IN THE SAME BOAT

By Jack Cohen

Fellow Association of BellTel Retirees board member John Hyland and I have become great friends. I spend more time with “Big John,” than any other member of our Board. He is more than a fellow board member, he is a dear friend and lives only a half-hour from my own home.

We meet each other to break bread at least once each week and frequently drive together to meetings with retirees, many times accompanied by fellow board member Tommy Steed. Together, we have run numerous “mini-meetings” locally, also accompanied by Pam Harrison, the Secretary of the Association’s Executive Board.

Why is this worth addressing? Probably because during four months in 1989, there was a good chance that “Big John,” Tommy and Pam would have chosen a root canal rather than spend any time with me. Conversely, I had been subjected to what NYNEX called “Re-Entry Orientation for Managers” to insure that the gigantic anger consuming all managers at the end of that strike did not result in retaliation.

You see, I am a retired manager who worked in New York City and both of those guys, as well as Pam were in the CWA. John was a Chief Steward in Southern Manhattan and Tommy was a CWA Union Organizer. Pam is a past President of the Local 1103 Retired Members Council. Another great friend, colleague and supporter of the Association is Michael McFadden, a retiree from New Jersey Local 827 of the I.B.E.W. and a powerful voice for working together with all retirees for their overall benefit.

Our Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. now has over 134,000 members. On a percentage basis it is split, with only half being retired management. Consequently, the old notion that this is purely a management organization has absolutely NO truth or merit.

We have regular bargaining reports on our website, which are sent to us by the IBEW. We have legislation in Congress (H.R.1856) that has been making progress. During collective bargaining we strongly urge our retired managers to not cross picket lines.

What other union or organization has legislation in Congress calling for healthcare being vested after 20 years of employment? We attend the Verizon shareholder meetings and have had many successful winning proxy proposals over the last 15 years. Three proposals actually won and eight we agreed to.

(Continued on page 2)
President’s Message
By John “Jack” Brennan

Fellow retirees, in 2016 the Association of BellTel Retirees will mark 20 years since its establishment. We all owe a tip of the hat to our seven founders, who were truly ahead of their time recognizing the very bumpy road ahead for America’s retirees. They were and remain visionary trailblazers, who gave thousands of hours of their time to our cause.

This volunteer-led organization has achieved so much for Verizon retirees and without its aggressive advocacy to protect our pensions and benefits, I know we would be far worse off.

Across our nation, a who’s-who of major U.S. based corporations are severing ties with their loyal retirees. The present day “Them –vs- Us” is a far cry from the belief system many of us have long held.

In the Same Boat

(Continued from page 1)

negotiate off the ballot with the Verizon board of directors, resulting in changes for the better in the company’s corporate governance. Our retiree association has also led and underwritten litigation when retirees need to fight their battles in court regardless of whether those affected are management or craft (e.g. the IDEARC case).

Things are quite different now, at least for retirees. As the saying goes: “War makes strange bedfellows.” As retirees we realize that we are (together) at war to preserve our earned health benefits and pensions. The old animosities driven into our heads for decades of active employment have no place in retirement. The negative energy driven by an ancient adversarial culture has no logic in the lifeboat carrying all of us. We either all row in the same direction and all pitch in or we will capsize or float adrift.

Please remember that the Association of BellTel Retirees represents both union and management retirees and we urge you all to remember that we are volunteers fighting on behalf of all of our retirees. I encourage and ask you to please get involved or more involved with the Association today.

It is a sad reminder that even two decades after we were created, we are still so badly needed. But without the Association of BellTel Retirees, we would all be left virtually naked and unprotected from the choices modern company managers make for our 134,000 members and all other Verizon retirees.

With that said, I need to spotlight our Association’s special legal counsel Curtis Kennedy and the ongoing and dogged fight he is leading on our behalf. As you will read on the cover, two of our cases to protect Verizon retirees were elevated for review by the United States Supreme Court! I could never have imagined, 18 years ago when I joined, that our organization would impact the highest court in America.

There are several important articles within these pages about the degradation, erosion and sale of precious copper, DSL and FiOS, which have long been the backbone of this great corporation. While the company has a deal to sell $10.5 billion in wireline assets in California, Texas and Florida (Pg 12), which it believes are non-core assets, another article (CWA Says Verizon Letting Copper, DSL Deteriorate – Pg 3) exposes that in the last seven years the company spent only $200 million on its wireline assets.

Layered atop all this, are complaints by 14 big northeast city mayors, including Philadelphia and New York City, which Verizon promised FiOS broadband to win contracts or concessions and then reneged. This is illustrative of the company’s current approach to its corporate responsibilities. Those mayors have a fight ahead, just as we do.

Finally, I encourage and invite as many of you who can, to join us on April 19, 2016 at the Association of BellTel Retirees 20th annual membership meeting in Tarrytown, New York. I look forward to personally meeting all of you there in April.

Happy Holidays to you and your family.

Our Mission:
The Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. is dedicated to promoting the protection and enhancement of the pensions and benefits for all retirees and beneficiaries of the companies and subsidiaries that make up the Verizon and Idearc/SuperMedia/DexMedia Corporations.

The Association will convince the company to properly care for its thousands of dedicated former union and management 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 fund.

Advertisements
All representations made in advertisements are solely the responsibility of the advertiser. The Association of BellTel Retirees is not responsible for any such representations. The Association does not endorse any advertiser.
CWA Says Verizon Letting Copper, DSL Deteriorate

The Communications Workers of America (CWA) has called for an investigation into whether Verizon has allowed its copper phone and DSL networks to deteriorate.

According to the CWA, Verizon admitted in a letter to the FCC that since 2008 it had spent only $200 million over the last seven years combined to maintain its copper landline network across a total of eleven states and the District of Columbia.

“Verizon pulls in more than a billion dollars in profits each month. $200 million represents less than half a percent of the $50 billion Verizon spent on its wireline network from 2008 to 2014 and less than one percent of what they charge the average voice customer,” said Dennis Trainor, Vice President of District 1 and Ed Mooney, Vice President of District 2-13 of the Communications Workers of America. “We support Verizon’s expansion of FiOS, but the company also has a legal obligation to provide safe, reliable service over its traditional landline network.”

In its letters to state regulators, the CWA referred to several complaints from customers about degraded service. For example, the letter to the Pennsylvania Public Utility Commission said that since 2012, more than 6,000 customers complained to the state "about the quality and reliability of service they receive from Verizon."

The union told Pennsylvania officials that Verizon technicians and customer service employees can confirm that the company "is not providing safe, adequate, and reasonable telephone service." The union said that the investigation should analyze network revenue and expenditures, the condition of the copper infrastructure, staffing levels for preventive maintenance, repair, installation, customer service, and policies and procedures that impact the quality of phone and Internet service.

The union is not the only one criticizing Verizon’s network priorities. Last year, Public Knowledge, the Utility Reform Network, and ten other consumer advocacy groups asked the FCC to investigate complaints that Verizon is letting copper landlines deteriorate.

Verizon responded by saying, “CWA leadership’s claims are absurd and nothing more than a tired tactic from the union playbook to avoid serious negotiations on a fair contract for their members. Verizon’s commitment to invest heavily in its wireline network is well documented and unquestioned. No company has invested more in broadband; last year alone we invested almost $6 billion in our wireline networks.”

Although Verizon has said fiber is superior to copper, it has not upgraded all of its customers.

An audit by New York City officials found that Verizon has failed to upgrade high-speed fiber optic internet and television to everyone in the city who wanted it. In order to gain certain contracts and approvals Verizon had previously promised that the entire city would be wired with fiber optic cables by June 2014 and that after that date, everyone who wanted FiOS would get it within six months to a year. The audit found that Verizon continues to refuse orders for service.

New Video Series on BellTel YouTube Channel

This fall the Association of BellTel Retirees rolled out its third online video series titled “Seniors’ Saga.”

The series draws from one-on-one interviews with Association members from five different states recorded at the 2015 Annual Member Meeting in Delaware.

Individual retirees who sat for voluntary interviews share their thoughts on pension de-risking, on pension protection and healthcare fears. They also discussed the positive value and impact the Association of BellTel Retirees has had on their lives.

One retiree addresses his feeling on Verizon transferring his and other retirees pensions to Prudential, saying that the company no longer takes care of its employees like they did before “when you were family.”

Another member, who is still an active union member in New Jersey discusses how corporations today are unfortunately more wrapped up in corporate greed and there is a lack of federal laws to stop them. She says companies can and have gone amuck to do almost anything they want with their retirees and workforce’s future.

Another member, whose pension is still under the Verizon umbrella, shares his fears that he and tens of thousands of retirees who have yet to see their pensions sold off to an insurance company could be next. When that happens the concern will only grow and get louder among all Verizon retirees.

We encourage our members to frequently visit the Association of BellTel Retirees YouTube channel. Please also continue spreading the word about the Association and our continuing fight to increase awareness and protect our earned retirement benefits. Share these videos and other social media from our organization with friends, family and other retirees.

The new series and other Association of BellTel Retirees’ videos can be viewed at the BellTel Retirees Channel on YouTube at:

http://www.youtube.com/user/belltelretirees
More Than 400,000 Teamsters Retirees May See Pension Cuts

The Teamsters Central States Pension Fund, one of that union’s largest retiree funds has filed for reorganization under a new federal law and has notified more than 400,000 members that their benefits may be cut.

In late 2014, Congress passed the Multi-employer Pension Reform Act of 2014, which allowed trustees of some multi-employer pension plans to submit proposals for benefit reductions.

Thomas Nyhan, the Executive Director of the Central States Pension fund said the fund had suffered from the deregulation of the trucking industry, declining union membership, two big stock crashes and the aging of the population. He also said that the fund was paying out $3.46 in pension benefits to retirees for every dollar it received in employer contributions.

The U.S. Treasury Department is set to review the restructuring plan for the pension fund. The department will either approve or reject the plan by May 2016. If it is approved, the Central State’s members will then vote on it. If the reorganization goes forward, experts say it could serve as a model for benefit roll-backs to beneficiaries of other multi-employer retirement plans across the nation.

A multi-employer plan is a collectively bargained plan that is maintained by more than one employer, usually within the same industry and a labor union.

According to the New York Times, about 10 million Americans participate in multi-employer pension plans. These plans were seen as financially stronger than a single-employer pension plan because if one company went bankrupt, the others would still be adding into the trust fund.

According to a summary provided by the Central States Pension Fund, retirees who are 80 or older will not have their pensions cut, and those over age 75 will receive smaller cuts than younger retirees. Disability pensions will continue to be paid in full.

At the end of 2014 the Central States Pension Fund had assets of $17.8 billion with a liability for promised benefits of $35 billion. The Fund pays out over $2.8 billion in pension benefits per year. To date, nearly $62 billion in retirement benefits have been paid by Central States Pension Fund to Teamster retirees and their families.

The Central States Pension Fund is jointly administered by an eight-member Board of Trustees consisting of four labor trustees and four employer trustees. It was established in 1955 to provide pension benefits to Teamsters in the trucking industry.

Verizon Retirees Take Cases to U.S. Supreme Court

(Continued from page 1)

The Supreme Court rarely takes up a civil case of first impression, unless it involves either a matter of constitutional law or issues of federal government versus state government rights. Since the Supreme Court refused to consider it, the Murphy case is effectively ended.

The Lee case, after being rebuffed by U.S. Appellate Court Judges, who decided neither to sign nor publish their rulings, which found there was no legal recourse against Verizon, is now also headed to the United States Supreme Court.

There are two significant legal issues being presented to the Supreme Court in the Lee case. The first legal issue is, whether retirees can complain in federal court about mismanagement of about $1 billion of pension funds used, not to pay expenses of the on-going pension plan, but rather used to pay expenses that should have been charged to corporate revenues.

The lower courts have ruled that retirees have no “constitutional standing” to complain in federal court about a violation of the federal law ERISA unless they were personally financially harmed by the mismanagement or improper use of pension funds. Ironically, the constitutional standing issue is now front and center before the Supreme Court in another unrelated case, Spokeo v. Robins, which was scheduled for oral argument on November 2. A favorable outcome in the Spokeo case will necessarily revive a big part of the Lee case.

The second legal issue to be presented in our Lee case is one of first impression – whether pension plan sponsors and plan fiduciaries engage in impermissible discrimination under ERISA when jetisoning one large group of retirees out of a healthy pension plan while maintaining the on-going pension plan for all other retirees.

What I want each and every member to recognize is that while anyone can file a lawsuit, so few ever reach the elevated status of even being considered by the highest court in our land, the United States Supreme Court. Your Association of BellTel Retirees has done that not once, but twice now in fighting to protect its members and fellow retirees from harm. It is imperative that you remain active and, supportive of the Association, just as they have and continue to be vigilant in advocating for you.

We expect to be able to provide you an update report concerning the Lee case in several months.
Retirees Meet this April 19 in Tarrytown, New York

This coming April, join the Association of BellTel Retirees in celebrating its 20th anniversary at the annual membership meeting in Tarrytown, New York.

The meeting will be at the Doubletree by Hilton Hotel located at 455 South Broadway in Tarrytown on Tuesday, April 19, beginning at 8 a.m. The hotel is less than an hour away by car or by the MTA Metro North Railroad from New York City and it is the first exit off the Tappan Zee Bridge coming from New Jersey or west of the Hudson River. It is also just minutes off of Interstate 95 in Connecticut and is easily accessible from all major highways. For those coming via Metro North railroad, the hotel will provide shuttle service given advance notice of arrival time.

Tarrytown has long been known as the backdrop for Washington Irving's famous 1820 story, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow and home to many of the industrial ages Gilded Age Mansions overlooking the beautiful and scenic Hudson River. There are multiple attractions nearby including: Empire Casino at Yonkers Raceway; the fantastic Rockefeller Estate Kykuit; Sunnyside, the estate of Washington Irving; Lyndhurst Castle, which was the estate of railroad baron Jay Gould and so much more. The hotel is about an hour south of West Point and some of the Hudson Valley’s many fine wineries.

The hotel will be offering the Association of BellTel Retiree members a special rate of $137 dollars for those who wish to stay overnight. Use code ABR when booking.

The Association last held its annual meeting in Tarrytown back in 2010 and over 300 people attended. We are anticipating an excited and robust attendance for the upcoming meeting and want as many members and their spouses to be a part of the event as possible. Reservations are needed. To reserve a seat, please complete and send the early RSVP reservation form below. Be sure to include the names of all those attending and return it with your $5 per person registration fee to Ms. Susan Donegan, c/o the Association of BellTel Retirees, P.O. Box 33, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724.

Please make all checks payable to the Association of BellTel Retirees. Entrance tickets and directions will be mailed to you as the event gets closer. Please note that hotel reservations and event reservations are separate and a reservation to one is not to another. All members must register with the Association to guarantee a spot at the meeting.

To reserve a hotel reservation at the special discounted rate you can contact the hotel at 1-914-631-5700.

Some thought had been given to having two satellite meetings in Florida including a visual feed of the Tarrytown meeting. Due to cost vs. attendance issues, that project was deferred to a future discussion.

We look forward to seeing you at our 20th annual celebration.

---

**Early Bird RSVP for Association of BellTel Retirees Annual Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 19, 2016 at The Double Tree Hilton, 455 S. Broadway, Tarrytown, New York**

**A Ticket Is Required To Attend**

I will attend the meeting in Tarrytown, NY - # in party______

Name:__________________________________________ Address:_________________________________________

Phone Number:________________________ Email Address:_________________________________________

Enclosed is a Check for $__________ ($5.00 per person)

Please list your guest’s names and addresses:

_________________________________________

_________________________________________

**PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY**

(You can list invitees names on a separate piece of paper if more than 2 are attending)

A ticket will be mailed to each member and guest for admission.

Please return this registration form and fee ASAP to: **Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. c/o Susan Donegan / P.O. Box 33, Cold Spring Harbor, NY 11724**
1996 - 2016: 20 years for BellTel Retirees

The Association of BellTel Retirees is gearing up to celebrate its 20th anniversary in 2016 – and what a run it has been! We have grown from a small group of seven dedicated advocates to a more than 134,000-member national organization battling year in and year out to protect the pensions and benefits we all earned. As we mark this proud milestone, it is important to remember why we came together in first place and to reflect upon where we are going in the future.

Originally founded as the Association of NYNEX Retirees, our group was formed after the company’s then Chairman and CEO Ivan Seidenberg refused to acknowledge or respond to a petition from 1,400 loyal retirees simply asking to for a retirement cost of living increase (COLA).

“If he had just given retirees a COLA at the time, he might have taken the air out of the balloon and we all might have just gone away,” said C. William Jones, the Association’s co-founder.

That fateful decision to ignore the petition sparked what has become a formidable national coalition of union members and management, joined together in the common cause of ensuring fairness and economic security for its members and their families.

Started by Bill Jones and Bob Rehm, the two were soon joined by fellow co-founders Ed Ward, Mike Kucklinca, Don Eltharp, Joe Ristuccia and John Parente. The retiree movement was incorporated in 1996 as the Association of NYNEX Retirees. From those early days, the original leaders were off and running to ensure that they and their fellow retirees were given the retirement protections they earned and were guaranteed.

“I was sick and tired of looking at a paycheck on January 1st and not seeing a cost of living increase in it,” Mr. Kucklinca previously told the BellTel Newsletter. “The fact that the company did not keep their promise was what motivated me.”

From the very first annual membership meeting it was clear the group had touched a nerve: More than 500 retirees showed up at Antun’s Old Country Manor on Long Island, NY in May 1997. At that moment it became crystal clear that the seven leaders were seeking to address concerns shared among a very wide group of retirees and their spouses.

“We spent our lives working to earn our pension and health benefits and it is up to us to protect what we earned,” said Mr. Ristuccia. “It is a good thing that the Association was created. Thanks to our efforts, retirees have representatives working on their behalf that are able to put employers on notice. We are ready to step up to the plate when our earned benefits are threatened.”

From that point forward, the Association of NYNEX Retirees grew organically and rapidly, expanding to an astonishing 10,000 members in just over year. It was quickly recognized as the pre-eminent retiree advocacy organization of its kind.

During the 1996 holiday season, Eileen Lawrence heard from several friends about fellow retirees who were starting an association. She contacted Mike Kucklinca, met the other board members and joined shortly thereafter. Eileen was already upset by the obvious change in the company’s out-of-sight/out-of mind attitude concerning
years of the Association’s History

As we mark this proud milestone, it is important to remember why we came together in first place and to reflect upon the pensions and benefits we all earned.

1996 - 2016: 20 years for BellTel Retirees

Eileen was already upset by the obvious fact that the company did not do its share on pensions and healthcare. Eileen Lawrence heard from several friends about fellow retirees who were-enabled and betrayed.

Promises at Retirement Broken” and “Ma Bell’s Orphans.”

Mr. Jones told media, “They,(company executives), have changed the rules of the game in the fourth quarter, which clearly is unethical, unprofessional and unprincipled. Our retirees feel abandoned and betrayed.”

As the Association’s good reputation grew, its leaders became involved with national retirees groups including the Coalition for Retirement Security and the Pension Rights Center.

In 1999 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that under the Employee Retirement Income Security Act (ERISA), American corporations do not have to share surpluses from their pension plans with retirees and workers, even if those workers had contributed to the plans.

That year, Bell Atlantic and the GTE were preparing to merge and we spoke at both companies’ annual shareholder meetings. At the Bell Atlantic meeting, our proxies were supported by over 570 million shares, illustrating our growing clout.

In the final year of the Millennium your Association led the national fight against companies like Bell Atlantic using so called “shadow profits” from the retiree pension fund in order to allow larger executive bonuses and compensation.

At the same time, we turned our attention to Capitol Hill, forming alliances with other corporate retiree groups to pursue legislation in the halls of Congress and began considering possible litigation to advance our members’ interests.

Within just a few short years, the seven founders had gotten the Association off the ground by establishing a recognized non-profit organization, publishing our current quarterly newsletter, and recruiting tens of thousands of more retirees to the cause. We were engaging and challenging senior management at annual shareholder meetings, running strong proxy initiative strategies and so much more.

In the coming issues, we will continue to reflect the Association’s activities through the years, but how about you? We ask that you please also share some stories about your years at the company or in retirement with us. Please write or email us your favorite memories or share them with us on Facebook. We look forward to hearing them.

Thank you for being part of our history and success.
The Association of BellTel Retirees first initiated its Planned Giving program after receiving donations and requests to be made in memory of several of our departed members. The program helps to ensure the continuing advocacy efforts of the Association to aid our surviving spouses, fellow retirees in the same lifeboat, as well as advocacy for what will be left for future retirees.

Over the years our fellow retirees have had to go to the unanticipated efforts to sue the corporation simply to fight to keep and protect our earned healthcare, pensions and benefits. We have had to file federal litigation to protect over 41,000 retirees who have already had their pensions spun off in Verizon’s pension de-risking and many have asked who or what is next.

To fight for legislation protections at the state and federal level, we have all needed to become more active in advocacy and to demand legislative and regulatory changes for the protection of our earned healthcare and pensions and for some, now de-risked annuities, simply so we do not get steamrolled by the corporation(s) we gave decades of loyalty to.

All these years we have been hyperactive on the corporate shareholder proxy front, earning and commanding respect from the Verizon board by causing 11 changes to corporate governance and policy.

All these things are part of the playbook of the Association of BellTel Retirees to protect and enhance the economic future of our fellow retirees and is critical in protecting our surviving spouses.

Along side any generosity you have planned for your local church, synagogue, high school or college, upon your passing, can you consider making a slight change to leave a legacy for the continued effort to protect retirees and surviving spouses. Help them by considering the Association of BellTel Retirees in your estate planning. It really is a simple matter to do so.

There are many ways to do this and we welcome any support you care to provide. You can leave a bequest of cash, property or negotiable bonds or CD’s. What you leave to the Association is both personal and private.

Before making any decision, please talk it over with your family and a financial advisor. Making that decision is important for the Association, but it is more important to you and your family to do it right.

Any questions about either of these programs can be answered by simply calling the office, or by a call to one of the board members.

Bequests ensure the Association will be able to carry out its mission to protect the pension and benefits of retirees well into the future.

Thank you for your support.

Retired NYNEX Chairman And CEO
William C. Ferguson Passes Away

On October 14, 2015, William C. Ferguson, retired Chairman and CEO of NYNEX passed away in Florida. Mr. Ferguson was 84 years old.

He was born on October 26, 1930 in Detroit, Michigan. After graduating from Albion College, he served two years in the U.S. Army. Afterwards, he returned to Michigan Bell in Detroit in 1954 where he held various management positions before he became a company officer in 1971.

In 1978, he became Executive Vice President, Chief Operating Officer of Michigan Bell, and in preparation for the breakup of the Bell System, he was transferred to New York in 1983 as President and CEO of New York Telephone. In 1987, Mr. Ferguson became Vice Chairman of NYNEX, and served as NYNEX Chairman and CEO from 1989 until his retirement in 1995.

Mr. Ferguson is survived by his wife of 63 years, his three daughters, seven grandchildren and two great grandchildren.
WHY SHOULD I DONATE?

By David Simmonds, Director of the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc.

How many times have I heard that question? The answer could be as simple as, “Do what’s in your heart”. But it’s never really simple, is it?

We all get bombarded on a daily basis with email, letters, church requests, etc., and they all seem to come at once. And once you donate it starts an avalanche of requests. If you look at what you’ve done in the past, you should be able to make a better informed decision in your donating habits. Being retired doesn’t make it any easier either. While life goes on and prices go up, most of us haven’t seen a COLA or any kind of raise in our pensions. That just adds another level of frustration. Can I still afford to do this?

I look at a few issues when thinking of donating. First, can I afford to do this? For the most part, if I donate to a few organizations, I view each one differently. When it comes to the Association of BellTel Retirees, I hold them close to my heart. Not because I’m a Verizon retiree, because I’m not. I am a Lucent retiree, but rather I look at the quality of work and the eager ambition they approach each issue with.

I personally donate to a few organizations. I view each one differently. What they do, not only benefits Verizon retirees, but it sets a precedent for other retiree organizations to follow. The healthcare, pension, and legislative work is only part of the mission. Educating others about the issues, speaking at meetings with other retiree groups, meeting with our elected representatives, and meeting with Verizon officials all goes on behind the scenes.

This all costs money. Money from only one source. You, the membership. Every penny that comes in is used for the benefit of the membership.

So when you ask “why should I donate?” the answer is simple. If we don’t get the money needed to fight for you, then it all goes away. Think about who would fill the Association’s shoes if that happens.

So dig down deep and help us to help you. If you’ve donated in 2015, thank you. If you can afford it, please make another donation. If you’re reading this and haven’t donated, then shame on you.

No donation is too small and certainly none are too large. Please help us to help you. Go to the website and donate, or mail us a check, but do something. We need your support now!

Thank you,

Mr. Simmonds retired from Lucent Technologies in 2001. His Bell System career started in 1966 with N.Y. Tel. During that time he worked for N.Y. Tel, AT&T, NCR, AT&T Network Systems, and Lucent. He has been a member of the board of directors since 2008.

WE NEED YOUR GENEROSITY

Consider a Special Help Contribution

2015 FINANCIAL SCORECARD!!

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ASSOCIATION OF BELLTEL RETIREES INC.
P.O. Box 61, Glen Head, NY 11545-0061

Yes, I want to support the Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. in our fight to protect the pensions and benefits of all retirees and active employees. Enclosed is my tax-deductible donation:

☐ Other $ __________ ☐ $100 ☐ $75 ☐ $50 ☐ $36.50 ☐ $30 We appreciate any amount you can donate $________

Or use your credit card. Visa Discover Amex MasterCard Credit Card

Acct.#_________ /_________ /_________ /_________ Expiration Date________ Three digit code on back of card: __________

Name______________________________

Address______________________________City/State/Zip Code______________________________

E-mail______________________________Telephone #_________

I am a: Management retiree _______ Union retiree _______ Other _______ Company Retired from:_________

You can also donate online by going to our web-site www.belltelretirees.org and click on the DONATE NOW button. Consider a recurring donation—which is an easy and safe way to budget your contribution.

☐ I am interested in learning more about Planned Giving. Please contact me.

The Association of BellTel Retirees Inc. is a 501(c)3 tax-exempt organization representing retirees and active employees of Verizon, its subsidiaries and retirees who were transferred to Idearc/SuperMedia/DexMedia.
Thank you for all that you do. You are our only hope for any kind of protection from the practices of the telephone company that it has become.

Never in this world did I ever think that after retiring in 1989, after 41 years of service, did I have to be concerned about the future of our benefits.

This is not the company that I knew as a young lady just out of school, starting what was to be a good career.

I started as an operator in the small village of Millbrook, NY, in Dutchess County. When that office closed in 1958, I transferred to Poughkeepsie, later going to the engineering department from which I retired. My late husband was an installer/repairman, and then a switchman, first in Millbrook and then Poughkeepsie. We were always proud to tell where we worked and never dreamed that the company would turn into what we see today.

My husband was in the Navy from 1940 to 1946, on destroyer duty (guarding the convoys to England) in the North Atlantic during WWII and was a radioman on his ship when Pearl Harbor was attacked. He later went on to many other battles in Europe and Africa. His experience in the radio field got him his job with the Company, which in those days also served the communications needs of police departments.

In the latest newsletter there was a page with contacts to know if a survivor needs to claim insurance, etc. I copied it and gave it to my daughter. It is a daunting task for a non-phone company person to deal with benefits or to report a death. Thank you.

Sincerely,
A.B.

I retired in December 1986 (30+ years) from New Jersey Bell, Bell Atlantic and Verizon. My career was in Northern NJ, as a member of IBEW 827.

I was brought to Michigan by my niece in June 2010 and have been in assisted living for 5 years now. I will be 84 years old in 2 months.

Thank you for all the work you do. My pension isn’t a lot but every bit helps. In 1986 I attended a meeting for retirees at headquarters at 540 Broad St., Newark, NJ. They told us all the wonderful benefits we had for our retirement. There was no mention of any future changes in benefits, so your work to keep our benefits is greatly appreciated.

M.H.

I wish I could contribute more. My retirement was in December 1992. My retirement check is the same amount in 2015 as it was then. There have been no cost-of-living increases or raises in my retirement check, which makes it hard to send kids to school as well as buy food and pay taxes. I don’t know what we retirees would do if we lost our benefits. We all worked hard and many hours to obtain them. Thank you for doing what you can to help us.

Thank you,
R.E.
Tom Steed, Board Member of the Association of BellTel Retirees

RETIREE SPOTLIGHT: TOM STEED

As a young man growing up in the Bronx, Tom Steed played baseball and football across the street from the New York Telephone garage. He watched admiringly as phone company employees performed essential services during the turbulent days of the 1970s, when arson and other troubles could knock out service and leave families without access to vital communications. Members of the community knew that telephone workers would always be there to restore service quickly. It was in those years that he came to appreciate how central a role the phone company can play in people’s lives.

“These men looked like they just got out of a muddy ditch, and they were all as happy as larks,” he said. This wasn’t your typical mundane job you hate. We loved work.”

Tom’s career focused around Plant Construction and Engineering. He started as a cable splicer in the Bronx in 1971 and later transferred to Newburgh, NY as an linesman. By 1999 he got the required weight of their equipment.

During the turbulent days of February when the ice could hold the telephone poles in swamps and return in extreme, they sometimes had to bypass and road crossings. The terrain was so extreme, they sometimes had to bypass telephone poles in swamps and return in February when the ice could hold the weight of their equipment.

Though the work was hard, Tom was always thankful for his telephone company career. Today, more than ever, he feels strongly that retirees need to have a voice and be engaged in Verizon’s future. That is why he became so active in the Association of BellTel Retirees.

“Sometimes decisions are made without thinking about the retirees. It’s the Association’s job to bring those problems out thinking about the retirees. It’s the leadership was protecting the retirement benefits he was earning even while still on the job. Tom decided he wanted to be part of the group, instead of watching things happen passively.

“Changing the rules at the end of the game” is something he finds unacceptable for companies to do. He feels that if he and his colleagues knew NY Tel would turn into a company that wouldn’t support them in retirement; they would have chosen different careers.

“You made a middle class wage, got platinum health care, 100% tuition assistance,” he said. “You didn’t need to win the lottery if you got a good, honest hard working job like I did.” Tom says it was his job and the healthcare protections that allowed him and his wife to raise their five children comfortably.

Tom was inspired to join the Association while still an active employee because he recognized that the BellTel leadership was protecting the retirement benefits he was earning even while still on the job. Tom decided he wanted to be part of the group, instead of watching things happen passively.

“Sometimes decisions are made without thinking about the retirees. It’s the Association’s job to bring those problems up to them,” Mr. Steed said.

Tom still holds a great respect for Verizon today and believes retirees and employees who helped build Verizon into a Fortune 50 company take pride in seeing it do well.

“I don’t know a single employee or retiree who does not want to see Verizon do well. It’s good for the shareholders, customers, employees, and retirees,” he said. “But they need to hold the promises, commitments and guarantees they told us to expect.”

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Elected Officials Demand Verizon Meet Communication Needs of Their Constituents

Mayors of fourteen East coast cities have written to Verizon’s leadership saying that they are fed up with the company for failing to adequately upgrade its network, as the company had previously committed to. Cumulatively, the mayors represent 12 million people across the states of Pennsylvania, New Jersey, New York, and Massachusetts.

The letter states: “As Mayors, we understand firsthand how vital broadband is to the growth of our local economies and to nurturing a healthy, competitive marketplace in our state... But consistently and increasingly, our consumers have complained that FiOS service is not available to them. These are not isolated complaints – there are millions of residents in communities throughout the Northeast who have been left without service, and with no plan or promise for future resolution.”

The mayors also told Verizon that their constituents relied on Verizon jobs but that the company should maintain its network. They wrote, “As Mayors who understand the importance of job growth in our communities, we are committed to ensuring the expansion – not the reduction – of opportunity in our cities...and to ensure that during the transition from copper to FiOS, service quality is maintained on the traditional network.”

The coalition of mayors conclude asking for a response from Chairman and CEO Lowell McAdam. The mayors include:

**Pennsylvania:**
James Kenney, Philadelphia
William Peduto, Pittsburgh
Kathy Sheehan, Allentown

**New York:**
Bill de Blasio, New York City
Byron Brown, Buffalo
Stephanie Miner, Syracuse

**Massachusetts:**
Bill Carpenter, Breckton
Rodney Elliot, Lowell
Joseph Petty, Worchester
Daniel Rizzo, Revere

**New Jersey:**
Ras Baraka, Newark
Steve Fulop, Jersey City
Eric Jackson, Trenton
Jose Torres, Paterson

**FCC Investigates Anti-Competitive Practices**

The Federal Communications Commission is investigating Verizon, AT&T, Frontier and CenturyLink Inc, over allegations of anti-competitive practices.

According to the FCC, competitors of these four companies claim that their tariff pricing plans for business data services are unreasonable and they lose demand for their services.

Business data services, or special access services, are usually purchased by business, governmental, educational and other institutions for their data and communication needs.

“The FCC is searching for a problem that doesn’t exist and doing an end-run around the competitive analysis it just initiated,” Linda Johnson, a spokeswoman for CenturyLink said.

Verizon spokesman Ed McFadden said “the services involved in the tariff proceeding are legacy services and have been in place for years.”

The FCC said, competitors claim the four companies use pricing plans with “a complicated web of all-or-nothing bundling, loyalty and term commitments, complex enforcing penalties and other provisions.” They also claim the four companies’ intention is to “lock up substantial proportions of carrier and end-user demand, which locks out competition.”

“FCC said it had found “potentially unjust and unreasonable practices” and they have “sufficient questions regarding the lawfulness of certain terms and conditions.”

The FCC has asked Verizon, AT&T, Frontier and CenturyLink to respond by December 18.

**Verizon Reports Strong 3rd Quarter**

Verizon Communications released its third quarter fiscal results for 2015. It reported $33.2 billion in total operating revenues, a 5% increase from third quarter 2014. They also reported $28.4 billion year -to- date in cash flow from operations.

Verizon Wireless added 1.3 retail net connections. Wireless capital investment totaled $2.9 billion in the third quarter, up 8.4 percent from a year ago.

Verizon Wireline added 114,000 FiOS internet and 42,000 FiOS video net additions. Verizon closed its Wireless sale in California, Florida and Texas to Frontier as to better focus their efforts on the East coast.

In June, Verizon also acquired AOL, which led to Verizon launching its go90, a mobile social entertainment platform. Throughout the year, Verizon invested $22 billion in spectrum licenses and capital for future network capacity, in addition to the AOL acquisition.

Verizon reported 99 cents earnings per share in the third quarter.

**FCC Approves Verizon’s Sale Of $10.54 Billion In Wireline Assets**

The FCC approved Frontier Communications’ $10.54 billion acquisition of Verizon’s wireline assets in California, Florida and Texas.

However, the sale still needs approval from the California Public Utilities Commission and the Texas Public Utilities Commission.

Frontier plans to offer California, Florida and Texas customers broadband services, wireline local and long distance phone service, video viewing options, and innovative products and services. The company said that FiOS customers in these states will continue to receive the same products and services they have had under FiOS.