

## COARM to review retiree status in UUP

By Jo Schaffer  
Cortland

The following are draft minutes of the Committee on Active Retired Membership meeting of May 10: Present—Chair Judith Wishnia, Ed Alfonsin, Pat Stempel, Al Magid, Eric Russell, Barbara Maertz, Jo Schaffer, Frank Maraviglia, Harvey Inventasch, Jack Richert and Membership Development Officer Ed Quinn. Guests—Joyce Haines, Bob Kasprak, Jeanne Galbraith, Paul Griffen, Harvey Axelrod, Joan Levinson, Joe Lamendola, Pearl Brod, Bill Reese, Fred Miller, Mac Nelson, Florence Brush, and Don Cohen.

The minutes were approved as Wishnia's report of the 2010 Winter DA.

### REPORT OF THE CHAIR

A COARM retreat was held Thursday, May 13. Issues discussed and reported by Alfonsin and Schaffer. It was such a vibrant give-and-take it would be difficult to capture the essence of commitment and

far-ranging discussion. Many of the emerging issues became motions for actions and votes.

- Most important to note is the schedule of regional activities requiring funding and approval, all of which were approved:

- CNY—June 10 brunch in Liverpool; summer meeting in Oswego.

- Southern Tier—April 25 brunch in Cortland; May meeting in Binghamton; June meeting for Oneonta and Delhi in Oneonta; and fall meeting in region.

- Capital District—spring meeting.

- Long Island—meeting to be held.

- Metropolitan—meeting to be held in New York City.

- Western New York—liaison meeting in July; general meeting in October.

- Discussion of campus benefits booklets: existing examples circulated; Long Island planning one, along with Binghamton and Central New York. Important that benefits be available to academic and

see COARM, page 8



### NEWS FLASH!

Henry Geerken of Cobleskill and David Peckham of Upstate Medical University have been selected as Outstanding Retirees of the Year and will receive their awards during the 2010 Fall Delegate Assembly. Congratulations!

Watch for more details in the next issue of *The Active Retiree*.

## Members updated on elder abuse bills

By Don Cohen  
Albany

Although the issue of elder abuse doesn't capture the headlines and national attention, there have been a number of dramatic legislative developments—by Congress, the New York state Legislature and the leadership of Art Mason and the Lifespan agency of Rochester—that together are shaping a more visible action agenda to address this understated but pressing problem.

What follows is an update of these developments:

- Washington, D.C.: Passage of the Elder Justice Act (2009). For the first time, this legislation establishes and

develops leadership at the national level to foster coordination throughout the federal government to address elder abuse issues. For example, the secretary of Health and Human Services will award grants to establish forensic centers to improve the capacity of geriatric health care professionals and law enforcement to collect evidence of elder abuse, neglect and exploitation.

- Albany: Bronx Sen. Jeffrey Klein and Bronx Assemblyman Jeffrey Dinowitz have put together a joint bill (S.5376) that would "codify, analyze and then punish" elder abuse violators. This is the first attempt to mandate and centralize the state's elder abuse incidence data collec-

tion process in the state Office of Children and Families. This bill is before the Assembly's Committee of Codes.

- Rochester: Elder abuse expert Art Mason, a previous guest of COARM's ad-hoc Committee on Elder Abuse, is preparing a report of the first statewide incidence study of elder abuse, which is due in September. Mason's agency, Lifespan, has been a major player in designing multi-county social and educational services throughout New York. COARM plans to partner with Lifespan to help translate Mason's research findings into a comprehensive legislative and educational package worthy of possible endorsement by UUP, NYSUT and AFT.

## The Active Retiree

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*The opinions expressed in this newsletter are those of the authors and not necessarily the opinions of United University Professions.*

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## Life as I see it ...

# A cow ruined my picture

By Henry Geerken  
 Cobleskill

*(Author's note: There is a plan afoot to have nostalgia featured in The Active Retiree. Below is my contribution to the effort.)*

If you are feeling bored by life, then you haven't been looking around. We live in a very exciting age—an age that is growing by leaps and bounds in the use of electronics, when time is no longer measured in minutes and seconds, but in nanoseconds.

I remember the first time I saw a television in a store. I know it was in the late 1940s, but an exact year I couldn't recall. There was a mob of people around a store window and I asked someone, "What's happening?" The answer that was relayed back to me was one word: "Television."

Finally it was my turn to stand in the front row and what did I spend so much time waiting for? It was a very snowy test pattern of a giant eye. Nothing else. Like the people ahead of me, I stared at the test pattern that didn't move. When I had my fill of looking at nothing, I went home. I thought to myself that this was much ado about nothing.

We moved from the city to a gentleman's farm in Worcester and, needless to say, television had yet to be discovered in upstate New York.

One day I approached my father and told him that not owning a TV set was the reason I had poor grades in high school. I told him that all of my friends were not as deprived as I, and that having a TV helped them to keep up their grades. That night my dad called the local TV guru to see about getting a television.

At that time there were only two channel options: A station out of Binghamton and another out of



Geerken

Schenectady. After doing a detailed signal evaluation, the TV guru said the best signal was coming from a location halfway up the mountain in an apple orchard behind our house. A television antenna was hung in the tree branches, and a long, complicated array of double wire was strung from tree to tree to

arrive in our living room.

It was hooked up to a small-screen Dumont television. When the TV was turned on, the first picture we saw was of a snowstorm somewhere in the Arctic. Or so it seemed. The antenna was moved from branch to branch with a relay of people staggered up the hill to repeat the shouted commands for the TV guru. Finally he announced, "There, that's as good as it gets."

We watched enthralled as we began to define actors in a nameless drama that was taking place in a snowstorm in our living room.

So, television finally arrived at the Geerken homestead. But now

we were still deprived because wrestling became my father's favorite sport.

Life was tolerable and things ran smoothly until one Saturday night, when the television became nothing but snow. It was right in the middle of Verne Gagne's famous "sleeper hold." The problem was that some cows in the pasture—in an effort to relieve an itch—had rubbed their backs on the wires holding up the antenna.

Cows 1, Antenna 0.

The location of the antenna became a "shrine" that was safeguarded by rolls and rolls of barbed wire, with the four outer rows protected with electrified fencing.

Now, all these years later, I think maybe the cows had the right idea.

"I remember the first time I saw a TV in a store. ... I thought to myself that this was much ado about nothing."

*From the COARM chair*

# We must rebuild our sense of community

**A**s we watch the gradual privatization of public education with increased emphasis on charter schools and the financial abandonment of public higher education by state legislatures across the country, many of us are asking, What is happening to our nation? Why did so many politicians and citizens support private health insurance companies that frequently make harmful decisions and give their CEOs massive salaries, rather than accepting a public endeavor such as we enjoy with Medicare? Is private enterprise, led by giant corporations, really more efficient, more successful and, most critically, more beneficial for Americans? Why have so many Americans turned against the government?

Yes, the American ideology has always favored “rugged individualism,” lauding individual enterprise and achievement. But until recently, Americans have also looked to the government for needed services such as public education, unemployment insurance, police and fire protection and, of course, Medicare. They have also looked to the government to promote social justice by passing legislation such as the Civil Rights Act. What has happened?

Once again, as a retiree who has time to read, I turn to two recent books. One is, *Ill Fares the Land*, by Tony Judt, a noted historian and political theorist, and the other is, *The Healing of America*, by journalist T.R. Reid. (Some of you may have seen Reid on TV.)

Both authors come to similar conclusions: Americans have lost their sense of community, the belief that we as a people are responsible for each other. Judt reminds us that after World War II, there was a social contract that defined post-war life in Europe and America: the guarantee of fairness and security. But that contract is eroding as we turn more and more to reliance on the “free market economy,” and less on government protection of our well-

“For 30 years, Americans—especially the younger generation—have been told that government is the problem, not the answer.”



WISHNIA

being and our liberties. He reminds us of LBJ’s Great Society of the 1960s, that gave us Medicare, Medicaid, the Civil Rights Act, Head Start, the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Endowment for the Arts, and the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. And, I might add, it was also a period of expansion for public higher education, with the creation of hundreds of satellite campuses and community colleges. Even Republican Dwight Eisenhower approved of increased taxation to benefit the community.

That began to change with the Reagan administration in 1980, when the political ideology shifted to revile government and government regulation, and to glorify the unfettered market. The result has been increased inequality (in 2005, 21.5 percent of the national income went to 1 percent of the population) and the destruction of the middle class. For 30 years, Americans—especially the younger generation—have been told that government is the problem, not the answer. The result is the celebration of Sarah Palin and Rand Paul.

Meanwhile, Reid, in his attempt to examine health care systems in a number of countries to see what Americans can use to improve our health system, came to a similar conclusion about the need for community responsibility. In every country with successful health care—whether conservative or social democratic—citizens and politicians agreed: We are all responsible for each other, and a healthy citizen-

ry is good for the country.

Reid notes that, despite the high cost of our system, we die sooner than people in 27 other countries and our infant mortality is one of the highest in the industrialized world (2.8 deaths per thousand in Japan; 6.8 in the U.S.)

He also explodes the myth that most of these countries have “socialized medicine.” Many use private doctors, private hospitals and private insurance companies. But, the government controls costs and has introduced some simple cost-saving principles such as the French “health card,” which when inserted into a computer, somewhat like a flash drive, your entire health history appears on the screen—no file cabinets!

So here we are. The reliance on the unregulated free market has caused the collapse of our economy (Oh yes, Wall Street needed government for their bailout) and we are not as healthy as most of the industrialized world.

Unfortunately, there are no easy answers, but one thing is clear. We, as citizens and unionists, must strive to rebuild our sense of community and reject those who rail against public enterprise.

Hey, even the rugged pioneers joined forces to build their barns and they imported the famous “schoolmarms” for their PUBLIC schools!

*Judith Wishnia*

This has been an active spring for retiree meetings. Meetings were held in six of our seven regions, and several hundred retirees were able to connect with former co-workers and friends in addition to hearing the latest news from Albany.

For those in the larger geographic regions, we are now trying to alleviate the long-distance drives by holding more campus meetings.

So, join us for a delicious meal, for renewing friendships and for lively discussion.

# Regional meetings

## Capital District hosts speakers on public higher education issues

By Al Magid  
Albany

**O**n May 19, the second speaker/luncheon program organized during the academic year 2009-2010 by the Capital District COARM Executive Committee was held in Alumni House on the UAlbany campus, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

As with previous Capital District

COARM speaker/luncheon programs, the lead-in was a social hour for the attendees: SUNY retirees and actives, including academics and professionals, from Albany, Cobleskill, New Paltz, Plattsburgh, and System Administration, and other guests.

Prior to the principal speakers, reports were presented by Eric Moore of NYSUT and Don Cohen of Albany.

Moore highlighted the NYSUT benefits available to SUNY retirees.

Cohen remarked on the union's 2010 Spring Delegate Assembly, May 14-15, and on the daylong COARM retreat held May 13.

A fine buffet lunch preceded presentations by two speakers. The first was UUPer Patty Bentley, a librarian at SUNY Plattsburgh who has a long record of stellar service in UUP. She received the union's Nina Mitchell Award for Distinguished Service in 2000.

The second speaker was Curtis Lloyd, associate vice chancellor for finance and administration and chief human resources officer at System Administration, who addressed the hot-button topic, "The SUNY System and the Future of Higher Education."

Before Jim Kiepper introduced Bentley and Lloyd, Capital District COARM repre-

sentative Al Magid put their topic in a larger context, shedding light on how the roiled global and U.S. economies, especially in the financial sector, were exacerbating New York state's economic condition and, concomitantly, imperiling the SUNY and CUNY public university systems.

Bentley and Lloyd each covered a wide range of issues impacting public education in the U.S., many with implications for SUNY and the future of higher education.

Among the issues discussed were:

- The Obama Administration's K-12 "Race to the Top" policy.
- The proliferation of charter schools across the nation.
- Traditional and alternative modes of teacher education.
- UUP retirees as mentors for new SUNY academics and professionals.
- Continuing and permanent appointments, faculty insecurity and academic freedom.
- The growing number of contingent faculty.
- The states' financial distress, reduced funding for public higher education, and strategies such as early-retirement incentives, furloughs and lag-pay.
- The push toward privatization, corporatization and bureaucratization in public higher education.
- Collective bargaining between UUP and the state.

A robust hour-long Q-and-A followed.

The Capital District COARM Executive Committee is already at work planning the speaker/luncheon event for fall 2010 and spring 2011.

The Executive Committee (Chair Magid, Cohen, Kiepper and Hy Kuritz) invites the 350 SUNY retirees—academic and professional—in the Capital District to make suggestions as to future speakers and other programs, and also possible venues outside Albany. Suggestions should be directed to Magid at [magid2@juno.com](mailto:magid2@juno.com) or to Cohen at [bdonco@gmail.com](mailto:bdonco@gmail.com).

KATIE AND DIANE GEERKEN PHOTOS



Above, guest speakers Curtis Lloyd, SUNY chief HR officer, and UUPer Patty Bentley of Plattsburgh answer questions.

Below, Al Magid puts their discussion in a larger context.



# Southern Tier retirees meet on home campuses

By Jo Schaffer  
Cortland

Once the threat of snow was lifted, the Southern Tier came alive with increased COARM activity. The snowbirds are back! The snowbirds are back!

Like the regular ornithological patterns noted in Petersen's *Guide to Birds of North America*, the COARM members of the district flocked back to their spring nesting grounds. To celebrate this return, campus-based COARM meetings were held throughout the region.

Thanks to the efforts of UUPer Bob Pompei, in coordination with the campus human resources retiree specialist, a first-time COARM meeting was scheduled on the SUNY Binghamton campus. As an "almost new" retiree, Pompei had loads to learn about COARM and, like the good student he is, he proved to be a very fast learner. We had a very productive meeting, providing attendees with tons of information about UUP, COARM and campus-sponsored retiree benefits.

At the end of April, COARM hosted its

regular spring brunch on the SUNY Cortland campus. The campus administration and COARM share the costs, alternating the expenses, for close to 85 attendees. COARM organizes the events and provides information and speakers.

This time, Sharon Steadman, a professor of sociology and anthropology, spoke with enthusiasm about her archeological project in central Turkey: the new finds, life in a small village and the continuing excitement of working with students at the project site. Cortland retirees relish keeping up with the achievements of the active faculty.

In addition, a June 16 joint brunch meeting was held for Oneonta and Delhi retirees. More than 30 people attended to hear a report from Schaffer on the state of COARM and UUP activities, threats to SUNY, and plans for increased advocacy.

UUPer Rob Compton, a professor of



NANCY CANNON

political science and chapter vice president for academics, was introduced by Oneonta Chapter President Bill Simon. Compton spoke about the threat of privatization of the University and the Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act moving through the Legislature.

A fall meeting at SUNY Delhi was approved as the next site for a regional COARM meeting.

# Central NY discusses UUP, SUNY, retiree issues

By Pat Stempel  
Upstate Medical University

A very enthusiastic group of Central New York retirees met June 10 at the Pier 57 restaurant. There were many new attendees as well as many old friends.

COARM/CNY representative Pat Stempel thanked everyone for taking time to attend the meeting. She then went on to report on the COARM retreat that was held before the 2010 Spring Delegate Assembly.

Highlights of the retreat include:

- There are now close to 3,600 COARM members and the numbers are growing.
- A COARM banner will be made.
- Statewide Vice President for Academics Fred Floss is in the process of setting up a mentoring program that uses retirees' expertise to assist new employees.
- Jo Schaffer and Stempel are creating a draft booklet to help retirees organize financial and other important information. Floss said it may be possible to put

this on a jump drive so that the information can be easily updated.

- COARM dues will likely be rising in the future, as costs are increasing and revenues are not keeping up.
- Efforts continue to ensure that all retirees are provided benefits on their home campus. The benefits vary among campuses, and are often different for professional and academic retirees.
- It was recommended that there be a retiree on each chapter executive board.
- The issue of increasing the life insurance to more than the current \$1,000 was researched. It was determined that the cost would be prohibitive, so it will remain the same.

Following Stempel's report and a wonder brunch, Carol Braund, UUP chapter president at Upstate, informed everyone of current campus events.

Braund said a large general meeting was held June 9, with UUP President Phil Smith and campus President David Smith in attendance. Both are concerned about the huge

state cuts to health care and their impact on hospital services. Upstate hospital is currently running at 95 percent occupancy, and is looking at a relationship with Community hospital to increase bed capacity.

The guest speaker was Richard Urciuoli of Summit Planning Group. He provided a number of handouts that demonstrated the impact of inflation and taxes on retirement income. The current financial crisis was discussed, with information on the impact of the work market on the stock exchange. A lively question-and-answer followed.

Stempel provided statewide updates:

- The risks of allowing each campus to become self-supporting were discussed. The Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act would allow different tuitions at different campuses. Each campus would also be able to sell or lease property with no legislative oversight.

• Health care and hospitals were among the latest cuts, as the New York

see **CENTRAL NY**, page 7

# Regional meetings

## WNY discusses massage therapy, prisoner rights

By Paul McKenna

SUNY Buffalo

The spring meeting of UUP retirees of Western New York was held May 4 at Fanny's Restaurant. There were 42 members and two guests in attendance.

The morning speaker was massage therapist Rebecca Albert, LMT. She discussed the full range of massage therapies. The audience was impressed by the rigorous training agenda demanded by New York and the federal government before licensing, as well as the continuing course work required to maintain a valid license.

The audience's many questions were answered concisely and the various therapies available for certain conditions were explained. The question of reimbursement by insurance companies was covered insurer by insurer.

Albert's presentation was comprehensive and delivered with a conciseness that validated her qualifications in her field.



PAT BAKER

Western New York COARM Chair Bill Rock is flanked by spring meeting speakers Rebecca Albert, left, and Karima Amin.

The afternoon speaker was Karima Amin and her subject was "Prisoners Are People Too."

Amin taught in the Buffalo public school system for 25 years before becoming a storyteller. As her audience and her reputation grew, she was asked to speak at a prison. Visiting many New York state correctional institutions and talking with prisoners her focus

changed. She started Prisoners are People, an advocacy group to be a voice for the incarcerated. The goal of Prisoners are People is to ensure that the basic needs of prisoners are met.

Her dedication to prisoners has brought reform, but she insists the advocacy must continue.

Amin's presentation was most enjoyable as she discussed her storytelling experiences while delivering a strong but subtle message about prisoners' rights.

Bill Rock, chair of the Western New York region of COARM, asked the members to be part of the legislative advocacy efforts of

UUP. It is very important that lawmakers understand our concerns. He also brought the members up to date on other ongoing issues relevant to retirees.

Harvey Axelrod will be assisting Rock, and Paul McKenna will serve as recorder.

The retiree liaisons met after the general meeting and discussed possible agendas and locations for future meetings.

## LI region reviews social services, SUNY cutbacks

By Barbara Maertz

Farmingdale

UUP retirees from the Long Island Region had a productive spring meeting at the University Club at Farmingdale on April 21. Attendance continues to grow as valuable information on benefits and UUP activities is offered to retirees from campuses at Old Westbury, Stony Brook and Farmingdale.

More than 50 people attended and were vocal in presenting their opinions and needs on a variety of subjects.

Laurie Kupperstein of NYSUT Social Services spoke about the various resources available to current and retired members help them manage hospitaliza-

tions, find support groups, assistance in marital/relationship issues and arranging caregiving services. Staff can be reached at (800) 342-9810 x6206.

Barbara Maertz distributed a draft copy of a brochure listing privileges and benefits for emeriti faculty and professional staff. Hopefully, it will be finalized and distributed to UUP Farmingdale retirees this fall and continue into the future. Special thanks to Judi Bird for her help in preparing the guide.

Farmingdale Chapter President Yolanda Pauze reported on the "202" termination letters recently sent to part-time term faculty and professionals. She explained how frustrating the letters were for department

chairs, full-time faculty and part-time adjuncts. These letters brought home the reality of the budget crisis. Retirees were urged to talk with legislators about the impact of SUNY budget cuts.

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia noted that retiree health insurance and other benefits must be renewed by the state Legislature every year and that the benefits are not permanently guaranteed. UUP retiree members must be vigilant and active to ensure that retiree benefits remain secure.

Other discussions centered on the ill-conceived Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act, the COARM budget and retiree dues.

All were invited to return next fall.

## Newsletter earns top NYSUT honor, three UUP awards

**U**UP's newsletter for its more than 3,500 retiree members earned the Ted Bleecker Best of the Best award in the annual NYSUT Journalism Contest run by *New York Teacher*.

*The Active Retiree* also won three awards in UUP's journalism competition, which recognizes outstanding chapter and retiree publications and websites.

### NYSUT AWARDS

For the second time in six years, *The Active Retiree* earned the Ted Bleecker "Best of the Best" Award, which is given to the publication—in-service or retiree, 10 members or 10,000—that the judges believe is top-notch in every way. Judges look for quality writing, editing, photography and design. The award is named after the late Ted Bleecker, editor-in-chief of *New York Teacher* for more than two decades.

*The Active Retiree*, which first earned the Bleecker award in 2004, drew high praise from the judges: "Absolutely the best! Thorough attention to detail in design, visuals and an excellent variety of story content. On every count—content, layout, writing, photos—this newsletter stands out. A model of what a newsletter should be."

The Bleecker award comes on the heels of four other NYSUT honors, including a first-place award for Best Newsletter for publications with a circulation of more than 1,000.

Also taking home first-place honors were Mac Nelson of Fredonia, who won for Best



Above, Judy Wishnia and Mac Nelson accept their awards from President Phil Smith, left, during UUP's 2010 Spring DA.

Right, Bob Kasprak, center, proudly displays the Best of the Best award. Flanking him are NYSUT VP Maria Neira and Secretary-Treasurer Lee Cutler.

Feature Story for his April 2009 article "All aboard," about his cross-country train trip to visit friends in Illinois, California and Oregon; and Don Cohen of Albany, who picked up a first-place award for Best News Story for his April 2009 article "Elder abuse under review."

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia of Stony Brook received an Award of Merit for Best Editorial for her June 2009 commentary "Labor left out of social history."

### UUP AWARDS

*The Active Retiree* picked up one Best in Class award and two Awards of Merit during the 10th annual UUP Journalism



Contest. The competition is supervised by the UUP Communications Department and is judged by professional journalists from the Capital District.

The newsletter received an Award of Merit for general excellence for publications with more than 1,000 members.

"A very nice looking newsletter, easy to read. This is extremely well written and jammed packed with useful, informative news. Particular kudos to Judith Wishnia, Henry Geerken and Mac Nelson for their excellent writing," according to the judges.

Nelson's "All aboard" article earned Best in Class honors, while Wishnia's editorial, "We must fight for the America we deserve," picked up an Award of Merit.

## Central NY ...

(continued from page 5)

state budget remains overdue.

- There was much discussion at the last DA regarding the relationship between UUP and the American Association of University Professors. The decision on whether to continue the relationship will be voted on during the 2010 Fall DA.

- Dave Peckham reported on the most recent advocacy efforts in Albany. He

expressed concerns regarding the ability to resolve many of the issues. He believes there is a wide division among the political parties and between upstate and downstate factions. The SUNY budget has lost more than \$500 million in the last two years. UUP is advocating to have the Legislature restore the \$152 million taken in this budget year.

UUP is also advocating for passage of

bills to fund a study on elder abuse; and to make health care benefits for retirees permanent. Currently, the Legislature must vote every year to continue health care benefits.

The next COARM/CNY meeting will be Wednesday, Oct. 6, at Pier 57. Meetings for the Oswego area and also for the Morrisville and Empire State chapters are being planned.

Many retirees are elected delegates to the union's Delegate Assemblies. Some are pictured here in action.



BRIAN TAPPEN

Above, Fred Miller of Oneonta casts his ballot for one of eight candidates for statewide office.

## COARM ...

(continued from page 1)

professional faculty equitably.

- It was decided to establish an ad-hoc committee to investigate the status of retirees in UUP. The ad-hoc committee is comprised of Schaffer, Magid, Russell and Wishnia. One item to investigate included the non-voting criterion for the retiree member to the statewide Executive Board.

- Creation of a COARM banner was approved.

- Production of a COARM membership card to be sent on receipt of member dues in August. Approved.

- Schaffer presented *A Heart Disease Handbook*, which she has arranged to be readily available to members at a 50 percent discount. Needs to be approved by Benefits and Legal prior to announcement.

- Allocated up to \$1,000 for Cohen to investigate potential for new COARM initiative. He is to return to COARM by July 1 with a preliminary report, enlarging his First Commission to prepare long-range program planning and developmental activities.

### FINANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

Budget for the coming fiscal year was presented by Maertz, Inventasch and Schaffer, with much appreciated assistance from UUP Director of Finance Tina George.

Due to increased activity for the membership, COARM had to dip into its

reserves by almost \$30,000 to cover annual expenses. Discussion covered the potential implementation of a dues increase for the next budget period. Annual dues have been \$34 since the inception of COARM in 1987.

George noted that a fund balance to cover expenses for two year's of operational costs was recommended fiscal procedure.

It was determined that COARM would need an additional \$7 per member to maintain dispersal costs.

### RELAG REPORT

Richert reported there will be a retiree day in Albany. He expects 44 participants will advocate for a unified SUNY and against the proposed Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act.

### NEW BUSINESS

- Stempel and Schaffer have turned over a rough draft of a "survivor's guide" to UUP Publications Specialist Karen Mattison for formatting.

- Wishnia noted with pride that *The Active Retiree* won the Best of the Best award of all NYSUT local publications and was going on to equal acclaim at AFT.

Below, COARM Chair Judy Wishnia takes part in a DA discussion between UUPers and AAUP General Secretary Gary Rhoades.



MICHAEL LISI

It was moved and passed to award Mattison a \$500 bonus in recognition of her outstanding work.

- It was noted that Article XV of the *Policies of the SUNY Board of Trustees* is out of date in reference to state policy on benefits.

- Maraviglia again raised the issue of increasing the amount of the retiree life insurance. It was noted that any minimal increase in the benefit would be an increase of \$50,000 per annum over current cost.

- UUP Vice President for Academics Fred Floss proposed developing a mentoring role for retirees at the chapters to



# RELAG reaches out

By Fred Miller  
Oneonta

**M**embers of the UUP Retiree Legislative Action Group visited Albany on June 8 to discuss retiree issues with state lawmakers.

Organized in groups of three or four, the retirees met with 27 legislators from districts around the state. The discussions covered a number of issues, but focused on two items that directly impact active UUPers and two that are of more immediate interest to retirees.

The issues directly affecting active employees are: 1) the woefully inadequate state funding proposal for SUNY; and 2) the Public Higher Education Empowerment and Innovation Act (PHEEIA), which, if enacted, would allow SUNY schools to raise tuition and enter in business ventures without legislative oversight. UUP opposes PHEEIA because it will privatize SUNY, reduce access and erode quality.

The advocates also expressed concern over health care benefits for retirees and the issue of elder abuse.

There were two parts to the discussions of retiree health benefits. The first was a repetition of UUP's efforts to have retiree health benefits made permanent instead of asking lawmakers to renew it every year. The second was the Emergency Funding Bill that passed June 7; lawmakers were unsure how retirees will be affected.

The current status of a number of bills dealing with elder abuse was also discussed. These mostly deal with the tracking and reporting of incidents of abuse wherever it occurs, and with the training and certification of paid caregivers who work in a private-home setting. Most of the legislators expressed their willingness to support the specific pieces of legislation when they come to the floor.

The participating retirees were: Don Cohen, Albany; Tom Jamison, Fredonia; Joe Lamendola, Canton; Harvey Inventasch, Cortland; Ron Daloia, Upstate Medical University; Bob Fluck, Upstate; Fred Miller, Oneonta; Jim Kiepper, Albany; John Hain, New Paltz; Horace Ivy, Upstate; and Jim Friel, Farmingdale.



EL-WISE NOISSETTE



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

Above, Ed Alfonsin of Potsdam takes to the dais to run elections for UUP officers and Executive Board members.

Right, Flossie Brush of Cortland raises her hand in support of a resolution.

Below, Eric Russell of Brooklyn HSC asks a question during the Spring DA.



EL-WISE NOISSETTE

build a more union-educated and active group of younger faculty.

- COARM appointed Kasprak to be co-chair of the ad-hoc Committee on Elder Abuse.
- Proposed a column of professional benefits advice in *The Active Retiree*.
- Wishnia proposed a successor system for regional chairs, an alternate method for designees. Further discussion is required. Axelrod brought a similar issue to COARM with a request to fund

chapter election for an alternate. The Executive Board will explore by-laws to determine who is responsible for costs that were not pre-approved.

- COARM recommended David Peckham of Upstate and Henry Geerken of Cobleskill to be joint recipients of this year's Outstanding Retiree of the Year award.

The statewide Executive Board is expected to approve COARM's recommendation.

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Another new plan is online **Defensive Driving** courses through the National Safety Council, which offers convenience and savings. NYSUT members and their family members who are licensed in New York state can take this course at the Member Benefits-reduced

price of \$25.25 per person, a savings of almost \$20 per course fee.

Be sure to access these and other money-saving programs through the Member Benefits Web site, [www.memberbenefits.nysut.org](http://www.memberbenefits.nysut.org) and click on Discounts - Members on the left-hand navigation bar. Using links provided from the site will ensure you receive any necessary discount ID codes and ensure you receive the Member Benefits discounted prices.

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# Holy ground

## Author looks at religion and politics along US 20

By Mac Nelson

Fredonia

When Moses saw the miracle of the burning bush, he heard the voice of God telling him: “Put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground.” (Exodus, 3, 5, King James Version.) Easy for Jahweh to say and, of course, it happened in the storied Middle East, what we now think of as the Holy Land. Yet the place where many of us regularly walk is almost as holy, by one standard, as Moses’ Midian or Canaan. The Mohawk River ranks right up there with the Ganges and the Jordan as a holy stream, a fertile ground for the creation of religions. And US 20 is the great road that ties all these religious foundations together.

Religious experimentation begins in Plymouth (1620) and Boston (1630) and spreads quickly westward along this great road to the eastern border of New York state. In the 1770s, Mother Ann Lee, an English born Quaker, brought her followers to the Albany area, where they became known as the Shaking Quakers, or simply, the Shakers. On US 20 in Pittsfield, Mass., is Hancock Shaker Village, the impressive set of buildings they once occupied there. In New Lebanon, N.Y., is another major Shaker site, the center of their world until 1947, for more than a century. The Shakers left us wonderful arts and crafts and music, but, as they were celibate, there are not a lot of Shakers around today.

Halfway across New York state, a man from Palmyra named Joseph Smith reported a vision of an angel and the discovery of golden plates inscribed in a strange language. He said he translated these plates and produced a very long addition to the Bible, which he called The Book of Mormon. It tells of Jesus Christ coming to the New World after His resurrection and establishing a new religion before returning to heaven. That religion is formally the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, but we call its members Mormons. They

headed west to Ohio, then Illinois. When their founder was murdered, another young man who grew up on Twenty in Auburn, N.Y., led most of them to Utah, which he described as “the right place” for them to flourish. He was Brigham Young. When he died in 1886, he left 27 grieving widows, having married 55 times, producing 57 children. Not all US 20 religions opposed reproduction, and there are more Mormons around today than Shakers.

There aren’t many Oneidans left, either, but it wasn’t for lack of trying. The Oneida Community, named after that central New

“The Mohawk River ranks right up there with the Ganges and the Jordan as a holy stream.”

York town where it was founded, followed a different idea of “complex marriage;” everybody in the community was married to everyone else, and, theoretically, sex with any of them was proper if both wanted it. That certainly sounds “complex” to me! Their founder was John Humphrey Noyes.

Several other religions were founded in this rich soil in the 19th century, but I haven’t space here to deal with them all.

To get *real* local: across US 20 from my house in Brocton is farmland once owned by the Brotherhood of the Common Life, a communal religion founded by Thomas Lake Harris in the 1870s. They farmed and made 20,000 gallons of wine annually. They fell apart, and Harris went on to found another community in Santa Rosa, Calif. You can see the last local remnant of the Brotherhood in a fine old house in Brocton called Vine Cliff.

Also in Chautauqua County, just up the road from me, is Lily Dale, the summer headquarters of the religion of Spiritualism, founded in Hydesville, in central New York in the 1840s by the Fox sisters, who reported communicating with the spirits of the dead and interpreted rapping sounds as

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those communications. They later admitted they had faked the sounds, then recanted. You’d think it would all died out right there. But no. In response to the challenge of Darwinian materialism, Spiritualism swept the world, and all those wacko things you still read about today—holy buns that look like Mother Theresa, and soap scums with images of the Virgin Mary—got a big boost from local nuttiness.

There’s also the Cardiff (N.Y.) Giant, a hunk of pale rock (gypsum) carved to fool the over-credulous religious who believed there were literally “Giants in the earth in those days.” (Genesis 6,4.) He became a huge carnival attraction; check him out in his current resting place in Cooperstown.

And there’s Chautauqua, just south of Twenty. The institution was founded in 1874 as a summer training camp for Methodist Sunday school teachers. It’s gone far beyond that, but it started with the missionary impulse of proselytizing protestantism.

This Great Road across New York was thus the breeding ground of and communications lifeline for many religions, from the astonishing to the goofy. And through them, the road made even greater contributions.

Many of these religions had emphasized the equality and/or the leadership of women, even the bisexual nature of the deity. All this freedom and intellectual ferment led to three other momentous achievements, right along the route of US 20:

— The Women’s Rights Movement, born on US 20 in Seneca Falls, with its credo: “All men and women are created equal.”

— Abolitionism, freedom and education for blacks, from Frederick Douglass in Rochester and Harriet Tubman in Auburn, to Oberlin College, which granted the first college degrees to “Negroes.”

— The first licensed female physician anywhere in the world, Dr. Elizabeth Blackwell, educated in Geneva, N.Y.

Freedom and equality for more than half of humankind. This is Holy Ground indeed.

# Meirowitz co-authors book on biz writing

**A** book co-authored by UUP Active Retiree Claire Meirowitz has just been published by Pearson/Financial Times Press and is drawing excellent reader reviews on Amazon.com. The book is based on Meirowitz and her co-author's many years of experience as journalists, business writers, magazine editors and organizational communicators.

The book, *The Truth About the New Rules of Business Writing*, is filled with insights into improving every type of written business communication. From everyday letters, e-mails, and reports to Web site content, proposals and new media such as blogs and tweets, this concisely written book shows readers what it takes to make every word count.

The book is meant for everyone who communicates for business purposes. This includes entrepreneurs, consultants, salespeople, lawyers, accountants, scientists and technology specialists. It includes people who have jobs and want promotions ... people who need jobs, or want different ones ... people who are in school and need to explore the job market ... and people who write for their clubs and organizations.

Meirowitz is a former editor of *The Active Retiree* and the current moderator of



MEIROWITZ

the UUP Active Retiree discussion list on Yahoo.com. She had been director of community relations and publications at SUNY Old Westbury until she retired in 1992. Meirowitz then began a second career as an entrepreneur: owner of Professional Editing Services and co-owner of C&M

Business Writing Services and Workshops. She specializes in editing, proofreading and fact-checking materials in information technology for business publications.



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