

S.S.R.A. NEWSLETTER

Volume 19, Issue 1

October - November 2018

Stoddard Wins Election in a Landslide; Dues Reinstated for 2019

From the Editor's Desk

As with all things, there is a beginning and an end. Several years after I had retired, the SSRA had a need for someone to take over the Newsletter. Little did I know that 20 years later I would still be doing it. Now it is time to pass on the baton. I am very proud to announce that Mary Mills, former STA secretary, has graciously agreed to take on the task beginning with the December issue.

I can't think of anyone more enthusiastic and more capable of taking on this endeavor than Mary. She was my tutor on how Publisher works as a means of writing a Newsletter, solved the many problems offered by the STA's printer, and in general solved many problems I often had with my computer. Mary was always willing to run off our Newsletter when I was in Florida for the winter.

Over the years, the Newsletter has gone through many changes. In its early years, the paper was sent out to a printer who would collate, staple and print it. The executive board had the task of putting on the stamps and mailing labels. This proved to be quite expensive. As time went on the STA allowed us to use their printer as long as I would run it off and the executive board did the rest.

Then about three years ago, Rich Davis, one of our SSRA members, developed a website for us and we joined the 21st century. For those still unfamiliar with the website, just go to myssra.com and view it. Once we had a website the Newsletter was put



online and we notified the members when it was available. Those who still wanted a paper copy were accommodated. Then, two years ago, the district office took over the process at a very nominal fee. We only had to do the labels and stamps.

On another topic, punishing school districts who had large opt-out rates on the state mandated tests in grades 3 and 8 has been unanimously rescinded by a 15 member committee of the Board of Regents. Districts with large opt-out rates were to be provided with money to use for advertising to encourage participation.

On Long Island, approximately 90,000 students in grades 3-8 opted out of these tests, about 50% of the eligible students. Most of these districts would have had to devise a plan if fewer than 95% of their students had opted out. This would have included Smithtown. But this will no longer be required. Remember, too, teacher evaluations were to be tied into these test scores. Although none of this is a certainty at this time but an approval by the Board of Regents is expected in the coming months.

My thanks to the SSRA Executive Board, to the many individuals who have aided me over the years but most of all to you the members who have sent me material over the years for use in the Newsletter.

Carl Haymes
Editor

Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association

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President..... Patty Stoddard
Vice President..... John Pettit
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The Smithtown School Retirees' Association is affiliated with the Smithtown Teachers' Association,
The New York State United Teachers and the American Federation of Teachers

Monthly meetings are held on the second Monday of each month at 9:30 AM
at the STA office

All members are invited to attend. We encourage your input.

Additions/Changes to Directory

New Member

Elliot Slotnick
PO Box 474
Becket, MA 01223
413-623-6070

Changes

Dorothy Becker - add Apt. 437 to address
Carole Coloe - 8395 SW 73 Ave., Unit 706,
Miami, FL 33143
Paula Golden- 7495 Granville Avenue.
Boynton Beach, FL 33437, 516-476-7356
Joyce McLaren - 114 Wellspring Way, Moores-
areville, NC 28117
Margaret Von Gonton - mvg505@outlook.com

Our Deepest Sympathy to:

The family and friends of Donald "Donnie"
Savino, former HS East Chemistry teacher
and Administrative Assistant who passed
away on Sept. 3rd.

The family of Joyce Tyree on the loss of her
brother, David Davis. Joyce is currently the
Director of the Teacher's Center.

Our Congratulations to:

Mary Jane Casey
(great-grandparent)
&

Carole Coloe
(grandparent)
(see News of Members for details)





News of Members



As retirees, we have the opportunity to undertake many diverse and interesting activities and trips. Why not share them with us? We welcome any stories, poems, adventures or whatever you would like to tell your former colleagues.

Bill Benzinger - Here I am returning to the Grand Canyon 3 years later. This time instead of jumping in on a solo adventure I decided to take a workshop with the Grand Canyon Association. I chose the "Rim to Rim Natural History Backpack," six days and five nights of tenting. You cook your own meals, no showers adventure. This was not a "gentlemen's hiking trip," like I am used to. It became a cold to hot, sweaty, amazing trip.

The Grand Canyon Association supplied a PhD Naturalist and a very competent assistant. We started at the north rim on the opening day of the season. Temperatures were in the 40's but quickly warmed as we descended. Elevation dropped 4000' in 7 miles to Cottonwood Camp which was excruciatingly steep and very hard on the knees, and calves. That coupled to a 35 lb. pack (we had to carry everything) was even worse. The next day we descended 2000' in 7 miles bringing us to Phantom Ranch Resort. We didn't get too excited over the name. It is a canteen with some cabins serving mule drivers, dormitories and a campground. Here we spent 2 nights exploring the area, drinking lemonade and Arnold Palmers, the featured beverages.

The National Park Service has a motto: "Hiking down is optional, Hiking out is not!" Now for the ascent. Downhill hiking is hard on your calves, knees and feet, while uphill is taxing on your quadriceps and heart. We also developed a habit of getting up at 4:00am to hike in the cool part of the day. At the end of our stay at Phantom Ranch we were up at 4:00am, broke camp, ate breakfast and were on the trail at 5:30. Two miles on the River Trail paralleling the Colorado River. Then 3 miles of multiple switchbacks to Indian Garden Campground. A little slice of heaven! We stayed here for our last overnight. The last part of the trail is 4-1/2 miles. We were motivated this last morning, but we knew it would be a steep trip. There were rest stops at the 3 and 1-1/2 mile rest houses. We were grateful for each one. Finally we reached the trailhead 5 hours later. We all said our farewells, took pictures and set off for home or elsewhere.

I went off on a side trip to the Arizona Meteor Crater. This is a mile wide, 600' deep crater produced by a house sized meteor traveling at 46,000mph that impacted Arizona about 50,000 years ago. Really incredible! My last night was spent in Las Vegas at the Gold Coast Hotel. The room was very nice and only cost \$38.50 plus resort fee and tax. I stayed at this off strip property at the beginning of my stay. I ate at their premier restaurant, "Ping, Pang, Pong." They are rated as one of the best 100 Chinese restaurants in the United States. It was amazing! I am coming back!

Carole Coloe - I became a grandmother again. Dylan was born August 4, 2018. Big sister Caroline is very happy to have a little brother. My new address is 8395 SW 73 Avenue, Unit 706, Miami, FL 33143.

Cont. on p.4 - News of Members)

(News of Members cont. from p.3)

Paul Schlesier - Paul and his wife Ellen celebrated their 50th anniversary with a party thrown by their children. The party was at the Country Corner Bar where they met when Paul tended bar there and Ellen was a student at Stony Brook University. A big thanks to Dieter Dose and his band Flashback for making the party so much fun.

Mary Jane Casey - The latest news is the arrival of our third great-grandchild Bradley Casey on February 13 and fourth great-grandchild Maxwell Ward on August 21. Super excited and enjoying these special moments. Hope all have had a good summer and will enjoy the remaining days. Looking forward to Fall and cooler weather.

Larry Hohler - The big event of the Hohler's summer was their participation on July 8th in our annual Kenya - USA 5 K Bi-Continental Walk Run. Thirty or so participants gathered on the Setauket-Port Jefferson Greenway, while over 200 got ready to compete against them, 7 time zones away in Meru, Kenya. Gary Westerfield started his timing clock at 10 AM, the same time that the race in Kenya was beginning at 5 PM, Kenyan time. Keegan Sabo of Mt. Sinai finished first in 22:16. Patchogue resident Jen Bradshaw, the quickest female, finished with a time of 37:16. Vic Desanctis and Larry Hohler finished well back in the pack with times of over one hour and 13 minutes. The Kenyans did better. Ambrose Muguna and Sheila Gatwiri, both residents of the Home were overall winners. Ambrose finished with a time of 16:50 and Sheila completed the race in 20:15.

Our successful fundraiser generated over \$7,000, enough to cover the cost of over half of the fall tuition fees for the 35 young people attending universities, trade and secondary schools. Fundraisers like the Bi-Continental Run help make it possible to our children to make real the HCF motto, "Education is the key!"

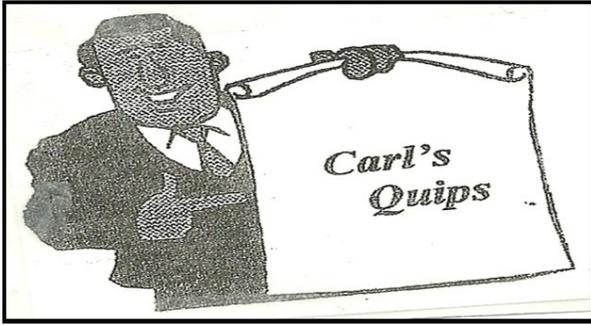
Warren Parnell - In May, I flew to Washington, DC with a group of WWII veterans. It was a most enjoyable day visiting and paying homage to all the memorials for veterans of the various wars.



(Honor Flights have one mission: to transport America's Veterans to Washington, DC to visit those memorials dedicated to the service and sacrifices of themselves and their friends)

Elyse Magram - Elyse and Gene visited the opulent Hermitage in St. Petersburg, Russia. The couple traveled to Amsterdam, Estonia, Berlin, St. Petersburg, Helsinki, and Copenhagen, as they cruised the Baltic. The trip was extremely educational and very colorful. Europe was packed with travelers from around the world. Elyse returned to Berlin after having visited it at age 17 when the wall was up.





Language is not properly the servant of thought but not infrequently becomes the master.

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Answers from students' papers collected over many, many years. Laugh or cry, but enjoy them! If you know of any, and would like to share them, please send them to the Newsletter.

Two plays by Shakespeare are Romeo and Juliet.

Fossils are extinct animals. The older they are the more extinct they are.

Q. On what grounds was Aaron Burr tried for treason?

A. New York

Caesar's last words were "boo hoo, Brutus."

Sea water is salty because it has so many fish in it.

Impeachment is like imprisonment but they give you a lot of fruit to eat.

Classified Ads

Time Share—Margot Bay, St. Lucia, the most beautiful bay in the Caribbean, as described by noted author James Mitchner. Time share is a beautiful duplex, one bedroom villa, available 2 floating weeks per year. Good income potential. For details go to: Oasismarigot.com. Click on Vacation Club Villas. Asking \$599. Contact Bill Benzinger at: nkeepr@optonline.net

More Classified

Vermont rental on Lake Ludlow- 10 min. to Okemo SKI area and 20 min. to Killington SKI area; 4 bedroom, loft, two fireplaces, kitchen, 3 baths, den, living room/dining area. Plenty of wood for fires inside and outdoor fire pit.

Ice skating, sleigh riding at your door step. In addition to a great ski area Okemo Spring house has indoor pool, racket ball courts, sauna and other amenities for nominal fees.

Weekends and weekly rentals available.

Call Mary Jane 516-961-5101

(News - cont. from p.4)

Arthur Bryton - It is back to reality after a hectic but enjoyable summer. Sheila and I started out with a trip to the east coast, visiting friends and family. In DC, was the relatively new African-American Museum. We highly recommend it when visiting the nation's capital.

Several weeks later we traveled to Switzerland, starting in Zurich, and then enjoying the lake region and the Alps. The high elevation in Zermatt and Mt. Pilatus was especially welcome since Europe was having a whopper of a heat wave. The temperature in the lower regions of Switzerland was 96 degrees plus, with a high humidity.

After Switzerland, we boarded our river cruise boat for a trip down the Rhine. Stops included Heidelberg, Rudenshein, Strasbourg, Koblenz and Cologne. All the towns and cities have their own unique charm. Most special was Colmar, known as the Little Venice of France. It is tucked between the Rhine River and the Vosges Mountains near Germany and Switzerland. It is a fascinating blend of German and French culture. Colmar is the capital of the Alsace wine region and looks like it popped right off the pages of a story-book. It was spared from the destruction of the French Revolution and both World Wars.

The cruise ended in Amsterdam where we spent 3 active days, visiting the main museums, and the Anne Frank house, of course. Amsterdam is a walking city, with its overabundance of canals. The main challenge when walking is not to be killed by the bikers. They are all over the city and rule the right of way, when crossing the street.

Three days later, we were on the road again. We visited our Michigan family, renting an Airbnb in Holland, Michigan. The "Dutch" city is located near massive Lake Michigan. The weather was perfect after the heat in Europe. There was plenty to do, including walking the beach, taking an exciting jeep ride through the dunes, and of course, the restaurants.

OFF THE CUFF

by John Pettit

SSRA Officers Election Results:

Despite largely *unconfirmed* rumors of election hacking (by a small island nation) and possible vote tampering, ballots have been counted and the election has been declared to be official – the results are: (with the exception of a few typo ballots, candidates ran unopposed)

President – Patti Stoddard
Vice-President – John Pettit
Treasurer – Susan Fink
Secretary – Donna Milgrom

Each officer will take office immediately and will serve a **four year** term.

Each officer is to be **congratulated** and **commended** for voluntarily assuming a position which involves a large amount of time and work solely for the benefit of all the retirees.

Membership/Dues: 2018 will be remembered as “The Year of N0 Dues and Free Lunch”. Unfortunately, as we wish one another “Happy New Year – 2019”, we return to the reality of having to pay Membership Dues – as you may recall: the SSRA is on a calendar year cycle, i.e., \$15.00 annual dues are due each January 1. Kindly use the form found on page 11 in this issue to renew your membership. It would be a great help if you would send in your dues upon receiving this request since my bookkeeping accuracy appears to be diminishing as the number of candles on my birthday cake increases.

Luncheon: As noted in an earlier column, we will be having an “annual” luncheon, each spring (April or May). Following the most enjoyable luncheon (at the St. George G & CC, Setauket) last year, plans are just beginning for 2019. I am most interested in any suggestions for locations (call, write or email me) – general parameters: reasonably close to Smithtown, private room, approx. 60 persons (flexible), weekday/noon to 3 pm, menu choices.

The St. George Club appears to be a big favorite with our members.

As stated in last December’s Newsletter, I am not including any deep or provocative considerations this month, not because I have none, but rather, there are simply too many to deal with – so you can “enjoy” your own musings.

A Thought: You cannot legislate the poor into prosperity by legislating the wealthy out of prosperity. –Abraham Lincoln/Adrian Rogers

Linda and John Howe, retiree, class of 2010: (jhowe@learnhowe.com)

This year Linda and I have taken a few interesting trips. We traveled to Mesa, Arizona for a family wedding, and took some time to do a little hiking. Every time we travel out west, the scenery there with the brown landscape does take a little getting accustomed to being East Coast people all our lives.



We then did our yearly family vacation during the Easter break to Sanibel Island, Florida, where we were able to watch the sunset every night directly from our cottage on the beach. It was a fun week spent with the kids, and our two beautiful granddaughters, whom we watch 3 days a week!



Four of us (2 couples) booked Jon Frosti (Solstice Tours: info@solstice.is) for a private tour which resulted in an incredible five nights in **Iceland**. Through many emails he helped us develop an informative and fun tour that suited our active thirst for adventure and desire to see all that Iceland had to offer. Jon is knowledgeable, interesting and personable. His Mercedes van is clean and has free WiFi. We were fascinated by the gorgeous scenery and his commentary.



Jon arranged for us to be picked up at the airport and we went to the Viking Museum where a buffet breakfast was available and then off for a relaxing soak in the Blue Lagoon. We ended with a short city tour of Reykjavik before reaching our hotel.





The next three days were a combo of his published tours plus suggestions he had to make our visit unique. One stop we made was to Diamond Beach, so named because of the beautiful chunks of clear ice that were adorning the beach. I told Linda that was the diamond I meant to present to her 43 years ago, but couldn't afford on my then teacher's salary.



He booked excellent, unique hotels. His suggestions for restaurants were wonderful including one that was in a huge greenhouse that grew tomatoes hydroponically.

He also provided us with wonderful photos of the four of us especially with the Northern Lights as a background.



Every time we turned around, there was another waterfall to visit, with many sporting rainbows.



We also got to walk many interesting beaches with fascinating rock formations, as well as hike a glacier with full ice hiking gear. Quite an exhilarating adventure!!



Our last day he took us on a tour of areas on the way to the airport which included a visit to a unique fish cafe for a lunch of lobster soup.

Do yourself a favor, ignore the big bus tours and the coupons for the day trips, and book Jon for a personalized experience with a native Icelander. You won't regret it!



P.S.: Pictures look much better in color, so check out the online, full color edition. Way to go Rich Davis!

Give Kids the World at Disney

by Joe Gilkey

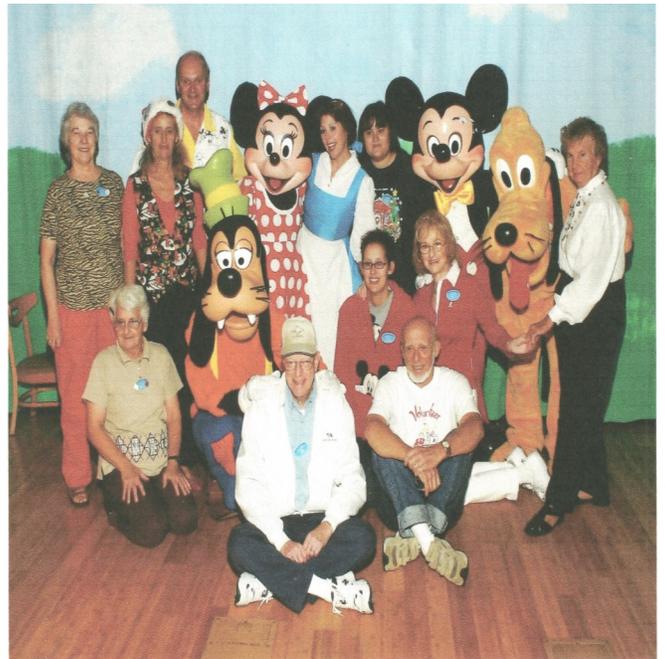
It was July of 1991 and I found myself after 30 years of service in the Smithtown School District headed for retirement in Orlando, Florida. After spending most of that first year building, and then furnishing a new house I wondered what I would now do to constructively spend my days. My answer came in the form of a community newsletter article. The article was written by a neighbor and in it he talked about volunteering at Give Kids the World (GKTW) and also at the public TV station in Orlando, WMFE. I immediately contacted both. I drove to Kissimmee a short distance from my home, to the Kid's Village, headquarters of GKTW.

I could write a great deal about GKTW but it would make this article too long. But briefly, GKTW is a foundation that works with more than 100 wish granting foundations, all over the world, to provide a free vacation to children with a life threatening illness, whose last wish is to see Mickey Mouse, or to visit any of the Central Florida parks. The entire family is included and everything is free. The family stays in a villa in the Village with everything provided including tickets to all the attractions.

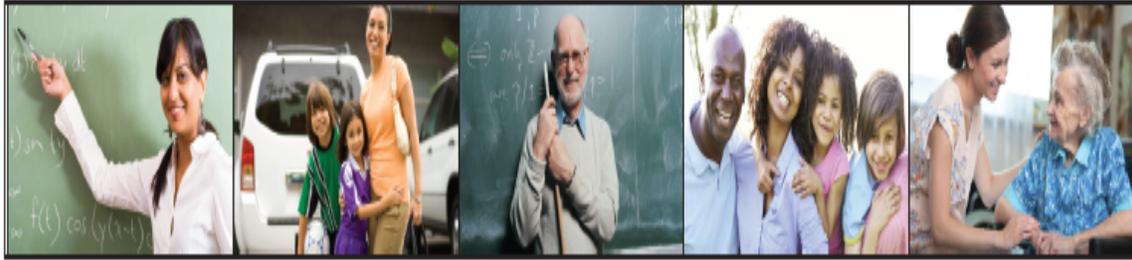
In my entrance interview they found I had a technical and administrative background. They wanted me to organize a "Memories Program." They had received 30 new video cameras and wanted a program organized to loan those cameras to the families, teach them how to operate the cameras so they could record their stay - perhaps their last vacation with the wish child. Additionally, the cameras were 8 mm so I would have to specify the equipment needed to convert the resulting 8 mm tapes to VHS tapes that the family would take home with them. After a few months the newly designated room was furnished with the appropriate furniture and equipment and we began the "Memories Program." I volunteered to lead and work in this program for 10 keeping the equipment operational and our guests grateful. I then moved to another job at the Village.

The Disney characters came to the Village twice a week. One of the highlights of the family's visit is that they get to have a picture taken with Mickey and Minnie. That picture ends up in a portfolio of pictures that have been taken during the family's visit and a CD is made of those pictures - yes by this time both the still pictures and the video memories program had become digital from analog beginning. My job, after the photo session was completed, was to collect the memory card from the camera and download it via computer to the electronic file folder for each family. That electronic image was also sent to a service that produced an 8" x 10" glossy print in a folder to be taken home by the family when they leave the Village along with a CD of all the pictures that had been aggregated into their electronic folder. This work was so rewarding and to see the joy on the families' faces as you provided them with this service was the biggest reward of all. I could not have asked for a better way to spend some of my retirement time.

I am taking a group from Oak Hammond to Visit Give Kids the World in October. It was such a rewarding time there and I love to share it with others.



The author (very front center of first row with the cap on) and the memories photo crew with Mickey and Minnie at Give Kids The World.



Union-endorsed benefits designed for NYSUT members

Whether it's our endorsed homeowners or auto insurance plans, life or disability insurance, financial or legal service plans, or any of our travel, entertainment or shopping offerings, NYSUT members have the ***Power of the Union*** behind them when participating in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

There's no need to go it alone when Member Benefits has your back! Member Benefits acts as your advocate for any program you participate in, and we'll do our best to quickly resolve any issues or concerns you may have.

The following is just a sampling of the dozens of endorsed programs & services available to NYSUT members and their loved ones:

- Auto, Home & Life Insurance
- Vision & Dental Plans
- Legal & Financial Services
- Hotel & Vacation Discounts
- Member Shopping Program
- Car & Truck Rental Discounts
- Competitive Savings Rates
- Retail Store Discounts
- Sports & Concert Tickets
- Theme Park Discounts
- Car Buying Service
- Heating Oil & Propane Savings

Don't Let That 529 College Plan Hurt Your Financial Aid

NEW YORK (Reuters) The costs for higher education have soared. But if your grandchild is applying for financial aid you need to know how these accounts will affect his/her bottom line. The basic problem: Not all 529 accounts are treated equally, so two different students with the same basic profile could get aid offers based on who actually owns the 529s plan.

That can come as a shock to middle-class families under the impression that 529 accounts, especially those of grandparents or non-custodial divorced parents, would not count against their aid offers. Assets in a 529 plan owned by the student or his/her parents count

against need-based aid, while those in a plan owned by anyone else (including a grandparent) don't. But once grandparents or other relatives start taking money out of a plan to help pay those bills, the reverse is true. The withdrawals can ding you pretty hard in the following year's financial aid package.

Grandparents who may have started 529 plans for their grandkids thinking it will help out when the time came to pay tuition, are particularly dismayed. They say "You've got to be kidding me...." The suggestion is to use the 529 for the \Senior year when there won't be a "next year" to think about financial aid.

Pay Your Dues For 2019

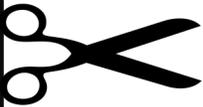
It will soon be 2019 and time to once again renew your SSRA membership. The dues for 2019 are only \$15 and as a reminder, we operate on a calendar year and these dues are independent of the STA. You can help reduce our mailing costs by completing the form below and mailing it along with a check for \$15 payable to the Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association.

Please note the following:

1. 2018 was a dues free year for all 2018 SSRA members and for all 2018 retirees
2. If you receive any endorsed programs & services from NY state other than a pension, you are required by law to belong to your local retiree association
3. Make your check payable to Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association (do not abbreviate)

Kindly cut out the form below and mail with your check to:

**SSRA
c/o STA office
26 New York Avenue
Smithtown, NY 11787**



_____ (For those with more than one address please list only your primary one)

Name: _____ Year Retired : _____

Street Address: _____ Apt. #: _____

City/Town: _____ State: _____ Zip _____

Telephone No.: _____ Email Address: _____

Kindly circle any of the above if it is NEW to us. Do not circle any updates to the 2017-19 Members' Directory if you have already given it to us. These changes are already in our data base.

Murphy's Other Laws

1. Light travels faster than sound. This is why some people appear bright until you hear them speak.
2. A fine is a tax for doing wrong. A tax is a fine for doing well.
3. He who laughs last, thinks slowest.
4. A day without sunshine is like, well, night.
5. Change is inevitable, except when it is from a vending machine.
6. Those who live by the sword get shot by those who don't.
7. If the shoe fits, get another just like it.
8. The things that come to those who wait, may be the things left by those who got there first.
9. Flashlight: A case for holding dead batteries.
10. God gave you toes as a device for finding furniture in the dark.

*S.S.R.A.
c/o STA Office
26 New York Avenue
Smithtown, NY 11787*