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BELLTEL RETIREEE

The Official Newsletter for Retirees of Bell Atlantic, GTE, NYNEX, Verizon and Its Subsidiaries

Fall 2004

Volume 31

Retiree Spotlight:



Meet Luther and Margaret Becraft – The Association of BellTel Retirees' 100,000th Member

Luther and Margaret Becraft spent most of their careers working to keep people connected, while providing for their own families. When Luther retired in 1981 and subsequently Margaret retired in 1993, they were determined to remain involved in the lives of retirees.

Luther and Margaret maintain active lifestyles that include membership in the Telephone Pioneers of America and the Retirees of the Communications Workers of America, Local 2202. During an April 2004 meeting of the Pioneers, Luther and Margaret heard a speech by President and Executive Director of the Association of BellTel Retirees, C. William Jones.

That presentation played a key role in the Becrafts' decision to join the Association, ironically becoming its 100,000th and 100,001th members.

(Continued on page 8)

Will Verizon Sell Upstate New York Land Lines?

Verizon Communications has proposed selling some 2.6 million access lines in upstate New York for \$7.7 billion that opponents say would most likely result in substantial job loss and may also lessen the service quality that the region receives.

To Verizon, such a sale of major portions of its wireline network would allow it to focus more attention to areas where it feels it has more growth and profit opportunity -- its wireless division.

Peter Thonis a spokesperson for Verizon told the BellTel Newsletter that Verizon continually evaluates its assets and properties based on strategic fit and financial performance. And that while the company has previously acknowledged sale discussions have taken place, no definitive sales agreement has been announced.

He said, "Every time we sell properties, the provisions vary based on a variety of factors, including the outcome of negotiations with the buyer, existing contractual provisions, external environments (and) location."

Union leaders have been saying that the real reason behind Verizon's strategy is to decrease its massive debt and recoup from bad investments. "This sale would be used to reduce Verizon's \$44.7 billion debt...and used to finance the expansion of wireless," says Communication Workers of America Local 1103's Chris Cutter. "This would be bad for the upstate customers and for an already bad (upstate New York) economy."

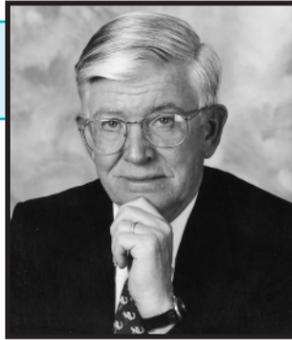
In a continuing effort to stop Verizon's proposed sale, hundreds of CWA members and other supporters of the workers

assembled in the Empire State's capital, Albany to persuade state legislators against allowing such a deal to happen.

If Verizon is able to push ahead with a sale, union leaders say up to 5,500 members of the CWA, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), in addition to thousands of other company employees' jobs may be at risk in New York.

Pamela Harrison, president of CWA Local 1103's Life Members Council and a member of the Association of BellTel Retirees Board said, "When the national telephone network was handed to the Baby Bells in the early 1980s, it was done so with faith that the system would be in good hands with the local operating companies acting as 'shepherds' for the ratepayers who built the system over the last 125 years. Unfortunately

(Continued on page 4)



President's Message

by C. William Jones

time to write a few letters and make a few calls in order to protect your pensions and benefits? Why elect someone who opposes retiree friendly legislation or supports retiree hostile legislation?

There are only two months left for all of us to pull together and take action. Below are four important issues, a brief description and a statement as to what action you want your Representatives to take.

ISSUE 1: PROTECTING RETIREE PENSIONS AND HEALTH CARE BENEFITS

Corporations have unleashed waves of cutbacks in company-paid health benefits for retirees who now bear increasing and unforeseen costs for health care. These companies are breaking their promises to loyal workers who earned these benefits through years of service.

ACTION: COSPONSOR AND URGE THE PASSAGE OF H.R.1322, THE EMERGENCY RETIREE HEALTH BENEFITS PROTECTION ACT.

This legislation closes a loophole in ERISA and will protect retirees from the reduction or cancellation of benefits once they have retired. Further, it provides recovery for retirees already affected.

ISSUE 2: MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL OF 2003

The bill places the interests of drug manufacturers and private health insurers before the interests of seniors. A new report from the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) estimates that the new law will strip millions of retirees of their drug coverage by the year 2006. The

law does little to prevent employers from eliminating benefits promised to retirees who earned them through years of service.

ACTION: AMEND THE MEDICARE PRESCRIPTION DRUG BILL

We urge Congress to revisit the Medicare Prescription Drug Act next year to amend sections that adversely impact corporate retirees. Safeguards must be added to prevent employers from eliminating currently provided benefits.

ISSUE 3: DRUG IMPORTATION

Millions of America's retirees are seeing their pensions, Social Security income and savings eaten away by the high cost of prescription drugs. Some simply cannot afford the drugs their doctor has prescribed for them.

ACTION: SUPPORT S.2328

Congress needs to pass this legislation making it legal for the importation of prescription drugs into this country. We are supporting S.2328, a bi-partisan bill introduced in the U.S. Senate that would legalize the importation of prescription drugs and would implement a system to guarantee their safety.

ISSUE 4: UNDERFUNDED CORPORATE RETIREE PENSION PLANS

H.R. 1776, legislation currently proposed in Congress, will allow corporations to legally under fund pension plans. If enacted, the bill would allow large corporations to change the method of calculating pension plan funding downward – endangering the solvency of many pension plans.

ACTION: OPPOSE H.R.1776

Legislators must oppose H.R. 1776 and any other bills that would endanger the solvency of corporate pension plans. Corporations cannot be let off the pension funding hook!

For those who have access to the Internet, you can get more information on these issues and sample letters that you can use or revise and send to both of your Senators and your Congressional Representative. Go to www.nrln.org find "Write to Congress," enter your zip code and click on "Go." This site also gives you the names and contact information for your representatives.

If you prefer not to use the Internet and need your representative's contact information, call our office and give us your name, zip code and telephone number and we will be happy to provide that information. *

Members Speak Up About Forming an American Retiree Political Party

In the last edition of the BellTel Retiree, we asked members to tell us what they think on the topic of "if America has room for a third major political party?"

During the past year many seniors have made public in the press, in internal correspondence and in discussions with the Association and other pro-retiree groups, like the National Retiree Legislative Network, their feeling of being disenfranchised by many of those elected to serve on Capitol Hill.

This comes at a time when there are many major retiree issues up for debate in Congress -- prescription drug importation and Medicare reform legislation and the Emergency Retiree Health Benefits Protection Act. Sentiment expressed by many retirees has been that the outcomes of these major pieces of legislation have gone against this nation's retirees and in favor of the major lobbying interests of big business on Capitol Hill.

With such sentiment widely discussed, it seemed the appropriate time to raise this question. Does America have room for a third major political party? Here is what the members have to say on the subject.

"I think a retiree party is not a good idea. The drawbacks outweigh the benefits. The NRLN (National Retiree Legislative Network) would seem to be the best alternative. I've sent in my form. Thanks for your diligent efforts, they are appreciated, keep up the good work."

Lucy McGuirk
Cold Spring Harbor, NY

"My first choice would be a reform of the present system to somehow divorce the democratic process from "big money". A third party would at least throw a twist in the current status quo. So, yes you may poll my vote in the affirmative on this issue. I look forward to more information and debate on this subject. Thank you for listening."

Tom Spirito
Via Email

"Your idea regarding a third party is not new. I agree that issue is up for thought if only to add a true voice to elections.

A "Neutral Retiree Movement" like the National Retiree Legislative Network is a superior thought. It would involve any other, large or small, group of retirees who want to protect the pension. I'm all for working with the group. Two old friends, both just retired from Verizon are eager to join the "cause." I appreciate the publication."

William A. Goetz Jr.
Straford, PA

"I'm with you. Go for it and I'll volunteer as much as possible. Just the challenge will wake them up."

Ronald Kukla
Via Email

"In your recent letter you suggest the need for a 3rd political party. May I suggest we already have a very good one called the Constitution Party. Adding still another would hopelessly split the 3rd party momentum. (If I understand you're meaning to start a National Retiree Party). The "Republicrats" have definitely merged. Check out www.constitutionparty.com. No need to reinvent the wheel!"

Charles Baker
Sellersville, PA

"A 3rd major political party? Yes! Concerning not only issues affecting our growing senior population. The need for a 3rd major party has been around for quite some time.

There have been issues that the two current major political parties wouldn't or couldn't disagree on (political collusion). Then, there are issues where Republicans favor "Big Business" and the "very wealthy,"

and the Democrats favor only the "poorest" and "minorities." Sticking it to the middle class."

"The only way to correct this problem of inadequate representation of the greatest tax payers we do, most definitely, need a 3rd major political party to at least make the other two parties honest and separate. I, for one have voted for 3rd party candidates in the past, and was told that I wasted my one vote. I felt it was not wasted because it voiced my true opinion and not some wishy-washy middle of the road collusion crap."

William Mallack
Colonia, NJ

Editors Note:

This is an important election year for America and especially America's retirees. We encourage all of you to get out and vote, in your local primaries and in the general election. Make every retiree vote count and have an impact. We also strongly encourage all retirees to speak up to your local elected officials and let them know that you, and every American retiree, are watching. With more than 35.6 million of us above age 65 we can swing an election, even a Presidential election.

*Take the time to also visit the web site of the National Retiree Legislative Network (www.NRLN.org) to find out more about vital retiree legislation and laws that effect you and how your elected representatives stand on pro-retiree issues. It is your right to be informed but it is also the job of every one of us as Americans and as retirees to be involved in the process of protecting our own economic rights and future. **

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Association members have a world of information available at their fingertips through the free services available at the Association of BellTel Retirees web site: www.belltelretirees.org.

We encourage members to sign up for our free e-mail news bulletin service that provides members the quickest means for retirees to gain vital news and information from the Association.

Signing up is simple and, unlike other pesky services, ours does not share your e-mail address with anyone. This means no advertisements, no hidden pop-up ads, or "spam" e-mails permitted.



UNITED, TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

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P.O. Box 33, Cold Spring Harbor,
New York 11724 • (631) 367-3067
website: www.belltelretirees.org

E-mail: association@belltelretirees.org
Hotline: (800) 261-9222

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President and Executive Director:
C. William Jones (410) 770-9485

Office Manager
Christina M. Kruger (631) 367-3067

Board of Directors:
John M. Brennan, Chairman (201) 666-8174
Michael S. Kucklinca,
Executive Vice President (516) 741-2424
Eileen T. Lawrence, Treasurer (718) 229-6078
Robert A. Rehm, Chief Financial Officer
(516) 827-0801

John Sellen, Secretary (201) 261-1454
James E. Casey, Jr., Vice President
Information Systems (540) 439-9568

Pamela M. Harrison, Director
Union Relations (845) 225-6497
Joanne Jacobsen, Director (978) 777-4858
Richard Knapp, Director (914) 779-6292

John A. Parente, Vice President
Membership (518) 372-0526

Joseph A. Ristuccia, Vice President
Government Relations (631) 765-1111

Thomas J. Sisti, Director
Union Relations (201) 794-6494
Louis Miano, Director Emeritus
(781) 444-8080

Advertising Representative:
Jim Falborn (212) 260-1731

Messages are sent directly by the Association's President and Executive Director, C. William Jones, about once a month and when there is vital or breaking news that retirees need to know and/or act on.

To enroll, go to the BellTel website (www.belltelretirees.org) and scroll down the left hand side of the home page until you find the "Keep Me Posted" icon with a picture of a man reading a newspaper. Click on the picture and enter your e-mail address. Then click the submit button and the subscription process has been completed. Shortly after signing up you will receive confirmation e-mail. It is fast, simple and free.

Should a subscriber wish to cancel their subscription, they can just as easily revisit the original "Keep Me Posted" sign-in screen and choose "unsubscribe".

We urge you to join with many other members who have taken advantage of this valuable, no cost, and trouble-free service.

Making a Difference for Non-Profit Organizations

Members who use the Internet can also easily make donations online as well. Through a service called Network For Good, users can safely and efficiently make

donations to many non profit groups around the nation, including your own Association of BellTel Retirees.

We encourage Association members to use this service, accessible through our web site to give your annual contribution to support the Association and its team of retiree volunteers in the fight for pension and benefit protection. Besides being safe for users it is also more efficient and cost effective for the Association, versus processing checks via a mail in system.

Free & Easy Communication with Congress:

Finally for members who wish to access the latest or archived versions of the BellTel Retiree newsletter online, or if you wish to use the Association's web site to write to Congress, click on the "BellTel Retiree Newsletter" icon at the top of the web page. When a box pops up asking for a "User Name" and "Password" enter "belltel" for both. Also, click the box that says "Save this password in your password list." This will enable you to bypass entering a user name and password each time you access the newsletter or communicate electronically with your members of Congress. *

Attention All Snowbirds

For those of you who temporarily relocate to warmer climates for the winter months, won't you please take the time to drop us a note or an email so that we can update our records and forward all important retiree communications to you, where you are when the mercury begins to drop.

This helps your Association substantially by allowing the most direct and immediate correspondence with our members. It also eliminates substantial cost

of return postage and clerical assistance to add or delete multiple addresses for some members in our database.

We would be more than happy to redirect your mail to your snowbird address in the colder months and then revert to your main address for the remainder of the year.

Just drop us a note, either online at association@belltelretirees.org or through the U.S. Mail at P.O. Box 33, Cold Spring Harbor, New York 11724. *

MISSION STATEMENT

The Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. is dedicated to promote the protection and enhancement of the pensions and benefits for retirees and beneficiaries of the companies and subsidiaries that make up the Verizon Corporation.

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 the passage of legislation which will protect and guarantee, rather than invade, our hard-earned pension and benefits funds.

United Airlines May Default on Pension Plans

United Airlines has said that it would not contribute to its employee pension plans while it remains under bankruptcy protection. Such a move could save it more than a billion dollars in the next year, and pension experts say it increases the likelihood that United would terminate some or all of the plans causing distress and hardship for the company's retirees.

As recently detailed by the New York Times, a full-blown default by United on all four of its pension plans would send tens of thousands of current and future retirees, and billions of dollars in unfunded obligations, to the government's pension insurance program, dealing the program its biggest blow since the government began insuring pensions in 1974. Such a huge default could also set off a chain reaction, prompting other airlines to reduce their own costly pension plans to stay competitive. That, in turn, would worsen the pension agency's finances.

In the Winter 2003-04 issue of the

BellTel Retiree, we wrote about the Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation being financially at risk and in potential need of a Congressional bailout. In the same issue an article "U.S. Airways' Double-Take Over Its Former Pension Fund" dealt with similar moves by another major airline bailing out on its retirees.

The drastic move by United, while harming thousands of retirees, would improve the company's chances of attracting lenders to help it emerge from bankruptcy. In a so-called distress plan termination, the government takes over the failed pension plan's assets and liabilities.

The Pension Benefit Guarantee Corporation is not allowed to reject such a termination, although it can go to court to try to get more resources from the defaulting company, as it did with U.S. Airways.

United workers can also try to block such a voluntary termination, either in court or by striking, but this is a dangerous path as if they win in halting the pension

plan termination, it could force the company to liquidate, leaving neither a pension plan nor jobs.

If United does terminate the plan, it would be the largest loss in the federal pension guarantee fund's history. Previously the largest pension failure so far, was \$3.6 billion by Bethlehem Steel in 2002. In total, United's four employee pension funds would have a total deficit of \$7.5 billion if terminated, according to the bankruptcy court.

Most of that loss would be borne by the federal agency, but some would be passed on to the employees whose pensions might exceed the limits of the program's insurance coverage.

As of last year, the federal pension agency was running a deficit of \$11.2 billion. In March, it disclosed that it had classified \$23.4 billion of airline pension obligations as "reasonably possible" to default.

United is the world's second largest commercial airline. *

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Will Verizon Sell Upstate New York Land Lines? (Continued from the cover)

for all of us, especially ratepayers in places like upstate New York, that intent would not be served if such a sale were permitted to move forward."

In late spring the New York State Assembly held hearings to gather testimony including witnesses from the Public Service Commission (PSC), which must okay the transaction before it can actually happen.

Some speakers expressed opinions that any buyer would not care for the assets of the system, including its employees and the communities they service, as Verizon would.

John Parente a longtime member of the Association of BellTel Retirees Board of Directors, who also has attended some of the proceedings before the legislature and the PSC said, "Workers are naturally concerned that some Wall Street raider will come in and pillage the company. This would severely impact workers, retirees and the upstate economy if local jobs are moved to other parts of the country."

Parente paralleled this situation to one facing workers of the upstate New York utility Niagara Mohawk just a few short years ago. At that time the utility was on the auction block. In order to get the sale approved the purchaser, National Grid, made promises to the workers and the upstate community that they are now

backing away from, citing financial concerns.

The potential sale of Verizon's upstate New York division would not be the first time the company tried to sell major portions of its landline network. In October 2001 Verizon sold 1.275 million access lines in Kentucky, Alabama and Missouri for \$4.11 billion to Alltel and Century Tel.

According to the CWA, the deal stipulated that the workers' contract would follow the workers but problems arose concerning the interpretation of the contract, predominately with Alltel.

"Once the contract expired, CWA workers had to strike to retain just some of the most basic protections included in the pre-existing contract with Verizon," says Cutter. "We expect even worse than this from an equity firm interested only in cash flow and not the telephone operations."

Campaigns to stop the sale has led to rallies in Buffalo and Syracuse, NY and Boston, MA where CWA and IBEW members held a "Don't Dismantle Verizon" rally in front of the New England headquarters.

With regard to a previous sale by Verizon of access lines in Missouri, Alabama and Kentucky, Thonis noted that the sale agreements did not affect the pension or retiree medical and life benefits provided to Verizon retirees and former employees who

did not transfer to the buyer. "Verizon benefit plans continued to provide benefits for such employees and Verizon retained liability for such benefits."

He noted that those sales spelled out the transfer of management employees and required the buyers to provide comparable compensation and to provide specified levels of other employee benefits. "For management employees who satisfied certain age and service requirements, Verizon retained liability to provide retiree medical and life benefits upon retirement." In addition, the Verizon spokesperson stated that "transferred management employees within five years of retirement eligibility were allowed to 'grow into' retirement eligibility by continuing to count age and service with the buyers for the purposes of determining satisfaction of the Rule of 75."

Regarding union transferred employees, Thonis said, "The sale agreements required the buyers to assume all existing applicable collective bargaining agreements. This meant that the terms and conditions of employment, including compensation and benefits for union employees, transferred to the buyer. Pension assets and liabilities for union transferred employees were transferred to the pension plans maintained by the buyers." *

Verizon, Pfizer, and AIG Make Dow 30

Earlier this year Verizon Communications was one of the three corporations added to the prestigious Dow 30. Also honored by being named to the elite listing were American International Group (AIG) and Pfizer Inc. replacing AT&T, Eastman Kodak and International Paper, which were dropped from the Dow.

Dow Jones Company created the index on May 26 1896.

According to Paul Steiger, managing editor of the Wall Street Journal, which is owned by Dow Jones, the reason for this change is that financial and health care sectors are now the stock leaders while basic material stocks are slowly diminishing.

The last time so many stocks were replaced in the Dow was November 1999. During this change Microsoft, Intel, Home Depot and SBC Communications replaced Sears Roebuck, Union Carbide, Chevron, and Goodyear on this important company ranking.

AT&T's sales and earnings decline, after divesting of several key business units including wireless and cable, secured its removal from the Dow 30. Kodak's condition was even worse at the time of the decision made by the Dow. It was only worth about \$7.5 billion with revenue reaching \$13.6 billion. This is incredibly low when 12 of the other Dow corporations have 2004 revenue targets that exceed \$50 billion each.

The companies introduced into the Dow 30 were very happy to hear the news of their inclusion and the boost it gives to each of their shares.

Bob Varettoni, Verizon's spokesman said, "Obviously we're very pleased about it. We think it reflects well on the strength of our business model". *

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Member Mailbag



Dear Association,

A while back a letter was printed from retiree Lew Verbouwens (spring 2004 issue), suggesting that if anyone remembered him, he would like to hear from retirees. He did hear from many retirees and was more than delighted. He subsequently had his 97th birthday. Three days later he was in the hospital; his legs gave out and he just sat on the floor. The ambulance took him to Sharon hospital where they found he had 103 fever and pneumonia. He was there a week and then to rehab where they got him walking again. He is now at home and a therapist comes twice a week and a home health aid three times a week. He is much stronger and doing quite well.

He had calls from a dozen fellow retirees and coworkers. Many, many thanks for brightening an old fellow's day.

Connie Jones
Warren, CT

Dear Association Members,
I ask what can you get for \$25 these days?
How about a group of dedicated,

professional and hard working volunteers watch-dogging your Verizon benefits and continually communicating with Verizon executives asking where is our COLA increase and why are some retirees losing promised health benefits, while being forced to pay more out of pocket? These motivated volunteers also have an important bill before the United States Congress – HR 1322.

This team of men and women, that I am proud to be a part of, has been working to protect our benefits with Verizon for over 9 years and will continue as long as we have your support to keep going. Please send in your annual \$25 (or more) contribution if you have not already done so, to keep the momentum going for all retirees and their families. Please also consider donating a few hours of your time each month as I and dozens of others do to play a role and make a difference in protecting our economic futures.

Pat George,
Kirkville, NY

Ms. George is also the Volunteer State Rep Coordinator for the Association of BellTel Retirees. The Association's team of State Representatives is accepting applications should you wish to serve as a local or regional member representative near your hometown. For more

information Pat George can be contacted at pattigeorge@yahoo.com

Dear Association,

Keep up the good work. The fellow retirees and I keep in touch and frequently talk about the good work you have done in a short time. The organization you have put together is dedicated and hard working and we thank you.

Bill Lee
Via Email

Dear Association,

Congratulations on the Association's success! However, I think that a policy that "limits the Executive Severance to no more than 2.99 times an executive's base salary and bonus" is still an outrageous amount. It's about as bad as the amounts paid to "star" athletes!!!

Nancy and Charlie Lando
Via Email

Dear Association,

Guess what? I hope everyone now increases their donation by \$5.00 per year. Great work by the dedicated people.

P. Corey
Dartmouth, MA

*

PIONEER & RETIREE NEWS AND NOTES:

John A. Parente, Vice President of Membership for the Association of BellTel Retirees, traveled to Erie, Pennsylvania on July 22 to speak with a group of more than 100 GTE and Verizon retirees about the founding, growth and mission of the Association of BellTel Retirees

The quarterly Erie retirees luncheon meeting, which has been happening for about 25 years generally attracts some 80-100 retirees. A committee of five, including Val and Pat Wingrove, Joanne Miniger, Agnes Lynch and Carol Eller are responsible for putting together the gatherings. The group's next meeting will be on October 3, 2004.

Old Dominion, Virginia, Chapter of Telecom Pioneers, will celebrate its 25th Anniversary with an Amusement Park Family Day during Columbus Day Weekend on Sunday, October 10. The outing at the Paramount King's Dominion Amusement Park will offer great ticket discounts, hourly door prizes and a special luncheon.

Tickets are only \$18 each for ages three and up, which is a big discount from the normal park admission of \$43.99. Each hour the Pioneers will draw the name of an attendee for a door prize. Proceeds from

the sale of special Pioneers T-shirts that day will benefit the chapter's volunteer efforts.

All retirees, even those from outside Virginia, are invited to participate in this marvelous outing and opportunity to support the local Pioneer efforts in Virginia. For reservations or questions, contact Pat Curvan-Moses (757) 471-6231 or Pioneers43@aol.com.

We would be happy to have someone attend your event, schedules permitting. If you have a local Pioneer club or informal group of Verizon retirees that would be interested in an Association of BellTel

Retirees representative speaking with your members and handing out information about our efforts on behalf of retiree economic justice, please contact the Association headquarters at (631) 367-3067, or association@belltelretirees.org.

Do you have Pioneer or Retiree News to share? If you would like to tell others about major retiree gatherings and events in your area, send us detailed information of the gathering's purpose, location, and contact information (name, number, e-mail, mailing address) to be listed on a calendar of retiree events. While we cannot guarantee publication, we will consider every submission. *



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(Continued from the cover)

Retiree Spotlight:

Meet Luther and Margaret Becraft – The Association of BellTel Retirees' 100,000th Member

"I think it is wonderful that the Association has that many members that are ready to fight for our interests. It is very surprising that we ended up being the 100,000th members to join, what a great stroke of luck," said Margaret Becraft.

Luther Becraft said, "I first heard about the Association from John Harper, President of the Tidewater Chapter of the Pioneers. Hearing President Jones' speech and learning more about BellTel's support of retirees convinced me that my wife and I needed to join," said Becraft.

"When we retired, we felt like the world forgot about us and there was nobody looking out for our interests. Now, we are part of a group that looks out for each other and is always in your corner," said Margaret Becraft.

Luther and Margaret feel fortunate to be members of the Association of BellTel Retirees. Several years ago, the Becrafts receive a welcome surprise, a lump sum pension payment from the company. During the speech by President Jones at the Pioneers, the Becrafts learned that the Association of BellTel Retirees has been petitioning Verizon to improve pensions for its retirees around the country. "It takes the

strength of an association like BellTel to force management to reward retirees for their years of service. We all worked hard for our pensions, we deserve every benefit we receive," said the Becrafts.

Luther Becraft is a life-long Virginian and began his career working for the Chesapeake and Potomac Telephone Company in 1948, earning \$31 a week. He first worked as a lineman for five years. Becraft then worked as an Installer/Repairman for ten years before becoming a Communication Rep #2 in 1968, his position until he retired.

Margaret, a 41-year veteran of the telephone industry, first worked for Southern Bell in Georgia, moving to Southwestern Bell in Wichita Falls, Texas and finally settling in Virginia in 1966, working for C&P Telephone and retiring as a Business Service Representative. Margaret explains her travels, "my first husband was in the military, so we moved around a lot."

Reflecting on their careers, the Becrafts say, "It gives us a great deal of pride that we played a role in the amazing growth in the telephone industry. We saw first hand how the equipment changed over the years and

how hard we worked to keep this country connected."

A recent back injury and illness may slow Luther Becraft down a step, but it has not stopped him and his wife from living. They both are on the Board of the Directors of Diamond Lake Estates where they live and work closely with their local church, the Thalia Lynn Baptist Church, where they first met and later got married in 1988.

The Becrafts civic involvements have allowed them to meet many different seniors and discuss the issues that affect their lives.

"We have a good pension but some of our friends are not as lucky. They need our help and we will be there to lend a helping hand as much as we can," said Mr. Becraft. "That is a big reason my wife and I decided to join BellTel. These days you feel as if the pension benefits you worked so hard to secure are under attack. The only way we as retirees are going to be able to protect our livelihood is by uniting to fight off those attacks," said Becraft.

This summer, the Becrafts have been spending their time traveling and spending time with their extended families. One of their many responsibilities is as "trip coordinators" for the CWA Local 2202, scheduling trips to Hawaii, Pennsylvania and New York. "We traveled to New York a year after the attack on the World Trade Center. It was very important to us to be able to remember the tragedy, but also see the beginnings of the Towers' reconstruction," said Margaret Becraft.

Most recently, the Becrafts have been spending time with their seven grandchildren. "The summer has given us a chance to see how much they have grown; two of our grandchildren have just graduated from high school and are thinking about college."

In the fall, Luther and Margaret will once again get active. "We are looking forward to learning more about our fellow retirees and working to ensure that our pension and benefits remain intact. If we have to go to Washington and demand our fair share, we are ready to do so," said Becraft. As the 100,000th and 100,001th member of the Association of BellTel Retirees, Luther and Margaret Becraft will have plenty of support in their fight. *

On the Issue of Corporate Outsourcing: Exploring Upsides of Job Exportation

by Richard S. Knapp

In a recent issue the BellTel Newsletter (Spring 2004 – *Corporate Outsourcing Dangerous for Workers, Retirees and American Economy*) we presented an article about outsourcing and some of the negative impacts it would have on the job market and the economy. In the interest of fair debate, this article will attempt to look at the plus side of outsourcing.

In the market economy, price, quality and service, among other things, are supposed to control the market. For an example, let's consider a company that creates complex computer programs... The XYZ Company.

The managers are confronted with a dilemma. Their arch rival, The AAA Company, is underbidding them by using highly skilled, low-paid workers in Outer Mongolia to do the basic programming. XYZ can compete and match or better AAA prices by using programmers on Easter Island. What is a manager to do?

Obviously XYZ will export the Basic computer code production to Easter Island. Failure to do so would end up costing the jobs of the program design team, the marketing team, the managers, and weaken supporting companies such as suppliers, accountants and others.

This model leads one to appreciate how important education is. The brain work which creates the patentable design is kept here. The cash flow from the patent stays here. The "grunt" work, basic coding, goes where labor is cheaper and education less powerful.

Corporations argue that the monies saved in this process come back to U.S. in the form of increased dividend and stock valuation for shareholders.

The people here who would have done the basic programming must upgrade their technical expertise so more and better designs are created and sold. It could be a win-win. It would also be very difficult for those whose jobs went overseas.

Another aspect to outsourcing that is more subtle is the effect it has on peace. Yes, peace.

As an example: one estimate shows India has 3,000,000 workers doing outsourcing type work. In a place like India, where there is a purported surplus of educated workers, outsourcing may have taken 3,000,000 of those educated individuals and made reasonably satisfied workers out of them.

If they, or 3,000,000 other highly educated but unemployed or underemployed workers, are not given the opportunity for a career, could they become dangerous in a

manner similar to what has been happening in the Middle Eastern areas of the world?

India and China with all their problems are moving ahead in jobs, education, and wealth while, relatively speaking, much of the Middle East is poverty stricken, backward, uneducated, and moving backward. China and India remain customers for US products, but that is not the case in much of the Middle East.

The point is, not to denigrate nations within the Middle East, but rather to see that to the extent outsourcing helps other countries pursue education, grow technically, and develop wealth internally, we also benefit. We need customers. Where else can they come from?

Outsourcing is very hard on those of us

who lose our employment to some distant land and it does negatively impact our economy in many ways as we discussed in the first article. Outsourcing can also motivate us to focus on education and intellectual pursuits which will in the long run help us economically and allow us to stay at or near the top.

*Richard S. Knapp is a 1991 retiree from New York Telephone and an engineer living in Bronxville, NY. He retired from the company as a Director of Corporate Services. Knapp has been a member of the Board of the Association of BellTel Retirees since 2003 and is heading its examination into how the protection and preservation of American jobs today can aid the economic preservation of our retirees. **

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Caregiver & Assisted Living Help

For many older Americans that can no longer perform everyday activities, assisted living can be an answer to their problems. But the costs associated with this dramatic lifestyle change can be substantial and need to be planned in advance.

Moving into an assisted living facility is a big step. When a family or a spouse decides it is time for a decision to be made, someone must take charge of researching and investigating the costs and the options, such as what facilities will best accommodate the prospective resident's needs and the care required.

Few individuals ever prepare in advance for the complexities associated with the potential need for their own assisted living requirements and it is a fact that very few individuals understand the cost and red tape associated in the process of caring for the elderly. Last year the average cost of a one-month stay in assisted living, including room and board, housekeeping and personal care assistance was \$2,379, up 10.2 percent in just the previous 18 months.

In the Washington, D.C. Metro Area the cost is the highest in the nation

averaging \$4,429 per month with the biggest bang for the buck coming in places like Jackson, Mississippi at \$1,020 per month, Grand Rapids, Michigan at \$1,381 per month or Scranton, Pennsylvania \$1,444 per month.

In some cases it could simply be an injury requiring extensive physical rehabilitation to an otherwise healthy individual that requires just a minimal stay in a nursing facility.

But in many more cases, it is a situation where a loved one requires round the clock attention or care that they can no longer get at home. It might also occur because of a discharge from the hospital into assisted living. According to a Met Life survey, 64 percent of those who are residents within assisted living facilities are cognitively impaired.

A caregiver, placed in this situation, is hard pressed to make decisions about placing a loved one in a nursing or assisted living facility. That is why having information in advance can be of great benefit.

The insurer, MetLife, through its Mature Market Institute has published several free books and brochures that can

serve as a resource for families, caregivers and retirees. Among the material available are its Survey of Assisted Living Cost and its Resources for Caregivers 2004 guidebook. They offer tips, advice and information about caregiver support services, helpful information for those caring for loved ones with cancer, Alzheimer's, Parkinson's, stroke, diabetes and many more debilitating ailments. They also help identify government, legal and financial help resources.

The Mature Market Institute also has a related study called its Retirement Income IQ Test that considers some of the costs of living in retirement, including long term care. The study, surprisingly, found that the average respondent got only 5 of 15 survey questions correct, suggesting that pre-retirees have significant misconceptions about the issues affecting retirement, life-expectancy and planning for retirement.

For more information or to obtain copies of the Mature Market Institute studies and guidebooks call 203-221-6580 or visit www.maturemarketinstitute.com.

Another important resource for information and guidance can be the federal government's own Eldercare Locator

which can help you identify local resources in your state or county. This system can be accessed by calling 800-677-1116 or online at www.eldercare.gov.

The Consumer Consortium on Assisted Living www.ccal.org, a non-profit organization in Virginia, urges consumers to not only do their research by reading and checking on agencies or local available help but to also conduct site visits to the facilities you are seriously considering.

Their recommendation is to visit four facilities taking time to speak with management, staff and residents, but also going the extra mile is important for your loved one. That suggested "extra mile" is to come in for a surprise visit on a Saturday at 6 p.m. Take a look around to see if it looks like a difficult time to get staff attention; are residents waiting anxiously to eat; does it look like the phones are ringing off the hook?

Spending time now looking into such matters can be a significant advantage when and if the time comes to make a decision about selecting an assisted living setting for a loved one. *

How To Be A Super Senior -- Living Longer & Stronger

Until recently, it was assumed that living to one's golden years was synonymous with slowing down. Now there's a new crop of "super seniors" emerging, full of energy and in good health with no intent on making that assumption a reality. But what's their secret?

According to the New England Centenarian Study in Boston, the key to longevity is good genes – a sibling of someone who lives to be 100 is four times more likely to reach and surpass 90 than the general population.

This study, along with others, also proposes that leading a healthy, active lifestyle is instrumental in keeping the mind and body in A-form. Try to avoid adding extra pounds, says Robert Butler, director of the International Longevity Center. It puts more pressure on your heart and other vital organs and increases your

chances for heart attacks, cancers and other diseases.

Losing weight or staying at an ideal weight coincides with two other elements to long life – exercising regularly and eating a healthy diet. Experts recommend at least 30 minutes per day for five days a week or more to help lower risk of Alzheimer's disease, diabetes and a slew of other ailments.

Richard Hodes, director of the National Institute on Aging, says it's never too late to begin a fitness regimen, even seniors who have never been active can find an activity that gets them moving – walking, dancing, gardening and even housework are all ways to get and stay in tip top shape. Experts also suggest at least 10 servings a day of fruits and vegetables to prevent cell damage and to stay away from fatty and salty foods. Getting regular checkups and

quitting smoking are also essential.

Fitness guru Jack LaLanne is a prime example.

For nearly three decades he hosted an exercise show, was a body builder and athlete. At 61, he swam the distance of the Golden Gate Bridge pulling a boat that weighed a ton behind him. Now approaching 90 years of age he credits his strength and endurance to his lifetime dedication to health and exercise. "My top priority in life is my workout each day," he said in a recent interview.

But a healthy body is just one piece of the puzzle.

Reducing stress not only improves one's health, but also improves one's attitude. Studies show that people who reach the centennial mark have a positive outlook when dealing with stressful situations. Research also suggests that socializing keeps

people healthier and allows them to recover from ill health quicker.

Learning something new also helps to keep both the mind and body alert. "Any time you have to work at something new, you're probably doing things for your brain," says Gene Cohen, director of the Center on Aging at George Washington University.

People who learn something new probably build new brain cells and make connections between existing neurons, he says.

So volunteer, become involved in local community or retiree organizations like the Association of BellTel Retirees or the National Retiree Legislative Network – your mind and body may reward you for your contributions for many years to come! *

Should I Stay or Go?

Where American Retirees Are Moving

Once you decide to retire and escape the workplace, one of the first questions that comes to mind is should I relocate and if so, to where? For many years the simple answer for many was California or Florida, but according to the Census Bureau that trend is shifting.

There are several factors that contribute to the decision as to where to go after retirement. Many retirees want a warm climate with low cost of living and taxes. They want a place to relax and be able to enjoy the lifestyle that they were not able to enjoy while employed.

For the majority of retirees, they need not move very far. According to the Census Bureau, between 1995 and 2000, 23 percent of the 35 million people that were age 65 and older chose to move. Nearly 60 percent of the relocations were made locally within the same county, with 22 percent within the same state but to a different county.

For those people that do decide they need a change in environment, the favored locations are changing. Although Florida still remains number one when it comes to the number of residential retirees moving in, it does not have the fastest percentage of migration gain. That honor goes to Nevada and Arizona.

The Census Bureau finds that California has lost an enormous number of

retirees, losing more than 34,000 retirees in a five-year period. New York holds the number one spot for the most outmigration, primarily because of its climate, and Illinois is ranked number two in the retiree outflow category.

On the other side of the spectrum are Arizona and Nevada which experience high levels of inward migration.

The Census says many retirees will chose to remain in their familiar environment, where they are close to their old homes. The reason for this is so that they can stay with their children and family or perhaps health reasons don't permit them to move elsewhere. For those that do chose to leave the state it seems that their choice in retirement spots is to warmer, lower cost states.

Most People (65 & Older) Arriving

Florida	149,440
Arizona	53,241
Nevada	22,189
North Carolina	20,922
Texas	17,957

Most People (65 & Older) Leaving

New York	114,171
Illinois	43,119
California	34,171
New Jersey	23,151
Michigan	21,949

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