

BELLTEL RETIREE

The Official Newsletter for Retirees of Bell Atlantic, GTE, NYNEX, Verizon and Its Subsidiaries
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Volume 32

Restoring the Legacy of the Pioneers

They've built barrier-free parks for the disabled, stocked food pantries and volunteered in hospitals and classrooms across the country and abroad. They even helped restore a once lackluster Lady Liberty.

For the past 93 years, "getting people to care and care deeply" has been at the heart of the Telecom Pioneers, formerly the Telephone Pioneers of America.

But for the world's largest industry-related, non-profit organization made up of current and former telephone employees, banning together to help make the 1984 Olympic Torch relay possible, for many, may have been the pinnacle of their humanitarian work here in the United States.

We recently spoke to Lou Miano, an Association of BellTel Retirees board member and retired New England Telephone employee, who once served as a regional council liaison for the Pioneers.

As a liaison officer and past council and chapter president, Miano donated time to homeless shelters and helped raise money for the refurbishment of the Statue of Liberty during the 1980s.

However, he fondly recalled the Olympic relay as the highlight of his Pioneer days.

Pioneers from all walks of life came

together to work alongside the Olympic Committee for 14 months prior to the relay, one of the largest in the history of the Olympics. Over 4,000 runners carried the torch across 9,000 miles and 39 states from

New York City to Los Angeles for a total of three months.

The three shared values of the Pioneers, Fellowship, Loyalty and Service, were proudly on display and it was a great moment in American history that will be long remembered, said Miano.

"Only the Pioneers with active and retired members in every town and city in America could have completed the project so brilliantly and beautifully," said Miano, who proclaimed the massive undertaking in 1984 a victory for both the spirit of the American public and the Pioneers, who aside from helping to raise money, contributed 300,000 man-hours to the event AT&T helped pay for.

Since the break up of AT&T and its Bell System that same year and subsequent corporate transitions and mergers, however, the Pioneers have been on somewhat uncertain ground, according to Miano and many other retirees. Membership continues to shrink and corporate support has waned tremendously, he said.

Shortly after the divestiture, AT&T's then-Chairman Charles Brown said he

(Continued on page 6)



Board Member Lou Miano holds a relay torch during the 1984 Olympic Relay. Many Pioneers served as volunteers and helped to raise money during the event.

**The 2005 Association
of BellTel Retirees
Membership Meeting will
take place in Camp Hill,
Pennsylvania
On April 13.**

To find out more and to RSVP

see page 4

Verizon Halts Sale of New York Lines

Verizon Communications announced a decision to remove its upstate New York access lines from the auction block.

The company, at least for the time being, has decided not to sell \$7.7 billion worth of access lines in the upstate vicinity, according to a bulletin issued by the company to employees.

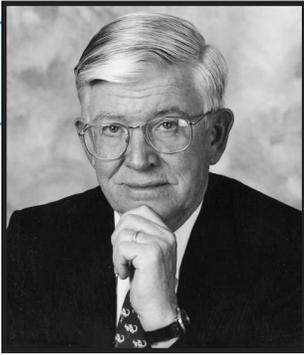
According to the September 30 bulletin, "Verizon is suspending discussions with potential buyers related to upstate New York access lines, while we continue to evaluate strategic options." Company spokesman Peter Thonis told the BellTel Retiree that

Verizon had no plans to publicly discuss what led to the decision.

Shortly after what some have described as a landmark decision by Verizon not to sell the lines, Reuters news service reported that the company opted to keep the lines after failing to attract enough interest from potential buyers.

Nevertheless, Pamela Harrison, an Association of BellTel Retirees board member, credited both members of Communication Works of America (CWA), who fought to protect the integrity of the

(Continued on page 5)



President's Message

by C. William Jones

Now that the Presidential and Congressional election is history let's hope this means that we can get back to addressing the many important issues that retirees are dealing with every day. You have had your chance to participate in the democratic process and I am sure that you have taken that privilege seriously. However, once the election is over we have an equally important task to perform and I hope that you will want to be a part of that process as well.

The lead article in this issue reviews the status of Pioneering and discusses some of the challenges facing that great organization. The Telephone Pioneers of America, now known as the Telcom Pioneers, have a long and rich history of volunteering – primarily reaching out to help respond to community needs and problems. At the same time, this Association fosters continuing fellowship and helpfulness among active and retired telephone people.

There are similarities between the goals of the Pioneers and the Association of BellTel Retirees. We depend heavily upon

volunteers, including our entire board, to achieve our goals. However, our mission is focused almost entirely on maintaining and improving the health and financial security of the Verizon retiree community.

But like the Pioneers, we cannot possibly depend upon only those who lead this organization. To promote the type of change that we need to achieve our goals, we require thousands of our members to volunteer and get involved in the national movement to protect our futures.

We hear from many retirees who tell us that they cannot afford to contribute financially as much as they would like to our Association. We understand and appreciate that, but here again, we can take a page out of the Pioneer book. Everyone, regardless of his or her financial position can contribute a few hours to the cause and make a difference. Look at it this way, if each of our members gave twenty hours per year or just 1½ hour each month to further our cause that would amount to two million hours of service to ourselves and to our fellow retirees.

Our greatest opportunities and our greatest threats reside in the legislative process. We have the opportunity to shape our own futures by becoming involved in this process. However, if we do not all take part in this process, we leave it to others to shape our futures and

that may lead to a bad result.

Our Association has taken a leadership role in the creation of a truly national legislative organization that will reach every single Congressional and Senatorial office in this country. This is an enormous task but when broken down into its smallest components, it is no more than you, I and our fellow members communicating with our own legislative leaders.

Imagine the cumulative power of our 100,000 members, joined by the hundreds of thousands of other National Retiree Legislative Network (NRLN) organization members all delivering a single message. This sort of out pouring of support or opposition cannot be ignored.

Recall the many stories in the Pioneer article that demonstrated how volunteers were able to perform truly heroic achievements. Remember how people felt when they got involved and volunteered some hours to a good cause. Our Association has a just cause and we need you to be a part, if only a very small part, of the movement to restore retirement security.

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Leaders Join National Committee in D.C.

Leaders of the Association of BellTel Retirees traveled to Washington D.C. for a strategy meeting with members of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare.

Joined by the 10 million-member, national committee's president, former U.S. Congresswoman Barbara B. Kennelly, the group discussed ways to outreach to other organizations also advocating for retiree-friendly legislation.

The national committee's Grassroots Director Sue Ward stressed the importance of gaining greater visibility for seniors and retirees on Capitol Hill.

"We are working to locate people across the country who are willing to go to 'the Hill' when legislators hold rallies or discuss issues that are crucial to seniors. Not only is it essential that we be heard, but also it is imperative that we be seen," said Ward.

Following the conference, Association leaders and member volunteers continued the dialogue on retiree issues by paying a visit to their respective congressional representatives.

"We plan more such meetings in the future and hope that volunteers from the



Volunteers like Maryland's Phillip M. Collison (shown) joined Association leaders during a recent visit to Washington, D.C.



Former U.S. Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly, president of the national committee, addresses members of the Association.

Washington, D.C. area will join us," said BellTel President C. William Jones.

"This is a new and exciting chapter for the Association. We must continue our efforts to network with other national organizations on all of our common issues. Retirees from all over must stand up and

make their presence known."

The National Committee to Preserve Medicare and Social Security was founded in 1982 and serves as an advocate for issues central to current and future retirees, according to the national committee's mission statement. The committee's website is www.ncpssm.org.

Lucent Retirees In Trouble as VEBA \$\$ Dwindle

Healthcare coverage had been a key issue during negotiations between Lucent Technologies and the unions, the Communication Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers.

The two unions represent roughly 10 percent of the telecommunications equipment maker's work force.

Lucent, CWA and IBEW contract talks were to take place under the auspices of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service, which helped Verizon and its unions reach a labor agreement last year.

However, CWA had voted to authorize a strike if a bargaining agreement could not be reached last month.

One of the unresolved issues had been how much retirees should contribute to the cost of their health insurance. Prior to the start of negotiations, Lucent announced plans to reduce union retirees' healthcare benefits for the second time in a year.

CWA's Communications and Technologies Vice President Ralph Maly

said that "by 2007, the average retiree who has a pension of \$920 would be looking at a \$700 monthly premium for a pre-65 family of two. Lucent has made a determination to abandon its union-represented retirees."

Edward Beltram, who is the Lucent Retiree Organization's director of communications, told the BellTel Retiree that he

currently pays \$531 a month in healthcare premiums that used to cost him \$143 a month

According to the Associated Press, Lucent had been relying on a Voluntary Employer Benefits Association Trust to pay for retired union worker's health costs.

Two VEBA trusts, one for retiree health-

(Continued on page 9)

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Pennsylvania will host 2005 Membership Meeting

It is that time of year again when the Association of BellTel Retirees announces the location of its annual Membership Meeting.

Each year, the lively get-together gives members the opportunity to gather with fellow retirees and former coworkers to hear about the Association's yearly progress, its plans for the future and allow members' voices to be heard about significant retiree issues.

The 9th annual Membership Meeting will take place on Wednesday, April 13, 2005 at the Radisson Penn Harris Convention Center in Camp Hill, PA.

Just minutes from Harrisburg, the convention center is easily accessible from major highways and public transportation and is within reach of Central Pennsylvania's many tourist attractions, including Hershey Park and historic Lancaster County. The area is also home to several theaters and museums

such as the State Museum of Pennsylvania.

This will be the first time that the Association will hold its annual meeting in Pennsylvania. Prior meetings took place in Long Island, NY, Atlantic City, NJ, Herndon, VA, Syracuse, NY, Fort Pierce, FL, and Boston, MA. Last year's meeting was held in Sarasota, FL.

Because reservations for the 2004 meeting were in such demand, over 70 members had to be turned away as the 450 seats were quickly sold out.

As a result, we highly recommend that you RSVP well in advance to guarantee a spot for you and your guests.

If you would like to attend the event, please complete the form below and mail it along with a \$5 per person registration fee to Jack Sellen at the address listed on the form. Please do not send cash or RSVPs to the Association's Cold Spring Harbor, NY, or Glen Head, NY, address. Please include your email address and the email address of your guests. An admission ticket will be mailed to you once your check and registration form is received.

Continental breakfast will begin at 8 a.m., followed by the annual meeting at 10 a.m.



Camp Hill, PA, located just outside of Harrisburg, will be the site of the April 2005 Membership Meeting.

**RSVP for Association of BellTel Retirees Annual Meeting
Wednesday, April 13, 2005 at the Radisson Penn Harris Convention Center
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania**

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

Name _____

Address _____

Phone Number _____

E-Mail _____

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

Other members/guests names and addresses in your party:

Please return this registration form and fee by April 4th to: Association of BellTel Retirees Inc; c/o Jack Sellen; P.O. Box 457; New Milford, N.J. 07646.

Still Holiday Shopping?

Are you looking for that gift for a friend or two, but don't know what to get them? Why not a one-year enrollment in the Association of BellTel Retirees! Avoid the long lines at the malls and department stores and just contact the Association at (631) 367-3067, or via e-mail at association@belltelretirees.org for some free applications. The Association's "little elves" will get applications out to you in a hurry and you can sign up a friend or two.

We received this idea from one of our members, who called the Association's office, asked for some applications and said that she was going to sign up some new members as a holiday gift.

It's the gift that keeps on giving, as they will help us in our fight 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.

BellTel Election Poll Huge Response

More than 2,000 Association of BellTel Retirees members responded to a pre-Election Day opinion poll sent out via email just hours before the third presidential debate.

The opinion poll contained questions about the 2004 election and was sent to those members registered for the Association's free news service.

According to the poll results, 99 percent of respondents identified themselves as registered voters. All of those polled indicated that they had planned to vote in the most recent election and only 10 percent had been undecided on who to vote for at the time of the survey.

Nearly 93 percent believed that the 2004 presidential election was more critical than past elections based on the number of retiree concerns to be decided in the next four years.

When asked to rate the most important

When asked to rate the most important domestic issues and their order of importance using a scale of one to five, members had this to say:

| | <u>1st</u> | <u>2nd</u> | <u>3rd</u> | <u>4th</u> | <u>5th</u> |
|---|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Proposals to modify social security | 14% | 16% | 33% | 20% | 18% |
| Fixing Medicare reforms | 7% | 15% | 29% | 37% | 15% |
| Importation of prescription drugs | 5% | 7% | 17% | 26% | 48% |
| Federal laws to protect retiree health benefits | 53% | 23% | 7% | 4% | 4% |
| Stiffer penalties for corporations defaulting on pensions | 20% | 39% | 14% | 13% | 14% |

Verizon Halts Sale of New York Lines

(Continued from page 1)

coast-to-coast network, including the upstate access lines, and members of the New York State Legislature, for the decision.

"The network was put into service and paid for by the American public. As a result, the network and its keepers were given the rights, privileges and responsibilities of a public utility," said Harrison.

"The intent of the 1984 AT&T divestiture was to make telephone companies caretakers of our nation's treasure, the most advanced, reasonably priced, telephone network in the world, built and paid for by the American public," she said.

Verizon appeared before the New York Public Service Commission this past spring to gain approval for the sale, as required by law.

Verizon has sold several of its assets over the past few years. The company recently agreed to sell its Canadian directory publisher, SuperPages Canada, to Bain Capital LLC for \$1.54 billion. The Carlyle Group in May purchased Verizon's local telephone operations in Hawaii for over \$1 billion. And in 2001, Verizon sold 1.2 million access lines in Kentucky, Alabama and Missouri for \$4.11 billion to Alltel and Century Telephone Enterprises.

Verizon has said that the sales will allow the company to focus assets in strategic markets, meaning more profitable businesses such as wireless service and high-speed Internet access.

domestic issue facing retirees, 53 percent said federal laws to protect retiree health benefits, 20 percent said imposing stiffer penalties on corporations defaulting on pensions, 14 percent said proposals to modify the current social security benefit system, 7 percent said fixing the recently passed Medicare reforms and 5 percent said re-importation of prescription drugs (see chart).

The Association's membership is currently made up of 56 percent retired management workers and 44 percent retired union workers. Half of those polled described themselves as Republican, followed by 29 percent as Democrat, 12 percent as Independent and 7 percent as Conservative. None identified themselves as Liberal or Green Party members.

Shortly after the poll was sent out, office workers at the Association's Cold Spring Harbor headquarters began tabulating what

turned out to be an enormous response.

The poll results have been a boon to the Association and although the 2004 presidential election is now over, the results will continue to be an asset by helping the Association better serve members' needs, said BellTel President C. William Jones.

Following the release of the poll results to the media, Jones conducted an interview with one of the nation's largest radio news broadcasters about the poll and what it meant for retirees.

"It is clear that American retirees plan to stand up and make their voices heard, not just on Election Day, but year round," said Jones.

For those members interested in signing up for the Association's free news service, visit our website www.belltelretirees.org and click on the "Keep Me Posted" icon.

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Restoring the Legacy of the Pioneers

(Continued from page 1)

had relied on the work of the Pioneers to help towards the task of getting people to care and care deeply. He also said "may Pioneering keep alive the heritage that has made our industry great." This year marks the 20th anniversary of the divestiture.

Miano partly credits what he calls "the demise of one of the greatest volunteer organizations" to a new culture of corporatism, which has resulted in less financial and moral support for the Pioneers since Brown's address.

"We have lost a lot of our Life Members," or retirees, as opposed to Active Members, who currently work for the several corporations within the communication industry, said Miano. Among these corporations are AT&T, Bell South, Verizon, Qwest,

Telcordia, Aliant, SBC, Lucent and others.

"There are hundreds of thousands of Pioneers out there answering the call and they need to be praised," said Miano. "Still many of the 'powers that be' within the corporations believe that the government would automatically provide if the Pioneers no longer could."

Less and less corporate backing has been detrimental to the Pioneers, according to Miano, who added that the Pioneers traditionally have been a life-line to the many communities they serve.

Although Pioneers, continue to make an impact, they must go "back to the future" and return to the past in order to keep the tradition going, warned Miano.

Doing so would require galvanizing Life Member groups, retirees and organizations like the Association of BellTel Retirees, according to Miano, who has long been an advocate of having the Association partner with the Pioneers' Life Member groups. Not all Pioneers are Association members, but all Association members are Pioneers, he said.

Jim Gadd, the international CEO and executive director of the Pioneers, told the BellTel Retiree in October that it has become essential that the sponsor corporations increase communication with retirees or Life Members.

"Retirees are central to Pioneering," said Gadd. As a result, "The Pioneers continue to be strong. Last year, the Pioneers contributed over \$300 million worth of volunteer services to charitable causes."

"Following the divestiture, the telecommunication industry continued to view the Pioneers as a great volunteer organization and today commits resources to make sure that the tradition doesn't just go away," he said.

However, a chain is only as strong as its weakest link and many Pioneer groups are in limbo or may soon be, Miano and others have predicted.

The Spring 2004 BellTel Retiree spotlighted Pioneer clubs in West Florida that have decided to break away from their sponsor corporation, AT&T.

The decision was made shortly after corporate officials contacted the clubs and asked them to close their local bank accounts and send their local treasury money to the company's headquarters even though they generated the money themselves at the local level.

"We were losing control," said a Florida retiree leader. "We don't want a company to dictate (community service programs) from a remote office."

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UNITED, TO PROTECT OUR FUTURE

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Pioneers from the Thomas Sherwin Chapter #14 in Massachusetts and local students proudly display handmade carpet maps. The maps, which are a signature project of the Pioneers, help instructors teach geography to young students.

Restoring the Legacy of the Pioneers

(Continued from page 6)

Despite fleeing the auspices of AT&T, the clubs' members continue to donate time to charitable causes.

After reading about the situation in West Florida, Brendan Feeny, who is president of Massachusetts' Thomas Sherwin Chapter's West Life Member Club, said there is unfortunately a growing lack of interest in the Pioneers on the part of the sponsor corporations. The club currently helps to support a local halfway house and a home for disabled children.

"The Pioneers used to get excellent feedback from the corporations. They were always willing to support us. And we had great allegiance to them too," said Feeny, who began Pioneering in the 1970s.

"Today, there is little communication between the corporations and the Pioneers," specifically the Life Member groups, he said.

However, the proverbial torch that has fueled the Pioneers in the past to take on social problems like illiteracy and poverty, as well as lend support to the disabled through the Special Olympics, continues to burn and inspire others.

Elaine Cramme is a member of Virginia's Richmond Life Member Club of the Old Dominion Chapter 43.

The club operates the Virginia Telephone Museum, which Cramme estimates contains over a million dollars worth of old telephone equipment and memorabilia.

However, keeping the museum and the club running has been a task, she said. They've done everything from "sell pastries to Easter eggs," said Cramme, a former C&P employee.

Within the last year, the Sherwin Chapter has taken on a range of projects from making colorful Afghans for expectant mothers and carpet maps for elementary school students to creating reading materials in Braille for the blind.

The chapter is divided into several clubs that serve eastern Massachusetts, including Nantucket and Martha's Vineyard.

"We've got about 1,200 retirees in the Cape Cod Club," said Cape Cod Club President Verna Semple. The club is currently focused on education initiatives, which have long been a focal point for Pioneers

internationally, she said.

However, funding has become somewhat of a challenge for many chapters and clubs, said Semple, a former Verizon office technician.

Because the Pioneers are a 501 (C) (3) organization they are required to raise much of their own funds, said Semple.

"Fundraisers are a vital part of keeping us going," she said adding "our motto has been to donate time, when we can't afford to donate money."

"It's disheartening to us that some of the younger office managers don't seem to understand the importance of what we do," continued Semple, regarding what she believes is a generation gap between many Pioneer clubs and younger office managers at the corporate level. Gaining permission to take off work to attend to Pioneer duties traditionally has been a challenge as a result, she said. Still, many of the sponsor corporations seem to boast about Pioneer activities on their web-sites.

But Semple said she is optimistic that the tradition of Pioneering will remain for years to come because "I can't imagine a world without Pioneers."

One Florida Pioneer recently agreed. He



The Pioneers' West Life Member Club in Massachusetts collects toys for children during the holidays.

said, "We are all Pioneers (even) away from the job."

"It's been said that once you volunteer, the good feeling you get inside from partnering with others could result in chronic volunteering," said Jane Ore, who serves as a vice president for New Jersey's H.G. McCully Upstate Chapter 12. "It's true. Most Pioneers get hooked for life."

The H.G. McCully chapter is located in northern New Jersey and consists of approximately 2,115 Active Members and 5,679 Life Members.

"As you can see, it is our Life Members (retirees) who keep us strong," she said.

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RETIREE SPOTLIGHT:

Behind the Scenes at Headquarters

Nestled in the quaint village of Cold Spring Harbor, NY, the Association of BellTel Retirees headquarters is a bustling machine brimming with activity.

However, juggling the workload needed to keep the Association—which boasts a membership of over 100,000—running often-times requires more hours than there are in a day.

Making the effort appear seamless are Chris and Jackie, two dedicated office workers who manage the Association's office, including answering telephone calls and both regular and electronic mail. They also help maintain a database that contains information on the Association's membership, which currently spans all 50 states.

"We truly appreciate the office crew in Cold Spring Harbor," said Association Board Member and Treasurer Eileen Lawrence. "They play a major role in what we do as a retiree organization. We couldn't do what we do without them."

The office receives between 100 to 200 calls a week. Aside from inquiries into how to become an Association member and information featured in the BellTel Retiree, questions about pensions and other benefits are not uncommon.

"We never pretend to know the answers," said office manager Chris, who has been working for the Association since 1999. "Our goal is to direct members to the proper agencies where they can get the information they need from the authority," rather than the Association, she said.

Being accessible to our members has been of great value to the Association since it was established in 1995, said Chris, a retired Verizon employee.

She recalled a recent situation where a member required immediate assistance after she simply stopped receiving her pension in the mail.

"She didn't know who else to call," said Chris, referring to the 90 year-old woman who said she had been given the run



The Association maintains an office in historic Cold Spring Harbor, N.Y.

around when she contacted Verizon. "All she knew was that she needed to talk to a real, live human being and not a recording."

Several months of not receiving her pension had left the woman in somewhat of a pickle, said Chris. The office quickly placed her in contact with a telephone company official. The company had assumed that the woman had passed away because her checks were all sent back marked "return to sender."

"The issue boiled down to a failure to communicate," said Chris. The woman had recently moved and either forgot to notify Verizon or they forgot to update their records.

The situation, however, was quickly resolved and the woman began receiving her pension again, this time at the new address.

For Jackie, who was hired as an office assistant less than a year ago, getting to know the members is the highlight of working with the Association at headquarters.

The headquarters' location in the village of Cold Spring Harbor, which was designated a Historic Maritime area in 1994, is an added bonus.

"We work in a great location, for a great association made up of great people," said Chris. "It helps make what we do here all the more worthwhile."

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.

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

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 regular mail at P.O. Box 33, Cold Spring Harbor, New York 11724, providing us with the temporary address and the dates that you will be away.

Free Member News Service

Do you want to stay up-to-date with the latest in retiree news, information and happenings? If so, sign up for the Association of Bell Tel Retirees' member news service.

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Also while online, feel free to read the latest Association bulletins by clicking on the "Bulletin" icon.

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PIONEER & RETIREE NEWS AND NOTES:

Association Board Members Lou Miano and John Parente will join members of the Pioneers' Cape Cod Life Member Club for a luncheon this month. The December 8 luncheon will take place at the Ballymeade Estates & Country Club in North Falmouth, Massachusetts. The club is located at 125 Falmouth Woods Road.

* * *

A group of Verizon retirees recently attended a luau in Baldwinsville, New York. The luau takes place each year and is planned by the Radisson Community Association in Baldwinsville, according to Association member Pat George.

* * *

The Washington D.C. Alexander Graham Bell Chapter #15 Pioneers donated computers to area elementary schools. One computer was donated to St. Anthony's Catholic School in Washington, DC. The other computer was given to the Doswell E. Brooks Elementary School in Capital Heights, Maryland. The new computers will be used by students to type and print homework assignments, access the internet and do research.

* * *

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.

On December 8, Association President and Executive Director C. William Jones will address the Verizon Telcom Pioneers in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

* * *

Do you have Pioneer or retiree news? If you would like to tell others about major retiree gatherings and events in your area, please send us detailed information (name, number, address, and email address) to be listed on a calendar of retiree events. While we cannot guarantee publication, we will consider every submission.



Verizon retirees recently gathered for a luau in Baldwinsville, NY.

Lucent Retirees In Trouble as VEBA \$\$ Dwindle

(Continued from page 3)

care and the other for pensions, were filled with AT&T funds when the company spun off Lucent in 1996, said Beltram.

However, the healthcare trust is currently depleted and the company has been dramatically transferring healthcare costs to retirees as a result, he said.

The LRO had been working to stop the passage of a new corporate tax bill that would allow large corporations like Lucent more flexibility in how they cut retiree benefits.

An October message on the retiree organization's website noted that "although members flooded Congress with email in an effort to stop the bill, the legislation

passed the Senate and was expected to be signed into law by President Bush."

The organization has also requested that the federal Securities and Exchange Commission investigate whether or not Lucent has properly exercised its obligations to retirees regarding its pension plan.

The Lucent contract negotiations sparked demonstrations across the country, including one in Holmdel, NJ, where employees and retirees wearing red shirts protested in front of Lucent's Bell Labs facility and another in Omaha, NE, where active and retired workers and supporters rallied at Gene Leahy Mall.

"Many retirees have seen up to 25 percent of their pension checks eaten away by healthcare coverage before they even receive the actual check," said Beltram.

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Using Consumerism to Combat Outsourcing

By Richard S. Knapp

Recently, I decided to take a trip to the hardware store to purchase a new hammer drill. As it turns out, the Milwaukee-brand drill had all of the qualities I was looking for.

Interestingly enough, upon inspection I realized that the brand, an old American manufacturer aptly named after a U.S. city, was actually made in Germany. So, I decided to pick up another tool, one touting the German brand name Bosch. You guessed it. It was made in the U.S.

Is it me or is outsourcing starting to look like double talk?

The subject of outsourcing is one that has been debated in the last several issues of the BellTel, as it is one that has a huge impact on the job market and economy—not to mention retirees.

In this most recent article, we will attempt to look at everyday solutions to outsourcing.

Bringing an end to the outsourcing of services that are often handled by call centers, such as billing operations and similar functions, for example, would be most difficult.

For instance, General Electric's GE

Capital International Services employed 17,000 people, with 12,000 at call centers in India and another 5,000 in centers in Hungary, Mexico and China as of September 2004.

There are dozens of countries where people are proficient in English, one reason why many corporations like GE claim these services can be outsourced to virtually anywhere outside the U.S.

Although taxation, legislation and other ways to regulate outsourcing to foreign countries, on a multitude of levels, look promising, they could be problematical because we trade in a global economy. Indeed our trading partners as "the other side" could seek retributions for the regulations. Consequently, reactive trade sanctions against the U.S. would probably hurt our economy more than the restriction of outsourcing would benefit us.

However, there is a huge area where we can put pressure on outsourcing. This is where consumerism comes into play. When you buy products do you check for the country of manufacture?

Products are still "Made in the USA" and will be made here as long as the manufacturer can make a profit, particularly if they get

the message that consumers take into account where the product was made.

If enough people buy U.S. products, whenever possible, then corporations will get the idea.

For instance, consider buying a car. Many of the so-called Japanese cars are made in the U.S., despite the fact that some of their parts are imported, as is the case with various parts in Daimler-Chrysler, Ford and General Motors cars. Some models manufactured by Honda, Subaru and Toyota are good examples of US-made Japanese cars.

If consumers do the research, though, they can find out exactly where a car is made and consider purchasing one made in the U.S.

Another example is tools. You can buy a pair of pliers or a screw driver made overseas at half the price of one made in the U.S. But, use both tools equally for a few years and the import most likely will need to be replaced a lot sooner.

The whole point is you can help combat outsourcing, retain jobs, feed our tax coffers, help our balance of payments and get a better product by doing just a little research. And the research could make a routine trip to the hardware store more interesting too.

Seidenberg Appointed to Federal Commission

Verizon Chairman and CEO Ivan Seidenberg has been appointed to a new federal commission aimed at developing strategies for improving health-care information technology.

Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, of Tennessee, announced Seidenberg's appointment after picking him to fill a seat on the Commission on Systemic Interoperability back in October.

The commission was established by the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement and Modernization Act of 2003 and will

develop technical standards for the storage and transmission of patient records, tests and other data.

Frist said the commission will foster improvements in the overall quality and efficiency of health care.

"The new Medicare law demands innovation in our health technology standards. Mr. Seidenberg's vast experience in both the public and private sectors makes him an outstanding candidate to lead this effort," said the senator.

According to Verizon, Seidenberg is the

only executive from a large corporation selected for the 11-member panel.

"I look forward to applying the lessons we've learned in the telecommunications industry to the work of this commission," Seidenberg said in a statement. "My participation is just one of the ways Verizon can impact the quality and cost of health care delivery. We believe that improving the U.S. health care system is a daunting but desirable policy goal for Verizon, and we will be actively pursuing that goal in the months and years ahead."

Retiree Hotspots Focus of 2004 Publication

The 2004 edition of the book "Retirement Places Rated" put to the test some 203 locations across the country to uncover some of the best places for retirees to live.

Of the top four places, Florence, OR, ranked the nation's best, followed by Scottsdale, AZ; the area of Melbourne and

Palm Bay, FL; and northern San Diego County, CA.

According to Association of BellTel Retirees records, the number of its members residing in these top-ranked locations was as follows: 354 in Melbourne and Palm Bay; 37 in Scottsdale; 35 in San Diego; and two in Florence, as of fall 2004.

Long considered a prime location for retirees, Florida held two spots in the top ten, according to the book released in August 2004.

Communities, both large and small, were rated based on six categories including cost of living, climate, crime, economy, ambience and services.

Member Mailbag



Dear Association,

“Exploring Upsides of Job Exportation” (Fall 2004 BellTel Retiree) is a healthy sign that the Association is maturing. Globalism will no doubt bring some pain, as does all change. But King Canute had more luck holding back the tide than anyone will have resisting the burgeoning of the international community. The survivors (as the beneficiaries) will be those who can not only accept it, but find a way to capitalize on its positive aspects! Glad to see you have room for the expression of larger viewpoints.

Nelson Runger
Pennsylvania

Dear Association,

Richard Knapp’s “Exploring Upsides of Job Exportation” is an excellent summary of the problem of outsourcing and some baby steps toward a partial and iffy solution. However, you missed a golden opportunity to promote the only plan, in my opinion, that would reverse outsourcing, encourage investment domestically, promote industrial expansion and create jobs.

I’m talking about a national sales tax to replace income tax and the demise of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). This plan completely does away with income taxes. For example, if you work for a plumber and he pays you \$500 a week, then you take home \$500 a week. Also under the plan, everyone would get a monthly payment from the government equal to the amount of sales tax they have paid for the necessities of life. The plan is revenue neutral and entirely fair.

The current tax code places U.S. manufacturers at a disadvantage relative to their counterparts abroad. In a global economy, the tax code is tantamount to industrial suicide. Anachronistic and inefficient, the code also contributes hugely to balance of payment problems and the national debt.

We have a golden opportunity to help pass HR 25, as it is legislation that would get the IRS monkey off our backs! It would also take a huge chunk of control out of the hands of Congress, curbing their appetite for social engineering, while rendering largely irrelevant the activities of the lobby. What’s not to like?

Don Pringle
Georgia

Dear Association,

In response to the article “Members Speak Up About Forming an American Retiree Political Party” (Summer 2004 BellTel Retiree), I think a party for those of us who cannot find a home in the “Big Two” is long overdue.

We self-proclaimed “Independents” are usually left to vote for the lesser of two evils, meaning we are still voting for evil to some degree!

Although a party for retirees would most likely garner support from retirees and those close to retirement, the party wouldn’t go anywhere if it didn’t support broader views and concerns.

These broader views and concerns may come from law-abiding citizens alarmed that criminals have more protection than they have, the small portion of the population aware that almost every item, except for food, in K-Mart, Wal-Mart, Target and

“dollar” stores are made in foreign countries or those who know that a president cannot create a single job, except for White House appointments, despite candidates who promise to create millions of jobs if we elect them.

Most importantly, let’s not forget those who feel that there should be a party that adheres to the pleas of two former presidents, one who said, “Ask not what you country can do for you, but what you can do for your country” and another who said, “Power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely.”

None of the abovementioned view has a champion in the “Big Two.” Yes, we need a third party. But, it cannot be made up of just retirees.

Lewis Burke
Virginia



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