales manager.

He retired as the District Operations Manager in the Customer Service department.

"I recognized the changing times and thought, maybe, 'Hey, this is the time to go,'" he said. So, in 1990, he retired.

But if you think Lou enjoyed his time at the company, he said he's really enjoying his retirement because he has been able to do his dream job - working with his son.

Edward Miano runs the Massachusetts-based Atlantic Group, a full service real estate and business, brokerage and consulting firm. He started the company in Needham in 1985, growing from an appraisal group to a builder agent for Epoch modular homes.

And he got the start in the business more than a quarter of a century ago from his dad.

While with New England Telephone back in the 70's, one of Lou's jobs was security work as an executive vice president of the Telephone Workers Cooperative Bank. Sometimes he brought along his young son, Edward, when he visited the homes of people who had applied to the bank for a mortgage to see if they were qualified.

Little did Lou know at the time that he would be laying the foundation for his son's professional life - and his retired life.

And when Lou retired in 1990 - after an amazing 44 years on the job - his son found that he had a new helper.

"From the first day I retired, I never missed a beat," Miano said. "I came in here and set up an office for myself."

Lou said that when he retired at 59, he felt he was still young.

"I just enjoy it (working)," he said. "I

"It's served him well and served me well," he said. "He's done extraordinarily well."

Lou is involved with meeting customers and talking to them about the concept of a modular home. He invites them to the factory and shows them sample houses.

In case you think Lou has been busy in his retirement, he made another major commitment of time and effort in 1996 when he joined the Board of the Association of BellTel retirees. He is representing and fighting for the rights of his former colleagues from New



SIDE BY SIDE: Since retiring in 1990, Lou, (left) has helped his son, Edward, with his business, the Atlantic Group.

can't imagine not working. It would be awful."

While he's "in and out" of his son's office, he's glad that he can lend a hand.

"Any dad in the same position would be doing the same thing," he said. "If you step back and look at it, it's flattering."

And, he said, "it's not bad" that Ed looks to him for advice.

England Telephone.

During the early years of his retirement, Miano didn't listen to the knocks when the Association came calling.

"At first, I really wasn't interested," he said.

But John Parente, the Association's Vice President of Member Development and one of its founders, persisted.

"Several calls and visits from John and I finally caved in," he said with a chuckle.

Since joining the Association, Lou, who is the Vice President of Public Relations and the Director representing New England retirees, has played a key role in its foothold in the New England area. He presides over a large geographic territory that encompasses some 10,000 retirees, which is about 20 percent of the Association.

He ran monthly meetings with key sup-

(Continued on page 5)



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It's All In The Family For Lou Miano

(Continued from page 4)

porters of the Association, Telephone Credit Unions and also with Pioneer Life members to update them on issues.

Through contacts in the Pioneers, Lou met key Southern New England Telephone (SNET) retirees who were eager to organize because they were facing serious retiree issues. With the help of Lou and the Association, SNET has, today, a very impressive and active retiree organization and is a founding member of NRLN.

Lou said he wants to continue to reach out to the Pioneers, a group that he's famil-

iar with from when he worked as a liaison between New England Bell and the Pioneers from 1983-86. Lou hastens to add that we all are Pioneers as well as Association members.

Lou also was instrumental getting Massachusetts Congressman John Tierney interested in sponsoring HR1322, legislation aimed at closing a loophole in the Employment Retirement Security Act that concerns health plans. He said that he is really glad that the National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) has jumped on board with the Association on this and future legislative issues.

"Our group has the potential, with the NRLN, to be true advocates for retirees," he said. "It's a great, great opportunity and I hope we can pull it off."

Since 1996, when Lou joined the Board of the Association, he has been kept busy wearing two hats — as a retiree advocate and as a mentor and model father.

Lou, thank you for your commitment of time and effort on behalf of all retirees, from New England Telephone, and all of the Bell Atlantic companies.

If you would like more information about volunteering in your community with the Association, call us at (631) 367-3067.

Get Ready With Those 'John Hancocks'

A petition drafted by the National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) supporting the enactment of HR1322, legislation concerning health care benefits, now is available.

The legislation, the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act of 2001, was proposed by Congressman John Tierney and is aimed at closing a loophole in the Employment Retirement Security Act that concerns health plans. If enacted, it will prevent corporations from taking away promised health care benefits from retirees, and would order the return of health benefits already taken away.

Our national petition drive should focus in on representatives who have failed to announce support for this pro-retiree bill. As President Bush stated in his September 2001 Address to Congress, "they are either with us or against us." Through signatures you and retirees around the nation collect, let's offer Congress the same option. If you are for HR1322, you are with us - if not, you're against us.

The bill currently has 76 sponsors - all Democrats - but we should have a lot more. And, by the way, where are the Republicans? Even if your elected official is one of the legislation's supporters, we ask members to go out and get 20 or more signatures of neighbors, family and friends of legal voting age, if you can. If through a church, social club or neighborhood group you can get 50, 100 or more signatures, let us know how we can help. Ask yourself, if we don't start flexing

our electoral muscles now and demonstrate our abilities to our officials, why would our elected officials want to support this bill?

Ask each signer to autograph three petitions, with one for your local member of Congress and the others for each of the two Senators in your state of residence.

Petitions are available online at www.NRLN.com or by calling the Association of BellTel Retirees at (631) 367-3067. If

you reach our voice mail, leave the number of petitions you require, your name and mailing address. All petitions should be returned by Jan. 15 to the Association's headquarters at P.O. Box 33; Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y., 11724.

The NRLN will deliver signed petitions in bulk to our elected officials on Capitol Hill. Let's make sure the effort is a powerful indication of what we can accomplish.

BellTel Retirees...

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www.belltelretirees.org

Pension Increases - Not As Promised

The ravages of inflation take away a chunk of our pension buying power each and every year. For decades Bell System retirees as a matter of policy were routinely granted ad hoc cost of living adjustments to help offset the economic erosion

they faced in their later years.

Over the last decade the erosion has become much more painful for Bell Atlantic retirees - as those from the NYNEX side of the company have not seen an increase since early in the year 1991. Those on the Bell

Atlantic side of the company were granted their last increase in 1993. The former union represented Bell Atlantic retirees received their last increase in 1996.

Exactly what economic burden has inflation inflicted upon retirees? The attached pension buying power erosion calculator demonstrates what has happened to NYNEX retirees. Take the example of a pensioner who retired in 1970. With ad hoc increases (up until 1991) a \$5,000 annual pension in 1970 would today have a purchasing power of \$1,855. Without ad hoc increases over that same period of time, that same pension's value would slump further to only \$1,150.

New York State, which granted periodic adjustments, changed the policy to annual COLAs in 1999 for this very reason. This means that just like social security, those retirees receive annual inflation adjustments. Why don't we?

The above example of inflation upon a pension over a 30 year period is not too far fetched, considering that we are in a day and age when employee buyouts has increased the regularity of workers retiring in their late 40's and early 50's. That combined with the average American's lifespan growing, it will not be uncommon for today's retirees and workers to have to live on their pensions for possibly 35 years.

Traditionally, the company has given raises in the form of ad hoc increases to its retirees and made it policy that this could be expected to continue. When inflation took a big bite out of disposable income — as it did in the late 1970's and early 80's — the company acted to shield its retirees by granting 3 increases over a period of 35 months, including 16 % in December of 1979, 9% in June of 1981 and 7.5% in October of 1982. Outside this period, generally ad hoc pension increases have been granted approximately every two to three years. In the 1970's increases ranged from 7.2-8 percent. In the mid-1980's to the last granting of increases, the average ranged from 4.5-5 percent.

"We Were Promised Cost of Living Adjustments"

Several retirees have come forward to the Association documenting that they had been told in meetings with their supervisors, prior to retirement, that should they leave the company or accept a buyout package, that

(Continued on page 7)

PENSION BUYING POWER EROSION CALCULATOR

Inflation Rates / Pension Increases

Year	Inflation Rates	Ad Hoc Pension Increase		Buying Power \$5000 (No Increases)	Buying Power \$5000 (With Increases)
1971	3.3	? (10/1/71)		\$5000	\$5000
1972	3.4	-		4830	4830
1973	8.7	-		4410	4410
1974	12.3	8.0 (1/1/74)		3870	4220
1975	6.9	-		3605	3930
1976	4.9	-		3425	3735
1977	6.7	7.2 (1/1/77)		3195	3755
1978	9.0	-		3005	3415
1979	13.3	16.0 (12/1/79)		2605	3510
1980	11.6	-		2300	3100
1981	7.9	9.0 (7/1/81)		2120	2855
1982	3.4	7.5 (10/1/82)		2045	2975
1983	3.3	-		1975	2875
1984	2.0	-		1905	2775
1985	3.3	4.5 (4/1/85)		1845	2810
1986	2.0	-		1805	2755
1987	3.8	-		1735	2650
1988	3.8	4.5 (5/1/88)		1670	2550
1989	3.9	-		1605	2450
1990	4.8	-		1530	2330
1991	3.8	5.0 (1/1/91)		1470	2360
1992	3.1	-		1425	2290
1993	2.9	-		1385	2220
1994	2.9	-		1345	2155
1995	2.5	-		1310	2105
1996	2.9	-		1270	2045
1997	2.0	-		1245	2005
1998	1.5	-		1225	1975
1999	2.4	-		1195	1930
2000	3.9	-		1150	1855



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Retirees Make Up America's Biggest Voting Bloc

Do you know the power that we retirees and soon-to-be-retirees hold on Election Day?

Based on voter registration and turnout by age in the 1998 General Election, more than 60 percent of the total votes cast in the United States were by those people 45 years or older. That age group also turned out en masse, with 61.3 percent of those 65 and older voting, and 56.5 of those 45-64 voting.

Those are rather impressive numbers, but are we taking proper advantage of those statistics? Are we delivering a message to our elected officials?

Across the nation, many retirees from some of the biggest corporations such as Verizon, General Motors, Prudential, Sears have stood by as witnesses as their health care benefits have been reduced. Now seniors on a fixed income have to assume a greater responsibility for their health care coverage.

Many of us have worked for the same company for 20 to 30 years and thought of these companies as a second family. Over the years, we gave it our all to make it a bigger, better and stronger company. After all, this was our "family," worthy of the very best.

After we retired, what a shock it has been to learn that our company, our "family" was not loyal! In fact, looking at these and so many other corporations, it seems their loyalty is only to the bottom line.

This corporate attitude has helped create the National Retiree Legislative Network, representing 1.5 million retirees and, in the process, reaching out to 20 million more. Its goal is to pass a bill now pending in Congress, HR1322, the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act of 2001, sponsored by Representative John F. Tierney (D-Mass.).

The bill, which has 76 co-sponsors, is aimed at closing a loophole in the Employment Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA) that governs private health plans.

Fellow retirees, we have the power, through the ballot, to correct these injustices. If our bill becomes law, corporations would not be allowed to take away our health benefits that were promised to us during our working years. It also would require a company to restore health benefits that were previously taken away after retirement unless it can demonstrate substantial business hardship.

As the numbers at the beginning of the article attest, we have substantial power at the ballot box, and with an upcoming Congressional Primary and Election in 2002, the future of the bill is in our hands. I urge you to write or call your representative and ask him/her to co-sponsor and vote for HR1322. Let your representatives know that you belong to a large voting bloc in their community and your voice will be heard.

It's up to you. Act now!

Pension Increases - Not As Promised

(Continued from page 6)

they should expect and factor in ad-hoc increases every 2-3 years and lifetime health and dental, as part of their retirement package. Several former company managers have also stated that on a regular basis they would be asked to counsel people in their groups considering retirement and that they were to tell them that regular ad-hoc increases and lifetime health and dental were part of that agreement.

One member tells the BellTel Retiree, "I was among 6,000 people who left NYNEX on April 1, 1988. At that time our bosses instructed us that when making a decision to retire we should weigh pension increases and lifetime health and dental (at 1988 levels) into our decision. We were promised COLAs and we haven't seen one in a decade.

Can the Association do anything to help, please?"

Retirees, we want to hear from you! As a worker considering retirement, were you advised by your supervisor that part of your retirement package included lifetime increases with healthcare and dental that would not diminish in the years to come? Or were any of our members a supervisor who directed or advised their staff about their options and to expect pension increases and health benefits when they came to you to discuss the decision to retire? We need your feedback.

Use the attached form, or feel free to write on a separate sheet, what you were advised of while considering retirement. If you were a supervisor, what information were you asked to provide to the people in your group. The information will be kept confidential.

Mail to Attention of: **I Want a COLA**
Association of BellTel Retirees
PO Box 33
Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724

Name _____ Year of Retirement: _____

Address _____ Company Retired From: _____

_____ Position Prior to Retirement _____

Phone/email: _____

Please take all the space you need or attach another page to detail information or what you were advised regarding your pension increases and benefits. If you were a supervisor, what were you told to advise your group about our pensions and benefits:

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HMO's Stick It To Retirees Again

By: Ed Creegan, Executive Board Member,
CWA National Retiree Council

Thousands of former NYNEX union retirees have just been dealt another major raw deal in their medical benefits plan. This time the issue is Medicare, as many Medicare HMOs are singling out retirees on Medicare for special mis-treatment.

Without any notice of a major change, the 2002 open enrollment forms and accompanying material were mailed out to all active employees and retirees. If you are a retiree on Medicare and enrolled in a Medicare HMO you could be in for a shock!

The company makes it clear that if you intend to stay in the same plan you do not have to do anything. Therefore many people, myself included, paid little attention to the informational packet that was sent. Well, I was in the same plan for over thirty years and there was no need for me to send anything in, so what would be the need to read through the entire document.

However, even if you did not change your plan starting in 2002 and you are in a Medicare HMO, it could be dramatically affected. Unless you read the material sent along by your insurer, you might not have known that...It seems that some HMOs, such as HIP of New York and MVP Select, have imposed a significant yearly retiree contribution up to \$1641 a year on each of their Medicare plans. Without any notice they pulled off this major injustice/price increase on Medicare retirees.

What HMOs are doing to seniors is a disgrace and it will get a lot worse if they can get away with it. My recommendation is that retirees, particularly those on Medicare who are in an HMO, check it closely. If they have imposed a co-pay upon you that did not exist before, consider leaving that HMO and going into the Medical Expense Plan if you have one or join another HMO that has not imposed such a co-pay. There are many plans under Verizon, and while I am not aware of the details of each of them, you

should look at your own plan and see if you were affected. If you were not, I assure you that you will be in the near future.

It is my intent to acquire all of the information possible about these under-handed HMOs. Then with the assistance of the CWA, the IBEW National Unions, and the Association of BellTel Retirees, I hope we can bring this information before our state and federal legislators and demand a major investigation of these HMOs, as soon as possible.



UNITED, TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

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Bell Retiree Forum Available Online

An online community, "Bell Telephone Retirees," has been created to give retirees a comfortable environment on the World Wide Web where they can share their thoughts. The forum enables retirees to post messages, discuss issues and chat. The site even includes a tutorial that takes visitors step by step through the forum to get them started.

Harry Bullard, who worked for Bell Atlantic for 24 years, created and maintains the forum. He said he wants to make the site known to all Bell Telephone retirees because he feels they are all in the same boat.

"As retired Bell employees, we have a lot in common," he writes on his Website, including "making ends meet,

health care, prescription costs, pension issues."

He urges all retirees to participate in the free forum, regardless of the "kind of job you had with Bell - management, craft, clerical."

Bullard joined Bell of Pennsylvania in 1966 and worked in Philadelphia before being transferred to Silver Springs, Md., where he spent his final years with Network Services Inc before retiring in 1991.

To participate in the forum, log on at www.delphi.com/belltel/start and fill out the quick and free registration. Then click on "Take Our Tours" which will show you how to start participating in the Bell Telephone retiree online community.

Advertising Representative:
Jim Falborn (212) 260-1731

Heartwarming Member Response

We sent a letter at the end of August to those of you on our mailing list who had not contributed during 2001. It was our hope to reiterate to you what we are about, how we are working for you without pay and to clear up some misconceptions that you might have about us.

Your response was heartwarming and appreciated. We received more than 2,300 contributions prior to the Sept. 11 attacks - events that put all of our lives on hold. We thank you and wish that we had the time and money to place a personal thank you call to each one of you.

Along with the donations, we received something equally as important - your comments. Many of you took the time to write, give us your thoughts and advise us of your personal status, such as being a surviving spouse or on a very limited income. You helped straighten our mailing list by telling us of errors or duplications - which has helped us save money - and told us that our letter helped you understand what we are about.

Here are some of the comments we received:

"thank you...for explaining all that your organization does. I really had no idea that

you are a non-profit, volunteer organization...I will pass on this information to other retired friends." -JMM.

"Sorry - we were guilty of assuming you were included in the Pioneer dues. Thanks for clarifying!" -MP.

"Keep up the good work. Best wishes for continued success. I give you credit for the Special Lump Sum payment. Thanks a lot. I'm using it to go traveling." -GD.

"I am sorry. When I get a COLA increase in my pension check, I'll be able to donate." -MS.

"Great job, keep up the good work and PRAY for all those in NYC." -TM.

"As a spouse of a retiree, I didn't know where or if I belong in the organization, but

I appreciate receiving the quarterly newsletter. I became more aware and current of the 'retiree' issues..." -CF.

"Wish I could give more. After 22+ years, the pension is a lifesaver, but we all are hurt by inflation. Thank you for all you have done..." -JC.

"Thank you for all the help you help gather for us old timers. Will be 95 (on) Oct. 3." -FM.

"Because of medical bills not covered by Empire BC/BS, I don't have spare money...I also have not received any lump sums. I missed everything by 4 months..." -CF.

"Get us our raises. I thought we took care of our own? My Mrs. has to work because Bell System is so cheap!" -MI.

ASSOCIATION OF BELLTEL RETIREES INC. MISSION STATEMENT

The Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. is dedicated to promote the protection and enhancement of Bell Atlantic retiree pensions and benefits.

The Association will convince the company to properly care for its thousands of dedicated retired employees.

The Association will conduct activities designed to educate elected federal, state and local representatives and promote passage of legislation which will protect and guarantee, rather than invade our hard-earned pension and benefits funds.

ASSOCIATION OF BELLTEL RETIREES INC.

P.O. BOX 33, COLD SPRING HARBOR, NY 11724

Yes! I want to join the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. I support you in your fight to protect the pension and benefit rights of both management and non-management retirees and active employees.

Enclosed is my tax-deductible contribution of:

Active Employee Member* \$25 minimum \$36.50‡ \$50 or Other \$ _____

Retiree Member \$20 \$25 \$36.50‡ \$50 or Other \$ _____

Check Enclosed or Charge contribution to my Visa MasterCard

Credit Card Acct.# _____ Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

Nam _____ Address _____

City/State/Zip Code: _____ Telephone: _____

Management Non-Management I retired or expect to retire in (year) _____ from (Co.) _____

Yours Commence

* All names are kept strictly confidential ‡ Only 10¢ a day

The Association of BellTel Retirees is a 501 C3 IRS • Tax-Exempt Corporation representing all retirees and active employees of Bell Atlantic

Member Mailbag



No "Entitlement" Mentality

To the editor:

Who really has a sense of "Entitlement?" This is a letter to our corporate officers that answers Lea Davies accusations that we have an "Entitlement" mentality.

It seems there have been several instances where our leadership has indicated that one of our problems in first and second level management is that we have this "entitlement attitude." Part of me can see where they might feel that way if they were not walking in our shoes, but mostly I've felt they were just spewing conservative political baloney.

It now seems that any thoughts of entitlement in this company are strongest at the top. When as a group, for the year 2000, the top six guys received salary, bonus, and other compensation of tens of millions of dollars, along with stock options worth hundreds of millions of dollars, one has to ask is this incentive or is this entitlement. After all, they are just doing the jobs for which they were promoted or hired.

At the risk of sounding naive, perhaps someone can answer this question: Why is it

that when our leaders get to the top, they need huge incentives to do their best work? I would have liked to assume that our best performers were those who worked their way up through hard and effective work and strong company focus. I would have thought that these leaders had a focus on the best interests of the business/customers, the shareholders and the employees. Some at the top might rationalize that the open competitive markets cause the huge compensation packages and they are entitled to feel that way if they want.

An equally plausible explanation is an apparent overwhelming feeling of entitlement that they must be worth it because of the profits generated. In Verizon's case, the profits are inflated as a result of shifting pension fund surpluses to the income statement. If they are worth all that compensation, was it because they shifted funds that were supposed to have been set aside for the exclusive benefit of the employees or did they feel the "E word" — entitlement?

The latest pension plan represents an improvement for me, but it sort of feels like when I lost my wallet. I was grateful when it was returned, but bummed to have lost all the money. The devastation done by the Bell Atlantic Cash Balance Plan conversion has only been half repaired. While I appreciate the pension improvement, some anonymous stranger did not lighten my pocketbook, it was emptied by those we came to trust. To return

the money is not about entitlement, it is all about fulfilling a compensation agreement committed to by the company over the last 30 years. Go forward, make changes if you must, but grandfather those who worked just as hard as Ivan to get us to where we are today.

Respect and appreciation is not the message I feel. This pension improvement is 'Fair and Reasonable,' only to the guys at the top who get the big entitlement compensation packages.

— Alfred H. Scholz

Asbestos Caused Cancer

Dear Association of BellTel Retirees,

I've been battling Malignant Mesothelioma, which you may or may not know is caused by Asbestos, which in most cases is a job related cancer and at this time has no known cure. So life is short!

My question is: Have other retirees contacted the Association about asbestos caused cancer? The New Jersey Bell Telephone Co. had asbestos gloves in their power rooms and by their emergency diesels, splicers used asbestos when wiping sleeves on lead cables, and all the soldering iron holders had an asbestos wiping pad to clean the tip. There was also fireproof wallboard put up that had an asbestos base to it. I can recall seeing asbestos in other uses in number 5 x-bar offices.

Maybe a question can be put to members in your newsletter to see if there are others that have Mesothelioma caused by asbestos. I would appreciate hearing an answer to this question. On May 25th of 2000 the doctors gave me less than 2 years but I'm hopeful that the experimental chemo treatment that I've been undergoing for the last 16 months will do some good.

By the way, I believe in the Association and like to keep updated on issues in the newsletter. I thank all the Board members for all the work and dedication that they put into running the Association and putting out an informative newsletter.

If there are other retirees or even surviving spouses concerned or suffering from this horrible disease, I'd like to hear from them. I can be reached at (732) 741-8515.

Sincerely,

Richard K. Moraller

Installer, Switchman; Local 827 IBEW
New Jersey Bell, 1988

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Medigap...You Better Shop Around

The U.S. General Accounting Office released a report this past summer showing the wide variety of annual premiums - in some cases more than 560 percent - for Medigap coverage for basically the same plans within the same state.

A Medigap policy is a health insurance policy sold by private insurance companies to fill gaps in Original Medicare Plan coverage.

The GAO studied 10 categories which started at the most basic plan (Plan A) to ones that pay for prescription drugs (Plan J). But when shopping for a plan, it's "Buyer beware!"

For example, under Plan A in New York, a 65-year-old person could pay anywhere

from \$864 to \$1,560 annually. In Texas, the disparity is even worse. Under Plan C, a 65-year-old person could pay in the range of \$664 to \$2,125.

In a recent Wall Street Journal report, Diane Archer, president of the Medicare Rights Center, a non-profit group that helps senior citizens in evaluating Medicare, said that prices of identical policies vary based on how companies set premiums.

She said that many times, the lowest premiums are based on a person's age. This means as we age, the price rises.

Another way, she said, is that companies give an "issue age," which doesn't escalate much as a person gets older. However, if we purchased this insurance at a later age, our

premiums will always be high.

Ms. Archer said that as a person ages, the best way is finding an insurer that offers a "community rating." This means that all people in our area pay the same premium, no matter what our age.

She also said that we should be cautious of plans that cover prescription drugs (Plans H, I and J) because they might not be as good of a deal as they seem. These plans are a lot more expensive and only start paying for prescriptions after a hefty deductible is met.

To read the GAO report, go to www.goa.gov and look up (GAO-01-941). You can also contact the Medicare Rights Center at (800) 333-4114, or look them up on the Web at www.medicarerights.org.

Annual Meeting Heading South to Florida

The Association of BellTel Retirees would like to invite you to our sixth annual membership meeting on Friday, March 8, in Fort Pierce, FL, at the Spanish Lakes Country Club Village. The annual meeting gives members a chance to gather with other retirees and old work friends, hear about our Association's progress in the past year and plans for the future and voice concerns.

In the past, retirees living in Florida and snowbirds have made several requests to host gatherings. Our annual meetings have been hosted by retirees in Boston, Syracuse, Atlantic City (twice) and Long Island. With more than 4,000 members in the Sunshine State and many more snowbirds, Association directors decided it would be a great spot for our sixth annual membership meeting.

The meeting will update members on legislative progress, including HR1322 legislation proposed by Congressman John Tierney to stop and overturn the loss of our health benefits. The meeting also will inform members on how to become involved as advocates for their own pension and benefit rights and how to enlist friends and neighbors in the crusade.

Danish and coffee will be served beginning at 8:30 a.m., followed by a business meeting from 10 a.m. to noon.

There is a \$5 registration fee per person. An admission ticket will be mailed to you when your check and registration form is received. If you have any questions about the meeting or wish to reserve a seat, call our headquarters at (631) 367-3067 or e-mail us at association@belltelretirees.org. If you want to join the welcoming and planning committees, contact one of our local co-hosts in Florida, Peg Stewart at (561) 465-9611.



(Registration Form)

**'Early Bird' RSVP for Association of BellTel Retirees Annual Meeting
Fort Pierce, Florida, March 8, 2002, Friday at 8:30 a.m.**

I will attend the meeting in Florida - # in party _____

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____ E-Mail _____

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____ (\$5 per person)

Yes, I would like to serve on the: _____ Planning Committee
 _____ Welcoming Committee

No, I will not be able to serve on any committee at this time. _____

Please return this registration form and fee to: Association of BellTel Retirees Inc; c/o Jack Sellen; P.O. Box 457; New Milford, N.J. 07646.

September 11th Tragedy's Ripple Effect on American Non-Profits

In the wake of the tragic events of September 11th, charities aiding victims of the attacks upon Pennsylvania, Washington, D.C. and New York City have been overwhelmed with the generosity of the American people. Reports say over \$1 billion dollars have been collected by charities including the American Red Cross and United Way to help individuals and families affected.

Almost immediately though, thousands of other non-for-profit organizations and charities throughout our communities began reporting that their phones have stopped ringing and donations have fallen off by alarming rates. Many say they have been forced to begin trimming necessary services they render in communities every day, even charities providing help to the victims of September 11th.

One example is the National Council for Unity, based in New York City. The

organization helps some 5,000 children and teens from Maine to California deal with problems of violence and bias in their communities. Immediately called upon to help quell bias incidents taking place in dozens of communities and schools post-attack, the Council is now struggling for its own survival. The group's annual fund raiser, scheduled to be held at the United Nations Assembly Hall in December, had to be rescheduled because too many corporations and individuals had redirected their charitable giving to World Trade Center related charities. To counter, the Council downsized the event and is taking emergency action to avoid layoffs of counselors.

The Association of BellTel Retirees is a 501C3 not-for-profit organization run by retiree volunteers, that likewise, relies on the kind support of its members for donations. "In the weeks following September 11th, we

have also witnessed and can confirm the accounts of so many other non-profits," according Eileen Lawrence, Association Treasurer.

She reports that contributions from the membership of the Association have dropped dramatically when compared to this time last year. If the trend were to continue, it would cause the Association to detour or postpone some of its strategies. However, she is confident that the membership will respond with their same enthusiastic support to our annual appeal in January 2002.

Let's not forget the important work done by local charitable organizations, like your local YMCA or Humane Society. Likewise, the Association's mandate to fight for the protection of retiree pension and benefit rights must go on. We must remember that our issues today are no less important than they were on September 10th.

Social Security Giving 2.6% COLA Increase

Social Security recipients can expect a 2.6 percent cost-of-living increase in 2002, equal to about \$22 a month for the average retiree. This rise follows a 3.5 percent rise in 2001, when inflation was considerably higher. The 3.5 percent rise in 2001 was a nine-year high.

The increase is tied directly to the growth of the Consumer Price Index for the 12 months through September 2001, as calculated by the government. The CPI is the government's chief measure of inflation.

"Inflation continues to be low, which is certainly good news for the elderly," said Larry G. Massanari, acting commissioner of the Social Security Administration.

Some 45.6 million Americans are recipients of Social Security payments. For the average recipient of Social Security, checks will increase in January to \$874 per month from \$852. The maximum retirement benefit will rise to \$1,660 from \$1,536. The government also announced that monthly Medicare premiums would increase 8 percent or \$4 per month in the next year to

\$54. The Medicare increase, which takes effect on January 1, is not based on the CPI, but reflects higher health care costs. The premiums are deducted from most elderly and disabled Americans' Social Security checks.

More than 60 percent of retirees rely on Social Security for more than half of their income, according to the AARP.



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