

S.S.R.A. NEWSLETTER

Volume XVI, Issue 1

September - October 2016

From The Editor's Desk

The Fall season is in full swing as the leaves are changing colors, baseball is heading towards the World Series, and the presidential campaign is coming down the home-stretch. After 18 months of campaigning is there anyone out there who is still undecided? If you are one of those a final debate will take place on Tuesday, October 18th at the University of Nevada at Las Vegas. Chris Wallace will be the moderator of this final chance to hear the candidates.

It is still a year away, but at the top of the ballot in 2017 (not 2016) will be a proposition to call for a Constitutional Convention in New York State. An article about this was in this past June's Newsletter. More about this topic will be heard in the coming months.

But to give our members a little food for thought...the cost of a convention would be prohibitive. Consider this; The Convention held in 1967 accomplished little, yet cost \$45 million. Allowing for inflation, that would be a cost of \$336.5 million in today's dollars.

Our state Constitution currently protects the rights of all New York residents to a free, public education. It allows the creation of union membership and collective bargaining and workers compensation. Most of all, it prevents the reduction in public pensions.



All of these can be wiped out at a Constitutional Convention considering the climate of politics today.

It is a new school year and many of the contentious issues confronting educators today regarding the Common Core have been resolved. Pearson, the company that has been the previous administrator of the tests in New York is gone and Questar will be the new administrator,

In December, a task force appointed by Gov. Cuomo revised the standards for the Common Core and decision making now includes teachers and parents. In addition, a four year moratorium has been instituted for implementation of the Common Core standards and teacher evaluation. Also, Betty Rosa, a recently elected chancellor of New York's Board of regents has sympathized with the opt-out movement as it had been structured. Still to be resolved is the growing number of opt-outs on the tests. Last year, hundreds of thousands opted out negating any validity to the test results. Perhaps that will change in this coming year.

Be sure to check out the dues payment slip for 2017 SSRA membership on page 9. It would make our job so much easier if you respond as soon as possible.

I wish everyone a happy and healthy retirement.

Carl Haymes
Editor

Smithtown Schools Retirees' Association

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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.

President's Message

Hi Everyone,

Summer has come and gone; seems to pass more quickly each year. Our next task is to get out and vote. SSRA does NOT endorse any candidate for any office. This is just a Newsletter and not a newspaper. We all have different opinions and should vote as our conscience tells us. No one should tell anyone else whom they should vote for!

Wishing all of you a beautiful Fall and a happy Thanksgiving.

George Makris

The SSRA

sadly announces

the passing of three

of our

members:

Nancy DeFeo

Robert Krebs

Loretta Santasier

News of Members

As retirees, we have the opportunities 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.

Lou DeBole - Lou was a standout pitcher for the Queens College baseball team in the late 1950s. Now, Lou will be inducted with five other student-athletes into Queens College Sports Hall of Fame during the fifth annual Hall of Fame Dinner and Golf Outing on Friday, October 14, 2016 at Harbor Links Golf Club in Port Washington. Lou was a pitcher for Queens College while attending the school. The ceremony is part of the day which includes an annual golf tournament in the afternoon and a dinner in the evening. Congratulations Lou!

Arthur Bryton - Sheila and I are anxiously awaiting October to roll in with its cooler temperatures. Eighty-five degrees is a welcome relief for Arizona residents. This August was our 23rd anniversary living in Scottsdale.

We have been fortunate to escape every summer for cooler pastures. Our journeys have taken us to various locations in the States, Canada and Europe. This past June and July, we started in Manhattan. Our family from Connecticut and Vermont spent a day with us visiting ground zero. It was a worthwhile visit although an emotional one. After four days taking in the usual sites and Broadway shows, we flew to Stockholm, Sweden. I understand why it is called, "the Venice of the North." Lots of water and islands. We used the "hop on-hop off bus" to get a feel for the city and then went out on our own to visit many of the places and museums. A highlight was a visit to the Vasa Museum which displays the almost intact 17th century ship that has been salvaged. It sank on her maiden voyage in 1628.

Next was Copenhagen, Denmark. Copenhagen is a very quaint city with lots of energy. Highlights included the Amalienborg Palace, the Canal Cruise, Rosenborg Castle, National Gallery, and of course the Little Mermaid. The cool weather and the very light rain was a welcome addition.

After three days we embarked on the Azamara Quest for a nine day cruise of the British Isles. Our ports in Scotland included Edinburgh, Kirkwall and the town of Portree, which is on the Isle of Skye. Next was Belfast in Northern Ireland. This city has beautiful architecture dating back centuries together with its history of 20th century strife. Our guide escorted us on a walking tour of the various neighborhoods that were an integral part of the "Troubles". (The fighting between the Catholics and the Protestants in the 1970s). Our cruise ended in Dublin. One of our tours took us several areas outside the city with beautiful gardens, and of course, pubs. Dublin is a vibrant city. The people are warm and friendly. The restaurants are all busy serving excellent, healthy food. Our sightseeing included Dublin Castle, St. Stephens Green, Trinity College and, of course, the Guinness Storehouse where everyone is constantly happy. A side trip, by train, took us to the seaport of Bray. Only 40 minutes from Dublin, the town has a wonderful promenade

(cont. on p.4 - Members)

(Members - continued from p.3)

along the ocean bank. The weather cooperated. It was brisk, cool, but sunny. Very invigorating! Our visit to Dublin ended with enjoying the show, "Once" at their Olympia Theatre.

Our four days in Dublin were exceptional. We would have loved to stay longer. The flight home to JFK was easy and uneventful. Before returning to Arizona we visited friends in the Hamptons for several days. Another experience altogether.

Gail Chivaro - My daughter and I were invited to attend a wedding in France this summer. The couple both work in London. The bride's family is from India, the groom's from Australia, and they were married just outside of Bordeaux. I guess this is what couples today call a "destination wedding."

We were blessed with seven days of great weather. The wedding was held on a large working vineyard, and guests stayed three days in the original chateau on the property. Bordeaux is a great old city with magnificent architecture and beautiful plazas on the river. Miroir d'eau is a lovely square where the surface is always kept wet to create striking reflections of the buildings, skies and passersby. St. Emilion, about thirty minutes outside Bordeaux, was a quaint medieval town with narrow and steep cobblestone streets, but wonderful crepes and baguettes. A strike by Air France forced us to take the train to Paris, no real hardship.

We managed to squeeze in visits to the Louvre and Versailles. Prearranged tours saved us the wait on long, early morning lines. I'm not sure what was more beautiful, the Louvre itself or the sculptures and paintings it housed. We did not miss Notre Dame and the Eiffel Tower, nor St. Chapelle and the Arc De Triomphe. We toured the city by bus at night in order to see all the monuments lighted. We did not notice any extraordinary measures of security; everyone seemed to be going about their normal routines. My only regret is that we did not have enough time to see and do all we wanted to. I guess that just means that we will have to return someday for the sites and the pastries we missed.

Larry & Yvette Hohler - The Hohlers left for Kenya on September 13. They report that their kids will soon be wearing Smithtown Bulls soccer uniforms, thanks to the Smithtown Schools' Athletic Department. These lightly used uniforms will be put to good use in a secondary school where (along with running) football is the national sport.

In addition to delivering uniforms and soccer balls, their top priority was to meet with the kids who are pursuing higher education. Among them are Doreen Gatwiri, who is maintaining a B+ average in pre-med at Jomo Kenyatta University, Kevin Mutuma Naari, who is studying medical technology at Mt. Kenya University, and Elosy Kinya who is learning the baker's trade at Nkubu Polytechnic. The Hohlers congratulated these scholars on their achievement and encouraged them to look into loans and scholarships that might lower the cost of their tuitions. They also discussed the need for them to continue their support for their Home after they begin their working lives.

A number of young people who were taken off the streets in 2005 are now living independently. Faith Ntinyari is a beautician; Betty Gakki teaches in a secondary school; Jedral Mungathia sells cosmetics and Evans Gitonga markets cell phones. The Hohlers find it hard to believe that it has been eleven years since the Home opened and that so many of their former street children have become free standing adults.

(cont. on p.5 – Members)

(Members continued from p.4)

Bill Benziger & Ken Matura - Two years ago Ken Matura and I both ventured on a Rim to Rim hiking trip into the Grand Canyon. Ken, with his daughter Nicole, myself solo. It was an incredible adventure that we knew had to be equaled!

In September we returned to the Far West, specifically to Yosemite National Park in Northern California. For a year we planned to do a five day hike in the High Sierras. This included part of the John Muir and the Pacific Crest Trail. So many people wanted to do this that we had to enter a lottery system. In April we found that we were accepted. They say that the best training for hiking is to HIKE! This included many circuits in Avalon Preserve in Stony Brook. We put ten 20 lb. weights in our back packs to simulate the weight of a real load. This was along with our usual physical activities.

If you look at You Tube clips of the High Sierras you will see happy people walking on flat ground. This is a slight exaggeration. There are almost no flat ground trails here!! We hiked 40 miles in 5 days with elevation changes between 2,400 feet and 9,400 feet. One trail had over 600 uneven steps! We received a nice compliment on this one. A group of young adult girls said we were doing great; we responded with “Not bad for two 68 year olds.” They said, “You don’t look that OLD.” Each night we stayed at camps with canvas sided cabins. They had four beds and a wood stove (we needed it). Temperatures ranged from the 80s to the 30s. An excellent breakfast and dinner were served. It’s amazing what you can eat when you are burning 5000 calories per day. I lost three pounds.

We were on the lookout for bears but did not see any. All food, soap and toothpaste had to be placed in bear lockers overnight. We did get a chance to see three coyotes come toward us on the last day (short flat meadow). They passed within 30 feet of us and went off to stalk something. The weather was sunny every day but California is currently in a drought condition. No water for showers was available to us so we were happy to stay at a Reno hotel for the last night

Needless to say, this was great adventure. We are currently planning our next one. A trip to Glacier National Park in Montana or a combo of River Rafting the Colorado and a hike out of the Grand Canyon may be fun. Let us know if this sounds interesting to you.

Sally Decker - I was very fortunate to be able to spend this past August and September in Sonoma, located in the northern California Wine Country. My daughter, Laurie, SHSW-'79 has lived there for over 20 years. This year I rented a small cottage near her to escape the heat and humidity of summer in Jupiter, Florida.

Sonoma, in my opinion, is a jewel, a unique small town nestled in “The Valley of the Moon,” about 30 minutes west of Napa. The weather is dry and sunny—actually two climates each day—a cool 55 in the morning and by the middle of the day it is 80-85 degrees with hardly any humidity. It cools off again in the evening.

Sonoma has a Spanish history. The last of the 21 Spanish Missions was built there and still welcomes visitors. At the center of the town is the Plaza—a seven acre square housing the historic City Hall building, a Visitors’ Center, a small outdoor music shell, a pond with ducks and large grassy areas with picnic tables and winding paths often bordered with roses. Sonoma has a large senior population. The Vintage House offers daily classes in just about everything. There are many art galleries in the area and then there is the WINE. Lots and lots of wine—with many wineries and tasting rooms. I plan to return next year. If you are in the area, check it out.

OFF THE CUFF

by John Pettit

Internet: When, over two years ago, we began planning to offer our Newsletter **On-Line**, it was intended to make it easier for all members to receive and read it; we could save postage and paper as well as the labor (all volunteer) in assembling and mailing. Of course, we realized that some members either don't use a computer or are unable to do so – so it was assumed that a few (very few) printed copies would need to be sent out. At present, about half of our membership have chosen for the **Printed/Mailed** format – and that is defeating our original intent. You could really help us if you would reconsider your choice and would try the Newsletter by e-mail --- it's quite easy --- here are the steps:

- 1- You will receive a notification when the newest Newsletter is available on-line.
- 2- go to "MySSRA.com" -- that gets you to our Homepage
- 3- In the middle column "SSRA Newsletter" (below the pictures of people we don't know) click on "Subscribe here"
- 4- you can choose to simply view the current Newsletter (in color) or download it to your computer to print a copy – to the lower left you can view previous copies also.

It really is quite simple and convenient--- kindly express your choice (Print or E-mail) at the bottom of your dues renewal slip on page 11.

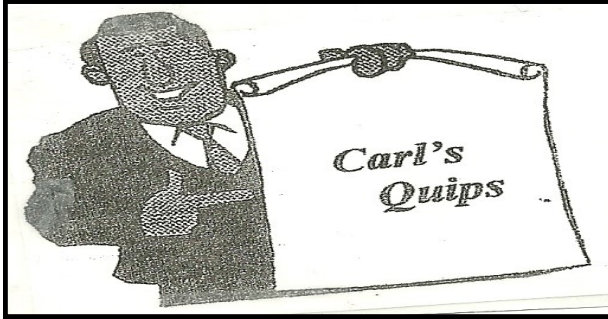
Fall Luncheon News: By popular demand, we are making our annual return to the **St. George's Golf & Country Club** on Wednesday, October 19, at 12 noon. While everyone is invited, a reservation- form flier was mailed to those members whose address is in the NY/LI metro area --- if you did not receive a flier and wish to attend, please call me (631-584-7564) and you will be included. St. George's has proven to be one of our most popular luncheon spots – the food is excellent, the service is first-rate and the location is beautiful – we look forward to seeing you there.

My Goof: Please note that I mistakenly printed the Luncheon forms with the old return address --- please use the current one at: SSRA, c/o STA Office, 26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787

Membership/Dues: Let me again try to clear some of the confusion over dues:

- SSRA dues are \$15.00 per retiree, to be paid annually by December 31.
 - Those Smithtown District employees who retired during the current year, are granted complimentary membership for the remainder of that calendar year. Kindly include the info slip (found in this Newsletter) and mail your check (made payable to: "SSRA") to: SSRA c/o STA, 26 New York Avenue, Smithtown, NY 11787.
- Since this is a one-man, "kitchen-table" operation, it would be of great help if you sent in your dues before Dec. 31.

A Thought: If you do not take an interest in the affairs of your government, then you are doomed to live under the rule of fools. - Plato



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.

Voltaire was the scientist who invented electricity.

A capella is smaller than a regular hat.

"Double Jeopardy" means the questions are worth twice as much.

Q. Where was the Magna Carta signed?
A. *It was signed at the bottom.*

In the Revolutionary War prisoners were kept as ostriches until the end of the war.

Q. *Where is Chicago located.*
A. *Right now Chicago is in first place.*

This column and the one at the bottom of the page were intentionally left blank.

Changes in members' personal information will be sent separately by email.

Financial advice shouldn't be a one-size-fits-all approach!

Are you looking for unbiased, objective advice *specifically designed* for you and your family? With the NYSUT Member Benefits Corporation-endorsed Financial Counseling Program, you've found it.

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- Includes Simple Will, Power of Attorney, Health Care Proxy & Living Will
- Two, free, hour-long consultations with a plan attorney

Early Dues Renewal Form

Join Now!

This is a first reminder for all SSRA members that your annual dues for 2017 are to be paid by December 31st. We operate on a calendar year and not a school year. The SSRA is independent of the STA so any monies paid to the STA do not go to the SSRA. You can help reduce our mailing costs by completing the form below and mailing it along with a check for \$15 made out to the **SSRA**.

Please carefully read the directions below before filling out the form.

1. if you were a member for all of 2016, kindly pay the \$15 for 2017
2. If you retired in 2016. you were an honorary member for the remainder of 2016; **(If you subscribe to any of NYSUT's benefit programs, you are required by law to belong to your retiree association)**
3. If you joined the SSRA after Sept. 1, 2016, you are considered paid for 2017
- **4. Please be sure to check one of the boxes at the bottom referring to Email or paper copy of your Newsletter

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

**SSRA
c/o STA
26 New York Avenue
Smithtown.11787**

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 changes you have already given to us. These changes are already in our data base.

In addition to the above information, please put an **X** in **ONE** of the three boxes below.

I have already opted to receive the Newsletter by email

I would like to try receiving the Newsletter by email

I prefer to receive the Newsletter by regular mail



**You Get
What You
Vote For!
So Quit
Complaining
And Vote!**

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