

S.S.R.A. Newsletter

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September—October 2017

From the Editor's Desk

Most surveys indicate that very few New York voters care about or are even aware of the referendum on November's ballot regarding a Constitutional Convention some times referred to more affectionately as Con Con. Required by law, a referendum on whether to hold a Constitutional Convention must appear on the ballot every twenty years. The last time a Constitutional Convention actually passed was in 1967 with nothing ever resulting from the ensuing Convention. In fact, very little has ever come out of any prior conventions.

At stake are issues already guaranteed in our state constitution such as current pensions, workers' compensation, the right to unionize and bargain collectively. Given the contentious nature of these issues, why even risk the loss or change to any of these benefits which have taken so many years to obtain. Do you want to give politicians the opportunity to change or eliminate any of these benefits. At a convention, any of these issues are fair game. These changes have already occurred in a number of states.

When I think of a constitutional convention I immediately think back to Greek mythology and the story of Pandora's box. When Zeus gave Pandora the box (actually it was a jar) as a wedding gift, she was warned to never open it. But Pandora could not resist the temptation to keep it closed and upon opening the jar, all of life's miseries emerged with Pandora only able to retain Hope in the jar.

There are so many groups on all sides of the aisle each with its own agenda. Interests vary



by location. Some upstaters would like to see NYC separated from the rest of the state, while another group would like to see NY state divided into three separate regions. Would you like to have your pension and benefits scrutinized by groups such as these?

If passed, three delegates would be elected from each state Senate district and 15 at-large delegates for a total of 204 all to be elected at the next general election in 2018. These delegates would include legislative members, other elected officials and party leaders. These officials can hold both positions. Each delegate receives compensation equivalent to the annual salary of a member of the state Assembly....\$79,500, plus pension benefits. How long does a convention last? As long as needed. The 1967 Constitutional Convention ran from April 4 to September 26. This year, if approved, the convention would take place in 2019.

Considering today's political climate why chance any changes to our pensions and benefits that took so many years to obtain? A synopsis of all that is at risk should the referendum pass can be found on page 10. By the way, the listing on whether to hold a convention appears on the back of the ballot. Be sure you turn your ballot over.

We have made a change in our dues policy for 2018. See page 8 for details and fill out the information form if needed.

Stay healthy and enjoy your retirement.
Carl Haymes
Editor

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Sunshine Committee.....Winnie Snyder
Technology Coordinator Patty Stoddard

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.

Congratulations

To:

Flo and Dave Dietz who celebrated their
60th anniversary on August 17th.



To:

Carol and Carl Haymes who also cele-
brated their 60th anniversary on June
23rd.

Congratulations

also to:



Bobbi Miller who is proud and de-
lighted to announce the birth of her
8th great-grandchild, Sienna. She
joins Jake, Katerina, Eli, Ronin, Leo,
Richard and Gabrielle.

The last name for all these wonder-
ful children is Trested as I have 3
grandsons. Life is great, fun and
busy!



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.

Bill Benziger - I usually submit articles about hiking trips, so this will be a departure from the norm. My wife Debby and I recently celebrated our 45th Wedding Anniversary. We decided to go somewhere where we have never been before. With the help of our friend and travel agent, Helene Rosenthal we went off on a great adventure. We left JFK on Iceland Air heading to Reykjavik, Iceland. We stayed at the City Center Hotel which was fine, except for sleeping due to the 20 hours of daylight per day. Excellent breakfasts were included, although whale meat was not available. Iceland is a geologist's dream; including lava flows, volcanoes, spectacular waterfalls, geysers and hot pools. We had a great dip in the "Blue Lagoon." This included clay and silicon facial treatments and a swim up bar.

From here we flew to London. Aside from the wonderful city sights we also visited Stonehenge, Bath, the Cotswolds and Shakespeare's Stratford on Avon. We were very impressed by the "Tube," London's subway, clean, efficient and easy to navigate. Lest I forget; the food and beer.

The best value for food and fun are in the "Pubs." After a week of experiencing England, instead of flying home we were transported to Southampton, where we boarded Cunard's Queen Mary 2. This is not just a cruise ship, but a true ocean liner. On the crossing to New York City we ran into heavy weather. The ship was steady as a rock, although I do not recommend going out on deck in these conditions. Thirty knots of wind was blowing over the bow, with twenty five knots of boat speed equals a stiff breeze. All evenings were formal. Debby and I became reacquainted with the "Waltz." Glad for the lessons before that night. The shows were excellent along with a wonderful Planetarium. We even saw Star Wars in 3D. English food has always had a poor reputation, but shipboard fare was surprisingly good. This was a great trip. Will have to think of something good to celebrate the 46th!

Arthur Bryton - Greetings from the Valley of the Sun. September is here and it is finally starting to cool down. It is estimated to reach 104 degrees today, September 2nd. It is not unusual for the temperatures to reach 115 plus during July and August. Cool temperatures during this time period is not an option. The remedy is traveling to more temperate climates.

In May, Sheila and I traveled to Israel for a two week excursion. It was quite dramatic returning to a country that I first visited approximately 40 years ago. We booked a tour with an Israeli tour operator. The tour company excelled far past our expectations. In addition to the usual sites, we visited many "off the beaten track." A noteworthy event was our jeep tour along the Golan Heights. We were 22 miles from Damascus, Syria and were able to hear the sounds of the explosions from the bombing. The realism of the strife in that country quickly set in. More exhausting than the physical nature of the tour, was the 14 hour non-stop flight from Los Angeles to Tel Aviv. Recommendation: If you haven't visited this great land, put it in your bucket list. Visit sooner rather than

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(cont from p. 3)

later.

After Israel, and a short stay back in Scottsdale, we visited family in Michigan, spending time in northern Michigan. This was our first time in Petoskey, situated on Lake Michigan. Petoskey is a charming town with a great climate. It is famous for its Petoskey rocks, which can be found on the shores of Lake Michigan. The condo complex had many attractions, including zip lining, hiking trails, and disc golf.

After returning to Arizona for a brief time, we left for California, spending a month in Carlsbad, in San Diego county. Carlsbad has great beaches for surfing, swimming, and just relaxing. There is a long sea wall and an upper promenade for long walks along the ocean. The average climate is 74 degrees. An area of concern is over-indulging in the many fine restaurants all along the coast in Southern California. Now it is back to the perennial diet. A special treat was that our children from Connecticut and Tempe, Arizona joined us.

Patty Stoddard - Since I retired two years ago, I have been quite busy with a number of activities, including those affecting the Township of Smithtown.

About a year and a half ago, I was requested to be a speaker on behalf of homeowners in Nesconset who were concerned about overdevelopment that threatened the environment. Although I had been a teacher for over 25 years, I was at first, hesitant to speak on topics outside of my comfort zone; topics unrelated to education. However, I spoke before the Suffolk County Planning Commission and the Smithtown Planning Board and we were successful in maintaining the quality of life we have in Nesconset.

This year I have taken another step in the public arena and am now busy campaigning for a seat on the Smithtown Town Board.

Along with Amy Fortunato who is running for the Town Council and Bill Holst , who is running for Town Supervisor. I am part of the **SMITHTOWNFORWARD** team that is working to make our great Town of Smithtown even greater.

We have been out knocking on doors and attending public events for months and hope to make a significant change in the way the people's business is conducted in the Town of Smithtown so that others don't have to experience what my neighbors in Nesconset and I experienced with a developer getting special treatment from Town officials without regard to the law.

As busy as I am campaigning for the Smithtown Town Council position, I always, of course, find time for my three grandsons.

Yvette and Larry Hohler - Traveling 19 hours from Kennedy, we arrived in Nairobi at 9:30 PM on September 19. We were met by Joe Kirima, the director of our Children's Home, loaded our bags - two containing lightly used Smithtown soccer uniforms, pencils and pens donated by the Smithtown Teacher's Association, and presents sent to the kids by their mentors. Before heading to the orphanage in Meru, we spent the better part of the day visiting our scholars who attend universities in Nairobi. We dropped off a laptop - reconditioned by students from Eastern Suffolk BOCES - with Job Kigori at the Multi Media University. On the road from Nairobi National Park, we saw escaped baboons across the road as we turned into the parking lot. Our next stop was Kenya Technical University, to see Moses Maingi, who is pursuing an engineering degree. On our way out of town we stopped at Jomo Kenyatta University to check on Doreen

Is it the Falkland Islands or the Malvinas?

by Joe Gilkey

A few years ago, Heather and I sailed from Buenos Aires, Argentina to Santiago, Chile cruising around Cape Horn. One of our stops was in the Falkland Islands and we spent a day in Port Stanley, the capital of the Falklands. Since not too many would make a vacation trip to the Falklands I thought it might be something I could write about to describe our day in Port Stanley.



Here you see us shortly after arriving in Port Stanley. Our first stop was the visitor's center and I am glad we did. There is still some danger in wandering about the Port Stanley area as a result of the Falklands war. (I'll elaborate on that further in this article.) The visitor's center has the information that can prevent you from making a mistake.

This is what some of the housing looked like in Port Stanley. All the flowers were in bloom even though it was January, but remember, January in the Falklands is their summer. As you can see from the jackets Heather and I have on it was still chilly.



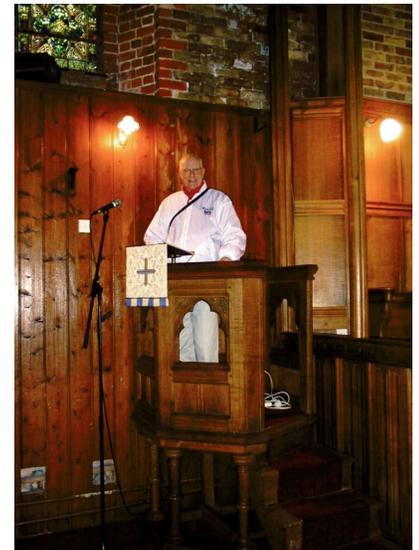
The church occupies a space right in the middle of Port Stanley. The arched pyramid sculpture has been constructed with whale bones - a testimony to the sea faring country this is. I had the opportunity to find out what it was like to be high up in the the pulpit of the church overlooking the congregation.

Cape Horn

In the sailing days, that are so ingrained in the history of the Falklands, vessels sailing to or from the Pacific Ocean made stops at the Falklands.



Those rounding the Cape from the Pacific frequently found the weather around the Cape unforgiving and their ships were battered and bruised making the rounding. Frequently, these ships made it to the Falklands, but could go no further because they were damaged. The harbor is littered with wrecked and partially sunk ships that found the end of their voyage here in the Falklands.



In 1982 Argentina disputed the possession of the Falklands which was under British possession. In fact Argentinians call the Falklands the Malvinas and do not accept the idea that they are British. In the war that ensued, Argentina lost, but as they left they dropped mines from helicopters. These mines have buried themselves in the sand and the land. The beaches and surrounding areas are unsafe and have been fenced off with barbed wire fences. A number of British soldiers have lost their lives trying to get rid of these mines. Only the penguins are light enough to maneuver around in those areas. A shame because for the most part the beaches are lovely, too cold to make use of them anyway.



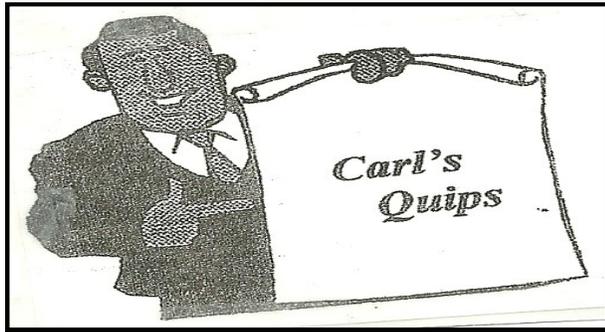
The safe terrain leading down to the water is steep and very rocky. The Magellanic Penguins live in burrows along these rocky hillsides. We could make our way throughout the colony without bothering them. You can't see Heather's right foot in this picture, but it is in a boot recovering from a fractured ankle from a trip taken just before this one. Good sport that she is she still made the hillside treks.



The Magellanic Penguins do have rule over the beaches and the hillsides leading to the beach. They are not bothered by the mines scattered hither and yon.

The penguins live in burrows among the rocky hillsides and it is not a pleasantly smelling place, but they are cute. I'd say that few of you would want to fly here for a summer vacation, but a day here takes you to a world we in the northeast of the U.S. only read about. Don't be like the Magellanic Penguins and burrow into your living space without seeing the world. It is a big, wide, wonderful world. From what I read in the Newsletter many of us are doing just that. Enjoy your retirement whether it be in the Falkland Islands or Timbuktu. You've earned it!





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

●●●●Clulow●●●●

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.

Population density refers to how stupid people are.

Wine is prevented from turning into vinegar by drinking it right away.

A monsoon is a French gentleman.

My family spends two weeks in Grease every summer.

The North Pole is so cold that the people who live there have to live somewhere else.

A glass house is an example of a "fragile" environment."

Our Deepest Sympathy To:

The family of Irwin Traugot, former art and elementary school teacher who passed away in June.

The family of Eb Mueller, former language teacher who passed away in July.

Bea Travis on the loss of her son, Travis.

The family of Wilbur Meyer, former elementary school teacher on his passing in June.

Kathy Mann on the loss of her husband, Vernon in August.

The family of Jessie Rodee Manitta, former elementary school teacher, who passed away In August.

The family of Henry Crisci, former district music teacher, on his passing in August.

Mary Hennessy and family on the loss of Jack Hennessy, long time district English teacher

**Vote
NO
on having a
Constitutional Convention**

Classified Ads

At the September board meeting it was suggested that we incorporate a classified ad section in our Newsletter similar to the one that has been in the Faculty Focus for many years. So we will give it a try. Rentals, sales, services, etc.

The only criteria is that the ad is from SSRA members ONLY. Send your ad to ssraeditor@optonline.net for publication in the December Newsletter



Off the Cuff

by John Pettit



Dues Holiday !!!!

Early this summer we were informed that NYSUT was to skip collecting dues from local retiree association such as our SSRA for 2018. This assessment (\$5 per member) represents the largest, single obligation which we have each year. Accordingly, we will pass the “savings” on to our membership by declaring 2018 a “Dues Free Year.” For this one time benefit, all membership will be automatically renewed.

You will note that while this Newsletter does not contain the annual Dues Renewal form, there is an information form which we ask be submitted by New Members as well as for changes of address, phone numbers and/or email addresses. See this Information Form on page 9.



Free Bus/Van Service

Many people aren't aware that the town of Smithtown's Office of People with Disabilities offers accessible transportation to town residents who need assistance, free of charge. This is a door-to-door service, anywhere in the town\ship for folks 18 and older, and is especially suitable for transport to medical appointments. The “handi-van” can accommodate up to eight people and features a motorized wheelchair lift.

You must register in advance by providing a certificate from a professional health provider. The handi-van operates by appointment, Monday through Friday, between 9 AM and 5 PM. More information is available by calling 631-360-7642.

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

(News cont. from p. 4)

Gatwiri, who is studying to be a doctor. These young people, all in their early 20's, came into our Home from horrific backgrounds when we opened in 2005. They were provided with the wherewithal to succeed by the hard work of our Kenyan staff and the support of donors in the United States.

One notices while driving north out of Nairobi the many miles of urban sprawl, where not too many years ago you could see an occasional antelope or baboon. The first indication of being in the countryside is the appearance of massive pineapple plantations. After the pineapple comes the rice - miles of paddys - and finally in the foothills of Mount Kenya carpets of tea plantings. We arrived at the Home in the early evening, to be greeted enthusiastically by our younger children, most of them wearing Smithtown soccer uniforms that came in an earlier visit. Our visit to Hope Children's Home was about to begin.

Have you tried our website yet? If not, go to myssra.com. See past editions of your Newsletter and much more.

(Cut out the form if needed)

Information Form

As you previously read, there will be a one year moratorium on SSRA dues for 2018. However, we do need to keep the information in our data base up to date. Kindly complete the form below **ONLY** if you would like to join the SSRA or have not informed us of any changes that may have recently occurred.

Name: _____ Year Retired _____

Street Address _____ Apt # _____

\City/Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone No. _____ Email Address _____

Get the Facts

Everything you need to know about the NY Constitutional Convention

What's at Stake?

1. The environment: NY State's Constitution has the strongest protections for forever wild area like the Adirondacks and Catskills. Greedy developers could push to undo these safeguards.
2. Public education: The state Constitution guarantees our students the right to a free public education.
3. The social safety net: The state Constitution ensures the state provides for the citizens in need.
4. Our voting rights: The Constitution provides valuable protections.
5. Don't risk losing these vital safeguards.

A Waste of Tax Dollars

1. Experts estimate a convention will cost hundreds of millions in taxpayer dollars.
2. Lawmakers can collect salaries and pension credits as elected officials and as delegates simultaneously.
3. The last time a constitutional convention took place it cost taxpayers millions and accomplished nothing.
4. Constitutional conventions don't have a mandatory end date - delegates keep meeting and taxpayers keep paying.
5. Should taxpayers fund a party for Albany insiders? No!

It's Just Not Necessary

1. A process already exists to amend the state Constitution, and it doesn't cost a thing.
2. For example, the state legislature passed an amendment in 2013 expanding casino gambling. The same process could be used for new amendments.
3. By opening the state Constitution you are looking for trouble. You can't predict what changes delegates will make.
4. The last time a convention took place it was a complete failure; voters rejected every proposed constitutional change
5. Don't add to Albany waste.

A Politician's Convention

1. During the last convention, four out of five delegates were career politicians and Albany insiders.
2. And every politician who ran for a delegate seat that year, won a delegate seat.
3. And who ran the show? All of the convention leaders were sitting legislators.
4. Most troubling? Thanks to the Citizens United Supreme Court case, corporate special interests can spend unlimited money getting their cronies elected.
5. Do you trust Albany insiders to do what's right? Don't risk it.

Labor Rights at Risk

1. At risk: The right to unionize and bargain collectively. Your union's strength could be jeopardized.
2. At risk: Workers' compensation. Safeguard your rights if you're injured on the job.
3. At risk: Public retirement protections. The constitution guarantees your pension will be there.
4. At risk: Other states have made drastic retirement changes with disastrous results for active members and retirees. Don't let it happen here!
5. Don't risk your rights/your future!

Have you had your financial check-up lately?

NYSUT Member Benefits launches the new Financial Planning Center!

NYSUT Member Benefits is excited to announce the launch of our NEW online Financial Planning Center. This enhanced site will assist NYSUT members and their families with making a variety of important financial decisions.

The NYSUT Member Benefits Financial Planning Center provides helpful tools and resources to assist members with a number of crucial decisions regarding financial wellness and retirement planning.



This new site includes more than 100 modules on different financial topics along with a financial fitness check-up to see where members stand with their financial knowledge.

Whether it's planning for retirement, saving for college for your children or considering purchasing a home, the choices we need to make on a regular basis are never easy. If you're already enjoying retirement, you may be dealing with long-term care needs, managing your investments and estate planning.

NYSUT members can get assistance with these questions and more with our NEW Financial Planning Center.

To access the Financial Planning Center (and more than 100 planning modules), visit the NYSUT Member Benefits website at memberbenefits.nysut.org and click on “**Financial Planning Center.**”

To learn more about Member Benefits-endorsed programs & services, visit memberbenefits.nysut.org or call **800-626-8101**.



For information about contractual endorsement arrangements with providers of endorsed programs, please contact NYSUT Member Benefits. Agency fee payers to NYSUT are eligible to participate in NYSUT Member Benefits-endorsed programs.

LEXOPHILIA—WHO ON EARTH DREAMS THESE UP?

Venison for dinner again? Oh deer!

England has no kidney bank, but it does have a Liverpool.

I tried to catch some fog, but I mist

I changed my iPod's name to Titanic. It's syncing now.

Jokes about German sausage are the wurst.

I know a guy who's addicted to brake fluid, but he says he can stop any
time.

I stayed up all night to see where the sun went, and then it dawned on me.

I read a book about anti-gravity. I just can't put it down.

I did a theatrical performance about puns. It was a play on words.

Broken pencils arde pointless.

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