

## Harris v. Quinn threatens all unions

By Judy Wishnia  
COARM Chair

Most of us are old enough to remember the struggles to form unions for public workers: for state workers, for public hospital workers, for teachers and, yes, for the academics and professionals of UUP. Unions negotiated for wages, benefits (including retiree pensions and health care), and improved working conditions, and they protected members from prejudicial actions such as being terminated without cause.

Despite the decline in blue collar and other unions in the private sector, public worker unions have not only remained strong, they have increased in membership and influence. So it goes without saying that the numerous ultra conservative organizations sponsored by corporations and wealthy right-wingers (like the powerful Koch brothers) are determined to crush these unions.

Many states have passed “right to work” (no union shop) legislation; for educators, tenure is under attack. A recent anti-tenure decision by a California court is now being tested in other states.

Now comes the Supreme Court decision in *Harris v. Quinn*, which is supposedly

“We in UUP must stop the attack on public unions, on all unions.”

— Judy Wishnia

limited to certain health care workers, paid by federally funded Medicaid, who can opt out of paying dues to their union. Some unionists breathed a sigh of relief that all public workers were not affected. But don’t be fooled. It is a dangerous precedent for a more serious blow to public unions in the future.

It is clear from the majority opinion written by Justice Samuel Alito that he and other justices would like to abrogate the 1977 decision, *Abood v. Detroit Board of Education*, which asserted labor’s constitutional right to collect dues and bargain collectively for public workers. *Harris v. Quinn* opens the door to anti-union cases. For example, the Hobby Lobby decision on contraception was also supposed to be limited. But two days after the official ruling, the court expanded its decision to cover yet another institution and more will be coming through the lower courts.

We should not forget that home health

care workers are mostly poorer women. In 2003, after a 20-year struggle, Illinois recognized these workers as state employees and they won the right to unionize and to bargain collectively. Since then, their pay has risen from \$7 an hour to \$11.65, with a contractual increase this December to \$13. SEIU represents 400,000 home health and child care workers, and they should be worried about further expansion of the *Harris v. Quinn* decision.

New cases are being readied to expand *Harris v. Quinn* to other unions, notably those for teachers. In *Freidrichs v. California Teachers Association*, several California teachers, represented by the anti-union Center for Individual Rights, have an appeal pending in the Ninth Circuit, and a number of other teacher cases are in the works.

*Harris v. Quinn* should be a catalyst for union action. We in UUP must stop the attack on public unions, on all unions. UUP will be calling on us to be active in campaigns to elect people who will protect labor’s rights. Remember one of the posters from the 2011 struggle in Wisconsin to stop the anti-union legislation passed in that state: United We Bargain; Divided We Beg.

## Affiliates heap awards on *The Active Retiree*

By Karen L. Mattison  
UUP Publications Specialist

**T**he *Active Retiree* has earned a total of eight awards in two journalism contests run by UUP’s affiliates, NYSUT and the AFT.

The newsletter for UUP’s 4,000-plus retiree members picked up five awards from the AFT Communications Network during the AFT Convention, July 10-14 in Los Angeles, and another three during the springtime Representative Assembly in New York City in a contest sponsored by NYSUT United.

### NEWSLETTER EARNS TOP AWARDS FOR COLUMN, LAYOUT

The *Active Retiree* won first-place honors in the AFT contest for Best Column and Best Layout. The winning column, “I can’t help



but wonder,” left, was written by COARM Chair Judy Wishnia of Stony Brook. The article discusses the plight of Americans who are not insured or underinsured, and calls on retirees to make their voices heard. It ran in the Fall 2013 issue.

Top honors for Best Layout went to the Summer 2013 issue, designed by UUP Publications Specialist Karen Mattison. The issue contained four-color photos from the 2013 Spring DA and various regional meetings of COARM.

Wishnia earned a third-place award for Best Feature. The article, which ran in the April 2013 issue, was a first-hand account of her 1963 trip to the historic “March on Washington for Jobs & Freedom.”

Al Magid of the Albany Chapter received a third-place award for Best News Story, The article, “The Reading is Fun Program,” see AWARDS, page 5

## 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 ...

# Politicians

By Henry Geerken  
 Cobleskill

Politicians. Someone asked me the other day why I hated politicians so much.

I thought about that for a little while and answered, "To coin a phrase, I have never known a politician that I didn't dislike. Sooner or later they all seem to smell ... bad."

I like the play, "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof," and the scene where Big Daddy says that he "smells mendacity" in the room. Like Big Daddy, whenever I am near a politician, I start to smell mendacity. Big time!

The political TV ads have started invading my life. I've begun hearing the wonderful things that politicians accomplished in the last term. Amongst them are the ads that inform me that one of their accomplishments is passing a budget on time.

I guess that I should shout "hoorah!" for something that was in their job description in the first place.

I offer the American people the following proposal:

Before an election, a politician should make a list of all the things that he or she will accomplish if elected. Let's call this their Job Description.

Before they run for re-election, they must give the public an accounting of their achievements while in office. This accounting will be required to be given in English and not in Politico-Techno Speak. This accounting we will call, The Performance and Evaluation Review.

This should sound familiar; these are the same tools used to judge SUNY professionals. What's good enough for us is surely good enough for them.

If we were using this program now and applied it to Gov. Cuomo, I can't help but wonder how he would fare. What's a



Geerken

passing grade? Is Cuomo trying to tell a big lie?<sup>1</sup>

I smell mendacity in the air when I hear claims that our state Legislature is the best in the country.

I smell mendacity in the air when I am told how fantastic my life will be when they build a casino in my backyard.

I smell mendacity in the air when I am told that fracking for shale oil will not mar my landscape, but make my sweet well water taste better.

I smell mendacity in the air when I hear the governor's TV ads claim that no one is more qualified than Andrew, that he's better than sliced white bread. Why all the ads now? Is he afraid of something?

Of course, the only fair thing to do for politicians is to let them form a union and fight for the things that are just and fair, just like we did. Perhaps seeing things from the other side might change their outlook.

Of course, to be just and fair they would face the same conditions of employment that we faced: If they work part time, their pay would reflect this.

And, to be just and fair, they would have the same pay scale that we had;

And, to be just and fair, when they retire, they would have the same retirement plan that we have;

And, to be just and fair, they would have whatever medical and dental plan as we have in retirement.

<sup>1</sup> A big lie (German: Große Lüge) is a propaganda technique. The expression was coined by Adolf Hitler, when he dictated his 1925 book *Mein Kampf*, about the use of a lie so "colossal" that no one would believe that someone "could have the impudence to distort the truth so infamously." Hitler asserted the technique was used by Jews to unfairly blame Germany's loss in World War I on German Army officer Erich Ludendorff.

*From the COARM chair*

# A return to the ‘not-so-good’ old days

If you listen to the right-wing talking heads, you will often hear the phrase, “take back the real America: the America of the good old days.” The question is: Were they really the good old days for most Americans?

Certainly the end of World War II brought much optimism for the future. College doors were opened to millions of veterans using the G.I. Bill and, thanks to very strong unions, millions more got good-paying jobs in an expanding economy that lasted for more than 20 years.

But was it the “good old days” for African-Americans who, despite their war records, returned to a segregated north and a Jim Crow south. Poll taxes, impossible literacy tests and violence kept almost all African-Americans from voting in what was then known as “the solid south.”

I still remember the killing of young Emmet Till because it was thought he had whistled at a white girl. Women, who had worked so hard during the war, were told to return to the kitchen and the bedroom. And the bedroom might cause an unwanted pregnancy. Abortion was illegal and birth control information and apparatus was hidden or required a doctor’s prescription. In 1957, as a mother of two very young children, I could not get any contraception advice, even from a doctor, in Connecticut. Thousands of women died from illegal abortions and if they chose to have the baby, were told to give it up for adoption. Single mothers were an affront to society.

Jobs for women were limited and low paid: the wage differential in 1965 was 59 cents for every male dollar. When I taught my first women’s history course in 1976, women were 6 percent of medical students, 3 percent of law students. LGBT Americans stayed in the closet. If they were open about their sexuality, they were harassed and physically attacked by police as well as anti-gay gangs. And this is the era before the introduction of Medicare, when seniors, plagued by lack of pensions and high medical costs, dined on cat food. So were these the good old days?

As for those strong unions, it did not take long for them to be under attack. The

anti-labor Taft-Hartley Act was passed in 1947. Factory owners began to flee the union-strong states for the unorganized southern states and then on to other low-wage countries. The anti-communist crusade of the 1950s led many unions to purge their membership of its progressive militants, communist or not, men and women who had built the unions. The major unions joined the communist hysteria instead of using their energy and money to organize the unorganized. As union membership declined, the wealth gap between the very rich and the



They want to return to the ‘good old days’ that “weren’t so good for women, African-Americans, gays, seniors, unions, immigrants or America.”

— Judy Wishnia

working class widened until we have the huge disparities of today (see Thomas Piketty, *Capital in the 21st Century*, for the correlation).

Thanks to the Civil Rights movement, the Feminist movement, the organization of gays and lesbians, and the introduction of Medicare and other parts of the “great society,” we began to move toward a better America. Now, we are in danger of returning to those “not-so-good old days.” Blue-collar union jobs with good pay are a relic of the past and many states now are non-union “right to work” states. Public workers and their unions are under attack; the Supreme Court decision on *Harris v. Quinn* sets a dangerous precedent. African-American voting districts are being gerrymandered. New voting laws limiting Sunday voting and requiring a government ID endangers to right to vote that was won with spilled blood. Women are now faced with the inability to control their own health and bodies, as many states, and

now the Supreme Court, limit access to contraception and abortion. And, of course, women still face violence and a huge wage gap.

Seniors who benefited from Medicare are now told that Medicare should be private and that the retirement age for Social Security should be raised. In many states, gays and lesbians can marry, but job and other discriminatory practices are still legal. Guns can be carried into schools and churches and millions of undocumented immigrants face arrest and deportation.

So, when you hear the words, “return to the real America, the ‘good old days,’” beware!

That’s what they want to do: return to the days that weren’t so good for women, African-Americans, gays, seniors, unions, immigrants or America.

*Judy Wishnia*



# Regional meetings

## Stony Brook retirees updated on key legislation

By Barbara Maertz  
Farmingdale

A rainy, dreary day in Stony Brook did not dampen the enthusiasm of nearly 70 retiree members gathered at the Hilton Garden Inn on campus for a spring brunch meeting of Long Island retirees.

They were pleasantly surprised when UUP Stony Brook Chapter President Artie Shertzer brought his 7-month-old grandson to the meeting; needless to say, young Jackson stole the show.

Shertzer reminded members of the importance of UUP's advocacy program and the need to meet with legislators and talk to them about: hospital financing; the threats to privatize Downstate Medical Center; the lack of funding for SUNY; the new UUP endowment initiative; and retiree issues, such as the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts.

COARM Chair Judy Wishnia spoke about IRMAA, which lawmakers did not implement this year thanks to the collective advocacy efforts of unions and retiree organizations. Wishnia said it is critical that UUP retirees thank their legislators



UUP Outreach Committee Co-chair Artie Shertzer, COARM Chair Judy Wishnia and COARM Long Island Region Chair Barbara Maertz recently addressed a meeting of Stony Brook retirees.

for this year's vote and to be ready to act when Gov. Cuomo proposes it again.

Also discussed was the UUP retiree life insurance program through UNUM. Long Island Region representative Barbara Maertz said COARM has been asked to review the plan, which also includes a travel assistance program.

Maertz surveyed meeting attendees about the life insurance and travel programs; 48 responses were received and shared with COARM during recent UUP Delegate Assemblies in Albany.

Negotiations are continuing. Members will be kept informed.

A pair of perky and friendly ladies from the Small Business Development Center, Susan Nastro and Kate Derryberry, noted the programs available to start a business or to network with others. There is help waiting at the SBDC for all retirees who want to start a consulting business.

The Hilton Garden Inn turned out to be a comfortable meeting location and we hope to continue to have regional retiree meetings there.

## Farmingdale

By Barbara Maertz  
Farmingdale

George Roach, former chief attorney of the Legal Aid Society of Suffolk County's Senior Division, was the guest speaker April 23 during a meeting of Long Island retirees at the Farmingdale University Club.

Roach, an attorney with the Smithtown law firm Grabie & Grabie, LLP, outlined the four essential documents needed for proper estate planning. He also gave attendees the latest information on the estate tax laws passed this year by the state Legislature.

Roach covered Medicaid eligibility rules for the community and nursing facilities, as well as long-term care insurance.

Judging by the many questions asked

and the enthusiastic response, Roach was a big hit. He graciously stayed to answer members' personal questions.

UUP's retiree life insurance and travel insurance plans provided by UNUM were discussed by Long Island Region representative Barbara Maertz. A survey of the members was conducted. The issue was set to be discussed by COARM during the Spring Delegate Assembly; negotiations between UUP and UNUM continue.

Yolanda Segarra, president of the UUP Farmingdale Chapter, urged advocacy efforts regarding Seamless Transfer and



Segarra

the controversial teacher performance assessment known as the edTPA. Segarra explained each and stressed the need for everyone to educate their legislators on these and other union issues.

Maertz was happy to report on the legislative victory regarding the Income Related Monthly Adjustment Amounts, which lawmakers

refused to implement this year. She reminded members to closely monitor IRMAA; many insiders believe Gov. Cuomo will try to impose this tax on retirees next year. Retirees are urged to tell their legislators how important this issue is to them.

# Retirees question if unemployment rate is permanent

By Al Magid  
Albany

**T**he stock market is up sharply, as is the sale of new homes and autos and the padding of compensation packages for corporate CEOs and too many university presidents, among others. Some folks think that the 2008 recession is over.

But there is another viewpoint, held by countless Americans. They have deep anxieties about the U.S. economy and their place in it. They fear for the present and the future. Their roiled state of mind is affected by, among other factors, the reality of pervasive under- and unemployment in the general population and especially among the nation's youth and minorities. Many cannot help but wonder, "Has massive unemployment in the U.S. become a permanent condition?"

Capital Region COARM's Executive Committee deemed it important to address that question. Its May 14 meeting, held in the Alumni House on the University at Albany campus, featured two speakers, Frank Mauro and Ronald Deutsch, both eminently qualified to assess current employment conditions in the U.S. and future prospects, along with an array of cognate issues.

Mauro is executive director emeritus of the Fiscal Policy Institute, in which role he served for 20 years before retiring at the end of 2013. Prior to joining FPI, Mauro was deputy director of SUNY's Nelson A. Rockefeller Institute of Government. Previously, he served as director of research for the last major revision of the New York City Charter (1987-1989), and as secretary of the New York State Assembly's Ways and Means Committee. Mauro is a graduate of Union College and Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. He twice received the U.S. Air Force Commendation Medal for his work in the field of race relations.

Deutsch is executive director of New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness, a statewide advocacy organization that focuses on building coalitions and organizing around issues of fair taxation and economic justice. He has been an advocate for social and economic justice for the last 20 years in Albany and has worked on many suc-



**New Yorkers for Fiscal Fairness Executive Director Ronald Deutsch, left, and Former FPI executive director Frank Mauro recently spoke to retirees at UAlbany. At right is COARM Capital District Chair Al Magid.**

cessful campaigns to spur closing of corporate tax loopholes and to raise tax rates on the wealthiest New Yorkers. Deutsch earned his undergraduate degree in sociology at UAlbany. Since then, he has continued to serve diverse organizations and programs keyed to helping the needy.

Mauro and Deutsch spoke for an hour. A robust hour-long Q & A followed.

The meeting ran from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. It began with an opportunity for SUNY academic and professional retirees (from the campuses at Albany, New Paltz and Cobleskill) and others to socialize and consult printed materials provided by UUP Member Benefits and Services.

Walter Apple, UUP retiree member services coordinator, updated the gathering on retiree issues dealt with at the union's 2014 Spring Delegate Assembly.

A lunch was provided by the statewide COARM for those attending the meeting.

The Capital Region COARM Executive Committee is in the process of organizing the semi-annual meeting to be held in

October. (Details will follow.) Its focus will be retirement activities of SUNY academics and professionals.

As a case in point, Al Magid, emeritus professor of political science at UAlbany and chair of Capital Region COARM, will highlight his work as founder and executive director of the all-volunteer Reading Is Fun Program. The program is keyed to teaching reading readiness and conversational skills to the 4-year-olds in Schenectady and their parents or other principal caregivers, most of them from the most marginalized and neediest sectors of the city's population.

Capital Region COARM urges the more than 300 SUNY academic and professional retirees in the area to participate in its lively and informative semi-annual meetings, and to propose to the Executive Committee topics and issues on which to organize future meetings. All meetings include one or more guest speakers and are keyed to timely topics and issues—educational and political/policy, the latter domestic and international.

## Awards ...

*(continued from page 1)*

highlighted the reading program developed by Magid to improve the literacy skills of pre-school children in Schenectady. It ran in the Fall 2013 issue,

The newsletter also got third-place honors for Best Periodical, which recognizes outstanding writing, photography and design.

### **NYSUT AWARDS WRITING, CONTENT**

UUP retirees earned three Awards of Distinction in the NYSUT contest. Wishnia won for Best Column, "What's happening to our country?" that questions the division of wealth in the U.S. It ran in the April 2013 issue.

Also awarded were Magid's "Reading is Fun Program," for Best Article About A Social Justice Issue, and Wishnia's "March on Washington" recollections.



# Regional meetings

## Universal health care a topic at CNY meeting

By Pat Stempel  
Upstate Medical University

**T**hirty-six enthusiast retirees and guests attended the Central New York Spring Retiree Brunch May 21 at the Casa Di Copani restaurant in Syracuse.

Pat Stempel opened the meeting and updated attendees on COARM activities. It is hoped that an email distribution list will soon be available so that important information can be sent. Retiree members now number more than 4,000.

There was a discussion regarding "Observational Status" by Medicare for hospital admissions. New York state recently passed a law that all patients must be informed within 24 hours if they are admitted to a hospital as an inpatient or on "observational status."

As retiree members of UUP, we are eligible to receive travel insurance and a \$1,000 life insurance benefit. UNUM no longer wishes to provide this, as it is too expensive. Other options are being explored. A questionnaire regarding these benefits was completed by attendees and will be used as other options are reviewed.

After a wonderful lunch, our guest speaker, Dr. Martha Livingston, provided a most informative presentation titled, "Health Care in the Era of the Affordable



Martha Livingston of Old Westbury discusses single-payer health care with Central NY retirees.

JO SCHAFFER

Care Act: The Struggle Continues!" She discussed our health care crisis and why there should be universal health care for all. The U.S. spends more than \$7,000 per person, per year on health care; almost twice as much as any other country. Yet our life expectancy is worse than our counterparts in other wealthy countries, Livingston said.

Health insurance companies are in business to make a profit for their shareholders. Twenty percent of their income goes to overhead, salaries and profit, and 8 percent to provide health care. Medicare spends 97

percent to provide health care.

For further information on the important topic, read Dr. Livingston's book, *10 Excellent Reasons For National Health Care*.

Updates regarding Upstate UUP were provided by Mike Lyon, UUP Upstate Medical University Chapter president. Dave Peckham discussed the need for continued outreach and advocacy.

Stempel urges members to contact her regarding topics for future meetings and possible meeting locations. The next meeting will be in September.

## Eastern CNY retirees discuss health care, investments

By Pat Stempel  
Upstate Medical University

**S**ix members of the eastern CNY region met for an informative lunch July 30. The meeting was held at the Lincklaen House in Cazanovia.

An update was provided regarding the UNUM travel and life insurance programs. This insurance is about to expire; an August meeting will be held in Albany to discuss options.

There was a discussion regarding "Observational status" for hospital stays and the implications for reimbursement

under Medicare. There was talk regarding the need for a single-payer health care system as a way to decrease costs and improve quality.

After a great lunch, talk turned to the changes going on at the eastern campus and the development of the nanotech component.

Retirement options and investment options were shared by attendees. We all learned a lot from each other. Suggestions were provided for topics for future meetings.

The next CNY COARM meeting is set for Sept. 24 at Coleman's in Syracuse.



Six eastern Central New York retirees talk about single-payer health care, UNUM insurance plans, and retirement options.

PHOTO COURTESY OF PAT STEMPEL

# Southern Tier retirees meet in Cortland, Oneonta

By Jo Schaffer  
Cortland

**D**uring the rather short spring this year here in the Southern Tier, there were two regional meetings held for UUP retirees: one in Cortland and another for Oneonta and Delhi retirees.

## CORTLAND

Cortland retirees were treated not only to a tasty luncheon, but to our own statewide Vice President for Academics Jamie Dangler, who spoke to attendees about the State Education Department's flawed implementation of a new—and untested—teacher performance assessment (edTPA).

As usual, the college president, the chapter union president and COARM's Southern Tier representative Jo Schaffer addressed the more than 65 members in attendance.

This was Dangler's first appearance in front of her colleagues (some of whom had been her instructors in her undergraduate years at SUNY Cortland) since her election as VPA. (It is historically rewarding to note that Henry Steck held the same office two decades ago.) Dangler recounted the union's struggle with SED over the high-stakes nature of the edTPA and its impact on teacher education students and programs around SUNY, including Cortland.

Dangler credited the active role UUP and NYSUT played in convincing SED and the state Board of Regents to set up a safety net for students who fail the edTPA, and to convene a task force to look into the best way to assess future teachers; UUP and NYSUT have seats on the task force. It was similar to hearing a stirring history of a battle of right over might!

## ONEONTA, DELHI GATHERING

With the help of Loraine Tyler, who is a tireless union volunteer, a luncheon meeting was organized for May 14 at a local Italian restaurant. Oneonta faithful Fred Miller was among the attendees who tucked into a rather copious menu.

Tyler had arranged for a speaker from a regional "wealth management" service

company to instruct, inform and inspire the retirees about how to predict and then manage retirement income from social security to pensions.

The speaker clarified some of the financial ramifications that many often overlook as they approach retirement and well into the retirement years. Of interest was the discussion of protecting income in trusts for members' survivors.

Judging by the active and lively discussion and questions asked, this was a well-received program.

## MORE FROM YOUR REP

These social and informative meetings for retirees are a painless way to make sure our retirees are well educated and



Above, VPA Jamie Dangler, right, joins the conversation at the Cortland meeting. At left is the Apple family.



JO SCHAFFER

primed to be active in advocacy for public higher education. I always find it a pleasure at these events to greet old friends and colleagues and to catch up on retirees' activities and families.

As Southern Tier representative, I serve on the executive board of the Cortland Chapter. Sometimes, I feel like the elder eldest member (fellow retiree David Kreh is also a board member). We are often called on to share chapter history and activities. It keeps my cerebral filing system tuned up! Between the two of us, we keep UUP a living history.

I have also attended meetings of related organizations at which I have been called on to present the UUP point of view for public higher education and the general well being of our retirees. As you know, we are all members of the Alliance for

Retired Americans. It is in conjunction with the national membership that I attend the monthly Central NY meetings. The membership of that group represents NYSUT, CWA, Firefighters and UAW, among others. I am proud to represent UUP to our fellow unionists.

Additionally, I have spoken at the Cortland Area Retired Teachers Association, a group that may have been in existence before NYSUT and NEA began organizing teachers. And I am invited to attend meetings of area NYSUT Retiree Councils.

All of this activity is to enlarge our working relationship with potential supporters, who we can call on to join in our fight for an affordable, accessible and top-notch University.

And, lastly, I had the opportunity to address the Democratic Rural Conference (since more than 60 percent of New York state retirees live in the rural areas) on the issue of protecting senior benefits and increasing services to our members in typically underrepresented rural communities.



# Regional meetings

## WNYers hear about single-payer insurance, Obamacare

By Harvey Axlerod  
Buffalo Center

**T**he WNY region of COARM held its annual spring meeting May 20. The featured speaker was professor Martha Livingston, chair of the public health department at SUNY Old Westbury.

There were some obvious, but still shocking, figures presented. American health care is ranked among the lowest in the industrialized world. Yet, on average, we spend \$9,000 per person, compared to other systems, such as those in Germany and Canada, that spend closer to \$5,000 to \$7,000 per person.

Why? Livingston said the answer is simple: The vast majority of health insurance companies are motivated by profits, not patient care. Every penny an insurance company spends on payment for services is a loss. This is known in the industry as the “medical loss ratio.” While the government may be far from perfect, hopefully it has a higher standard than for-profit corporations. (Editorial note: This talk was given before the Veteran’s Administration scandal; we might have had an even more vigorous Q-and-A than we had.)

The topic turned to Obamacare, which has led to more people being covered by health insurance. While not perfect, it is a step in the right direction. Obamacare mandates that, beyond a certain ratio, the insurance companies must rebate “excessive profits.” Again, not perfect, but a step in the right direction.



Martha Livingston of Old Westbury enjoys the “smile maker” spatula she received for addressing WNY retirees.

Also mentioned was the upcoming implementation of “Cadillac coverage”—the details of which may very well change in the future.

The winners of the door prizes were Barbara Labinski and Phyllis Parisi.

### ATTENTION WESTERN FLORIDA RETIREES!

Western Florida retirees who would like to meet in 2015 should contact Upstate Medical University retiree Pat Stempel at Pat28@aol.com.

She asks that emails have “COARM” in the subject line, and include topics of interest and possible dates and meeting locations.

A March 2014 meeting for Western Florida retirees was scheduled for the Bradenton area, but was canceled due to poor response.

### Watch for VOTE/COPE call for donations

COARM is working with UUP and NYSUT to improve retiree participation in the unions’ political action fund.

This fall, UUP retirees will receive a mailing outlining new ways to contribute, including through pension deduction for retirees enrolled in the Teachers’ Retirement System or the Employees’ Retirement System.

Retirees benefit from VOTE/COPE: the voluntary contributions are used to support legislators who share the

unions’ goals and ideals. Dues money cannot be used for political action.

In 2013-2014 legislative session, NYSUT and UUP were successful in getting lawmakers to defeat a budget proposal that would have increased out-of-pocket health care costs to certain retirees and diminished health care benefits. These wins are not possible without contributions to VOTE/COPE.

Watch your mailboxes and get involved in UUP’s political fight!



# Retiree pens book on Martha's Vineyard in WWII

(Editor's note: UUP retiree member Herb Foster of the Buffalo Center Chapter has co-authored a book, Martha's Vineyard in World War II, published by The History Press. The book retails for \$19.99 and can be purchased wherever books are found. Read on for a taste of what you'll find inside the book.)

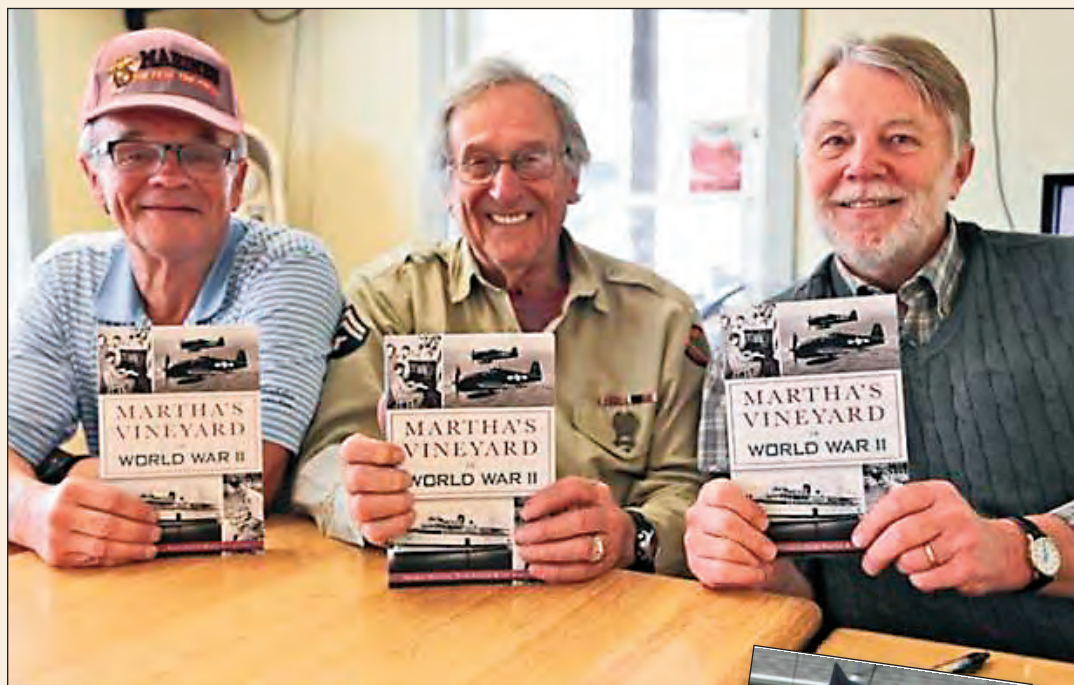
Unbeknown to most people, including many present-day Vineyarders known as Wash-Ashores, Martha's Vineyard was very much involved with World War II.

For example, just prior to Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, President Roosevelt boarded his yacht *Potomac* and allegedly went off to fish with some of his buddies. Although the press could not figure out where the president was, some Vineyarders knew that he was off the fishing village of Menemsha before boarding the cruiser *Augusta*, escorted by four destroyers, on his way to meet with Churchill to approve the Atlantic Charter.

To fool everyone, the *Potomac* stayed behind with Secret Service agents dressed to look like the president and his buddies. A letter written by Roosevelt to a cousin—about how delighted he was to have dodged the press—is reported in the book.

There were maneuvers on Martha's Vineyard and as part of the ongoing action; GI's from the 36th and 45th Infantry Divisions assaulted the island, while parachutists jumped into Katama's grass airport in Edgartown. During the maneuvers, ranking officers slept in James Cagney's Vineyard home rather than out in the field.

Much of the development of and the planned use of landing craft for the D-Day invasion were developed on Martha's Vineyard and Cape Cod. A GI who was part of this development ended up in the Pacific as a major with General McArthur and headed the planning for the Island-



ALISON L. MEAD

Herb Foster, a Buffalo Center Chapter retiree member, center and inset, has co-authored a book with Thomas Dresser, left, and Jay Schofield, *Martha's Vineyard in World War II*. Foster is a WW II veteran who served in the occupation in Sasebo, Japan.



hopping invasions carried out by the Marines and the Army.

Meanwhile, the signal corps had set up camp on Peaked Hill in Chilmark. Hiking there today, one will find some of the sand bags used for machine gun emplacements, as well as the addition of Rescue 31 the Coast Guard's equivalent to 911. Indeed, after the war, the Air Force and others took over the camp well into the cold war.

According to The History Press, "The small tightknit island community of Martha's Vineyard was irrevocably transformed by World War II."

There were blackouts and the Coast Guard checked the beaches looking to sea for German U-boats and any possible landing of spies. In 1943, the Navy cut out a swath of the State Forest and built the Martha's Vineyard Naval Auxiliary Air Facility to train pilots. Pilots flew training missions from the facility and practiced

bombing runs on the shores of the Vineyard. Some of the ordinance dropped during practice runs in WW II show up every now and then as the ocean waves change the character of the shore.

The former Naval Auxiliary Air Facility, with updated technology and physical improvements, is the present Martha's Vineyard Airport.

A Vineyard ferryboat was convoyed to Great Britain, converted and served as a hospital ship in the D-Day invasion. The book also contains personal stories about what went on the Vineyard and the surrounding waters. For example, in one of the stories, toward the end of the war, a commercial fisherman was fishing between the Vineyard and Block Island when a German U-boat sidled up to the fishing boat. The Germans took all the gas and food onboard the fishing boat, pulled away, and submerged.



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# Musings from Mac and Meyer

## It's the same the 'ole world over ...

By Mac Nelson  
Fredonia

*"It's the poor what gits the blame,  
While the rich 'as all the pleasure,  
Ain't it all a bloomin' shame?"*

**T**hat old music hall song gets truer all the time. I promise you this is not just one more lengthy list of the gazillion ways in which a political system, ruled by "Big Money" masquerading as "Free Speech," has screwed most of us blue and made the rich richer than ever. Quite true, but obvious: nobody with a brain bigger than a cumquat doubts it, so it doesn't need arguing.

No, this is about the subtle ways in which our lives are made harder, meaner, by decisions that don't even affect the Koch brothers' bottom line.

Take Airlines.  
Please.

(OK, the line was funnier when Henny Youngman said, "Take my wife. Please." But it applies here.)

A note in the Travel section recently said that some airlines are planning to change the system whereby one accumulates "loyalty points" that can be used for future flights. Points will be awarded not by miles flown but by dollars spent on tickets. Result: the folks who could afford first-class flights, the ones who don't need it, will now get more points; those of us squeezed into economy, fewer. It's just another sneaky way to raise prices with-

out raising prices.

And are you really gonna charge me to check a bag? Then how about letting me board in time to get overhead storage space, not letting half a dozen preferred classes board before me?

They unload their luggage and disembark first, too, while us peasants wait and hope not to miss a connection.

Can it be long before we will have to buy vouchers to use the can?

Didn't flying use to be fun? Kinda special? I remember showing my age once by telling some incredulous kids (maybe in their forties) that airlines used to compete by offering great food.

"Sure, Grampa. And Amelia Earhart was the Stew." All they've ever known is Toy McFood, served on Greyhound buses with wings.

And arbitrary buses at that. Going to New York City recently to connect with a European flight, we arrived in good time to find our flight was cancelled. We could reroute through Atlanta if we wanted. Tomorrow. And miss our connecting flight and tour, of course. No reason given.

Obviously the plane wasn't full, so they cancelled it to save money: too bad, your tough luck, so sue us.

Then there are airports, which can be even worse.

The small ones, like Buffalo or Billings, Montana, and surely many others, are fine. Human sized. But the larger ones are nightmares. Some of them now have

moving walkways to help you cover the vast spaces necessary to handle all the gates. Good. Though as I ride one I can't help but think of the Monty Python sketch in which John Cleese, a young architect, is making a pitch to get a contract to build a block of flats. He describes how the people enter and step onto moving walkways and are pleasantly transported to the rotating knives, and the walkways are washed clean of blood and human tissue. "Rotating knives?" asks Michael Palin. "Rotating knives, yes," says Cleese, "all I've ever built are slaughterhouses."

That is exactly the way I feel as a client in a mega airport. And I think that must be what the managers want me to be: quiet, docile, moving toward my fate without complaint.

Moo.

So far, I've not encountered any rotating knives.

But that does not alter the fact that modern long distance travel, for ordinary folks at least, is mean, nasty, brutish and long.

I do not have a yacht or a LearJet. Cruise ships can be lovely until you need to get off, and then welcome to hours of bureaucratic delay. Long distance rail travel in the U.S. and Canada is anachronistic, creaky and slow, fun if you have the time, but it won't get you to London.

I probably will not go back to Italy until they finish the superhighway to Rome.

## The frozen highway ...

By John Meyer  
Plattsburgh

**I**t was a grey day in the North Country, like so many other winter gray days in those long bygone days. Interstate 87 (the Northway) was frequently covered with snow and ice. Driving was not always recommended; it could be treacherous, until the plows cleared the roads, and sometimes even after. Black ice and snow drifts were fearful throughout the Adirondacks.

However, the call had gone out. "We need people from the campuses to come to

Albany for meetings and lobby days." So, intrepid UUP and NYSUT members from North Country campuses responded to the call. They sometimes were the only traffic on the deserted Northway, passing cars abandoned in the ditches.

To call I-87 a road of terror would be hyperbole, but to call it a highway of anxiety could be an understatement. Therefore, a system of roadside telephones was constructed. Bright yellow-orange phone boxes allowed stranded drivers to call for help. The system was supported by Plattsburgh Sen. Ronald Stafford, who also had

to make many car trips to and from the Capitol in Albany.

My recollections are many, going back to the '70s. However, two moments I remember clearly—how my officemate was injured on one of those trips and how Assemblyman John O'Neil died in a head-on collision in December 1992.

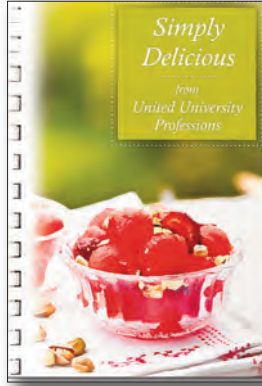
In looking back on those "good old days," one has to wonder if we union travelers were brave or foolish for making the journey on that frozen highway. Let's assume that our bravery enabled SUNY to provide a more quality education to more students.

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