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# The Active Retiree

A Newsletter for Retiree Members of United University Professions

## From the COARM Chair

### Officers for retirees: The missing link

by Jo Schaffer Cortland

Delegates to the 2017 Winter Delegate Assembly adopted a constitutional amendment authorizing the position of chapter officer for retirees. The Stony Brook Chapter executive board submitted the amendment, which was approved by the statewide Executive Board and endorsed by the Committee on Active Retired Membership (COARM).

The positively determining debate was won when the position was described with clarity as “The missing link.”

It was understood that these officers for retirees would be the two-way conduit for information, queries and services between retirees, chapter executive boards and the active (retirees in training) members of the chapter.

In doing so, the officers would facilitate pre-retirement workshops, help arrange retiree meetings, regularly attend chapter board meetings, promote

local and statewide advocacy sessions, identify potential retirees, work closely with chapter assistants to ensure that all campus and paid benefits are known and available to members, and participate in UUP chapter events.

I thank them all for having offered up their names for UUP service without knowing, at the time, what they were getting into. More than three-quarters of the officers for retirees volunteered their time this summer to attend two workshops, held in Westchester and Syracuse. The COARM regional reps and I handed out instructions and materials,



**Names and contact information of the new officers for retirees can be found on page 3.**

and conducted intensive sessions to better prepare the new officers to hit the ground running in the upcoming academic season.

We all look forward to a new, more involved and informed cadre of retirees continuing their connections to the union that served them well as

active academics and professionals. We know that because you couldn’t have joined

ARM (Active Retiree Membership) had you not already been members of UUP.

In solidarity,

## The Active Retiree

### UUP Officers

**Frederick E. Kowal/President**  
**Thomas J. Tucker/VP for Professionals**  
**Jamie F. Dangler/VP for Academics**  
**Jeriluanne O'Bryan-Losee/Secretary-Treasurer**  
**Thomas C. Hoey/Membership Dev. Officer**

### COARM Members (2017-2020)

**Jo Schaffer** COARM Chair and Delegate  
 31 Pearl St. schaffer@twcny.rr.com  
 Cortland, NY 13035 (607) 753-7245

**Loraine Tyler** Southern Tier Region  
 2525 Rich Road tylerll@oneonta.edu  
 Oneonta, NY 13820 (607) 433-2452

**William Borgstede** Central NY Region  
 430 Hollis Path adkbill46er@gmail.com  
 Jordan, NY 13080 (315) 689-9109

**Alvin Magid** Capital District Region  
 2200 Grand Blvd. magid2@juno.com  
 Schenectady, NY 12309 (518) 377-9542

**Charles McAteer** Long Island Region  
 158 Montrose Dr. cmcateer@uupmail.org  
 Port Jefferson Strn., NY 11776 (631) 474-3541

**Eric P. Russell** Metropolitan Region  
 134 Smithfield Ct. ericrussell@hotmail.com  
 Basking Ridge, NJ 07920 (917) 446-5414

**Patty Bentley** North Country Region  
 33 Clinton St. plattpatty@gmail.com  
 Rouses Point, NY 12979 (518) 569-5327

**Anastasia K. Johnson** Western NY Region  
 491 Ashland Ave. jhnsn@buffalo.edu  
 Buffalo, NY 14222 (716) 885-2486

**Sandra Harper** Presidential Appointee  
 PO Box 260-739 santema@prodigy.net  
 Brooklyn, NY 11226 (718) 941-9021

**Otilie M. Woodruff** Presidential Appointee  
 255 Park Place ottwood79@roadrunner.com  
 Grand Island, NY 14072 (716) 773-3158

**Thomas C. Hoey** Ex-officio member  
 thoeys@uupmail.org (518) 442-6499

### UUP Retiree Member Services Coordinator

Walter Apple wapple@uupmail.org

### UUP Associate Director of Communications

Karen L. Mattison kmattiso@uupmail.org

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

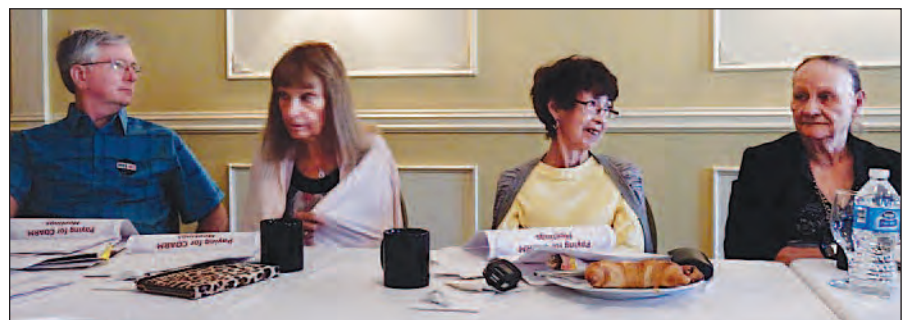
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# Honing their skills

## Newly elected officers for retirees gather in Westchester, Syracuse

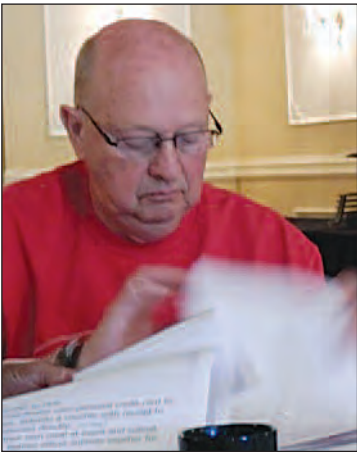


Top, from left, are: Irene Stern, Stony Brook HSC; Sandy Spier, Downstate Medical University; Cliff DaVis, Cobleskill; Jay Gilbert, Empire State College; and UUP Retiree Services Coordinator Walter Apple.

Middle, from left, are: Joy Bilharz, Fredonia; Gary Moore, Alfred; and Gwen Veira, Buffalo State.

Above, from left, are: Larry Fuller and Cindy Fuller, both of Oswego; Carole Torok SUNY Polytechnic; and Stacey Johnson, Buffalo Center.

## COARM and Officers for Retirees



Top, from left, are: Barbara Warkentine, Maritime; Eric Russell, Downstate Medical Center; and, standing, statewide MDO Tom Hoey.

Above is Joe Greenfield of Delhi.

Below, from left, are: Barbara Maertz, Farmingdale; and Charlie McAteer, Stony Brook.



PHOTOS BY JO SCHAFFER

### COARM Chair

**Jo Schaffer**

[schaffer@twcny.rr.com](mailto:schaffer@twcny.rr.com)

### Capital District:

Albany  
Central Admin  
Cobleskill  
New Paltz

### **Al Magid**

Betty Shadrick  
Scott Bartow  
Clifford Davis  
Glenn McNitt

### **magid2@juno.com**

[bps505@gmail.com](mailto:bps505@gmail.com)  
[Bartowsc@sysadm.suny.edu](mailto:Bartowsc@sysadm.suny.edu)  
[cdavis97@nycap.rr.com](mailto:cdavis97@nycap.rr.com)  
[Mcnittfg@newpaltz.edu](mailto:Mcnittfg@newpaltz.edu)

### Long Island:

Farmingdale  
Old Westbury  
Stony Brook  
Stony Brook HSC

### **Charles McAteer**

Barbara Maertz  
Delores James  
Charles McAteer  
Irene Stern

### **cfmcateer@gmail.com**

[barmc134@optonline.net](mailto:barmc134@optonline.net)  
[dpjam@optonline.net](mailto:dpjam@optonline.net)  
[cfmcateer@gmail.com](mailto:cfmcateer@gmail.com)  
[Stern.Irene@gmail.com](mailto:Stern.Irene@gmail.com)

### North Country:

Canton  
Plattsburgh  
Potsdam

### **Patricia Bentley**

David Butler  
Patricia Bentley  
David Reeder

### **plattpatty@gmail.com**

[Butlerdf@canton.edu](mailto:Butlerdf@canton.edu)  
[plattpatty@gmail.com](mailto:plattpatty@gmail.com)  
[reederdj@potsdam.edu](mailto:reederdj@potsdam.edu)

### Western NY:

Alfred  
Brockport  
Buffalo HSC  
Buffalo State  
Buffalo Center  
Fredonia  
Geneseo

### **Stacey Johnson**

Gary Moore  
Herbert Fink  
Suzanne Laychock  
Gwendolyn Veira  
Harvey Axlerod  
Joy Bilharz  
James Bearden

### **jhnsn@buffalo.edu**

[MooreGE@retired.alfredstate.edu](mailto:MooreGE@retired.alfredstate.edu)  
[hfink@brockport.edu](mailto:hfink@brockport.edu)  
[sglaychock@hotmail.com](mailto:sglaychock@hotmail.com)  
[veira.gwendolyn16@gmail.com](mailto:veira.gwendolyn16@gmail.com)  
[axlerod@buffalo.edu](mailto:axlerod@buffalo.edu)  
[jabilharz@gmail.com](mailto:jabilharz@gmail.com)  
[Bearden@Geneseo.edu](mailto:Bearden@Geneseo.edu)

### Central NY:

ESF  
Morrisville  
Oswego  
Upstate Medical  
Polytechnic Inst

### **William Borgstede**

John View  
James Engle  
Lawrence Fuller  
Carol Braund  
Carole Torok

### **adkbill46er@gmail.com**

[vej812@yahoo.com](mailto:vej812@yahoo.com)  
[englejd@aol.com](mailto:englejd@aol.com)  
[lawrence.fuller@oswego.edu](mailto:lawrence.fuller@oswego.edu)  
[braundc@upstate.edu](mailto:braundc@upstate.edu)  
[fctk@sunyit.edu](mailto:fctk@sunyit.edu)

### Metropolitan:

Downstate Medical  
Maritime  
Optometry  
Purchase

### **Eric Russell**

Sandra Spier  
Barbara Warkentine  
Robert Kasprak  
TBD

### **ericprussell@hotmail.com**

[spier@ptd.net](mailto:spier@ptd.net)  
[Synodus@aol.com](mailto:Synodus@aol.com)  
[telecom18@juno.com](mailto:telecom18@juno.com)

### Southern Tier:

Binghamton  
Cortland  
Delhi  
Oneonta

### **Loraine Tyler**

Robert Pompei  
Dianne Galutz  
Joseph Greenfield  
Loraine Tyler

### **tylerll@oneonta.edu**

[Bandkpompi@yahoo.com](mailto:Bandkpompi@yahoo.com)  
[dml1951@twcny.rr.com](mailto:dml1951@twcny.rr.com)  
[greenfji@yahoo.com](mailto:greenfji@yahoo.com)  
[tylerll@oneonta.edu](mailto:tylerll@oneonta.edu)

### Empire State:

Jay Gilbert

[jaygilbe@optonline.net](mailto:jaygilbe@optonline.net)

# COARM regional updates

## Long Island: Trip down Memory Lane

by Barbara Maertz  
Farmingdale

The Long Island UUP retirees who met at Farmingdale in April drifted back down memory lane while listening to Jack Bilello talk about growing up in Brooklyn. Bilello is a retired history teacher from Lindenhurst who has written several books about Brooklyn including one that is titled "I still remember Joni James." Bilello's talk was titled "Laugh, Cry, Think" and we certainly had a few laughs while listening to him speak about our youth.

There were many stories about uncles, brothers and friends who served in WWII and the Korean war. It seems like every family was affected in those days. Funnier memories of the Brooklyn Dodgers and stickball played in the streets made a number of the retirees smile and nod. Oh, Yes!, we all remembered those. Of course, what would Brooklyn be like without memories of the Godfather and the mafia types who lived in the area. However, the most celebrated stories were about Mom and the food served on Sunday and the family that gathered for dinner. We had apartments that were three and four rooms but there was always space for another relative and a pot of sauce that didn't seem to end.

Thank you, Jack for bringing us back to where we all began.

Our meeting contained lots of great information about benefits from Walter Apple, UUP retiree services coordinator, and updates on the legislative action that was being passed in Albany. The retiree issues about Medicare reimbursement,

IRMMA and the sick leave reduction the governor proposed are all being rejected by the legislators. Another victory for retirees due to the work of UUP President Fred Kowal and the UUP advocates.

Vicki Janik, president of the UUP Farmingdale Chapter, reminded all the retirees about the upcoming constitutional convention which will be on the ballot in November. She urged all to VOTE NO on this proposal because of the danger of losing our pension and health care benefits, and the effect it would have, if passed, on the working conditions of our union brothers and sisters by removing the rights to bargain collectively with the state. Also at risk is the "forever wild" designation of the Adirondacks, opening that area to exploitation by business interests like coal mining and casinos. Not to mention the cost in billions to run this convention.

Barbara Maertz introduced Charlie McAteer as the new Long Island regional representative for COARM. McAteer will plan the Stony Brook meeting and represent Long Island at COARM meetings. Maertz will be the Officer for Retirees for Farmingdale and an Officer for Old Westbury will be appointed by the new chapter president, Martha Livingston. Maertz will plan the next meeting of retirees in October at Farmingdale and hopefully in conjunction with the rep from Old Westbury.

We hope to see you there as we present Dr. Margaret Sukhram from the American Red Cross, who will discuss storm preparation.



Jack Bilello

## Capital District retirees: Join your colleagues at fall brunch meeting

by Al Magid  
Albany

Albany-area Active Retirees have an opportunity to learn about climate change at the fall brunch meeting of the Capital District Region of COARM.

The event is slated for 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., Wednesday, Oct. 11, in the University at Albany's Alumni House, 1400 Washington Ave., Albany. The first hour includes time for participants to mix informally, followed by brunch, a short COARM business meeting, guest speakers, and a question-and-answer period.

Speakers for the program— Climate Change: Science,



Politics and Policy—are Suzanne Hagell and Mark Lowery, climate policy analysts for the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.

A UUP Member Benefits and Services representative will be on hand to answer questions.

Parking is available in the lot across the road from Alumni House.

Interested individuals must confirm attendance by enclosing a \$5 check payable to UUP for themselves and a guest to guarantee attendance. Checks will be returned at the door.

RSVP by Wednesday, Sept. 27, to:

UUP, P.O. Box 15143, Albany, N.Y.

12212-5143, attn.: Retiree Services Coordinator

Walter Apple.

# Playing ‘nuclear chicken’ with our lives

by Larry Wittner  
Albany

**W**hat kind of civilization have we developed when two mentally unstable national leaders, in an escalating confrontation with each other, threaten one another—and the world—with nuclear war?

That question arises as a potentially violent showdown emerges between Kim Jong Un of North Korea and Donald Trump of the United States. In recent years, the North Korean government has produced about 10 nuclear weapons and has been making them increasingly operational through improvements in its missile technology. The U.S. government first developed nuclear weapons in 1945, when it employed them to destroy Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and currently possesses 6,800 of them, mostly deployed on missiles, submarines, and bombers.

According to the North Korean government, its nuclear weapons are necessary to defend itself against the United States. Similarly, the U.S. government argues that its nuclear weapons are necessary to defend itself against countries like North Korea.

Although, in recent decades, we have grown accustomed to this government rhetoric about the necessity to possess nuclear weapons as a deterrent, what is particularly chilling about the current confrontation is that Kim and Trump do not appear deterred at all. Quite the contrary, they brazenly threaten nuclear war in an extremely provocative fashion. Responding on August 8 to North Korean threats, Trump publicly warned that North Korea “will be met with fire and fury like the world has never seen.” Later that day, North Korea’s state media announced that its government was considering a strategy of striking the U.S. Pacific territory of Guam with mid- to long-range nuclear missiles—a strategy that a spokesman for the Korean People’s Army said would be “put into practice” once Kim authorized it.

This kind of reckless and potentially suicidal behavior is reminiscent of the game of “Chicken,” which achieved notoriety in the 1950s. In the film *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955), two rebellious, antisocial male teenagers (or juvenile delinquents, as they were known at the time) played the game before a crowd of on-lookers by driving jalopies at top speed toward a cliff. Whoever jumped out of the cars first was revealed as “chicken” (a coward). A more popular variant of the game involved two teenagers driving their cars at high speed toward one another, with the first to swerve out of the way drawing the derisive label. According to some accounts, young James Dean, a star of *Rebel Without a Cause*, actually died much this way.

With news of the game spreading, Bertrand Russell, the great mathematician and philosopher, suggested in 1959 that the two sides in the Cold War were engaged in an even crazier version: nuclear “Chicken.” He wrote: “As played by irresponsible boys, this game is considered decadent and immoral, though only the lives of the players are risked.” But the game became “incredibly dangerous” and “absurd” when it was played by government officials “who risk not only their own lives but those of many hun-

drreds of millions of human beings.” Russell warned that “the moment will come when neither side can face the derisive cry of ‘Chicken!’ from the other side.” When that moment arrived, “the statesmen of both sides will plunge the world into destruction.”

It was a fair enough warning, and only several years later, during the Cuban missile crisis, the game of nuclear “Chicken” played by Nikita Khrushchev and John F. Kennedy could have resulted in a disastrous nuclear war. However, at the last minute, both men backed off—or, perhaps we should say, swerved to avoid a head-on collision—and the crisis was resolved peacefully through a secret compromise agreement.

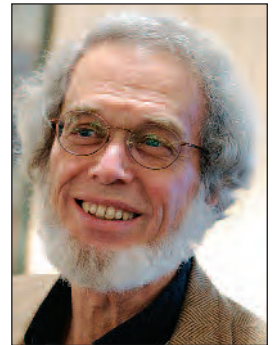
In the current situation, there’s plenty of room for compromise between the U.S. and North Korean governments. The Pyongyang regime has offered to negotiate and has shown particular interest in a peace treaty ending the Korean War of the 1950s and U.S. military exercises near its borders. Above all, it seems anxious to avoid regime change by the United States. The U.S. government, in turn, has long been anxious to halt the North Korean nuclear program and to defend South Korea against attack from the north. Reasonable governments should be able to settle this dispute short of nuclear war.

But are the two governments headed by reasonable men? Both Kim and Trump appear psychologically disturbed, erratic, and startlingly immature—much like the juvenile delinquents once associated with the game of “Chicken.” Let us hope, though, that with enough public resistance and some residual sanity, they will back away from the brink and begin to resolve their differences peacefully. That’s certainly possible.

Even if the current confrontation eases, though, we are left with a world in which some 15,000 nuclear weapons exist and with numerous people who, in the future, might not scruple about using them. And so the fundamental problem continues: As long as nuclear weapons exist, we teeter on the edge of catastrophe.

Fortunately, this past July, in an historic development, the vast majority of the world’s nations voted at a UN conference to approve a treaty banning nuclear weapons. Nations will begin the process of signing onto the treaty this September. Although, sadly, all of the nuclear powers (including the United States and North Korea) oppose the treaty, it’s long past time for nuclear weapons to be prohibited and eliminated. Until they are, government officials will remain free to play nuclear “Chicken” with their lives ... and with ours.

*(Lawrence Wittner—www.lawrence swittner.com—is a professor of history emeritus at SUNY Albany. His latest book is a satirical novel about university corporatization and rebellion, What’s Going On at UAardvark?)*



Larry Wittner

## 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.



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# What's in a name?

by Mac Nelson  
Fredonia

“A rose by any other name would smell as sweet.” That’s Romeo, trying to convince Juliet that changing her name from Capulet to Montague (in Italian, Cappelletti to Montecchi) wouldn’t change her nature, though the families were ancient enemies, and the feud does indeed kill them both.

Names have power, though some people are strong enough (or rich enough) to overcome bad karma or unconscious hilarity. One such was Ima, the daughter of former Texas Gov. “Big Jim” Hogg. Ima Hogg’s life was long and distinguished, and she never married; youda thunk she would have if only to get rid of that surname. There is no truth to the legend that she had a sister named Ura.

Take my name. Please.

I never liked “Malcolm,” though my mother thought it sounded distinguished, and it was a nod to my part-Scottish heritage, which I cherish. I disliked it even more when I learned it meant “bald-headed; a monk” (“Mal Coll,” “bad/bald head,” get it?). I forgave her because she was also the one who nicknamed me “Mac,” which I like.

Onomastics, the study of names and their meanings, is, to me, endlessly fascinating. I chose my dissertation topic (Robin Hood literature in England in the 16th and 17th centuries) after noticing a Harvard Ph.D.s topic, the same subject in the 14th and 15th centuries. I met the author, Leger Brosnahan, not long after, and we talked names. His names are from Anglo-Saxon: “Hleodgar,” “Spear-of-the-people;” and “Dweller-in-the-lit-

tle-furzy-place.”

Wow. Makes “Nelson,” “son of Nels,” seem pretty tame, though I like the name.

Scholarly articles are not known for their hilarity, but one is among the funniest pieces of prose I know: “Bible-Belt Onomastics,” by Thomas Pyles. He writes that he did his research enduring, sitting through, many long graduation ceremonies at the University of Florida in the 1950s. His mock-serious thesis is that only in a region where infant baptism is frowned upon (“Anti-pedobaptist”) could any parent get these names past the baptizing clergy and onto defenseless infants.

Here are the names of some graduates, from the official programs:

“Shelley Swilley”  
“Melody Clinkenbeard”  
“Esperanza La Socke”  
“Early Hawaiian McKinnon”  
“Lovey Slappy”  
“Cowboy Pink Williams”  
“Okla Bobo”  
“Alure Sweat”  
and “Fawn Grey Trawick Dunkle.”

This last reminds me of a contestant in the big TV quiz shows of the 1950s: “Cellador Tuley Poinsettia Houston Crockett.”

Really. She said that her parents had heard that “cellar door” was among the most beautiful phrases in English, and they adapted it for her. Gee, thanks, Mom.

And don’t you suppose Thomas Pyles had to endure lots of jokes about *his* name?

There are many occupational names with a comic punch, such as an Asian-



Mac Nelson

**“My favorite is from prim and proper Victorian England, an inventive, rich and famous plumber named ‘Thomas Crapper.’ No, he did not invent the flush toilet ...”**

— Mac Nelson, Fredonia

American lawyer named “Sue Yoo.” Many comical names are manufactured, bogus, but there really was an actor named “Dick Hertz.”

My favorite is from prim and proper Victorian England, an inventive, rich, and famous plumber named “Thomas Crapper.” No, he did not invent the flush toilet, but he made many of them, and his name may have influenced the slang term for the commode. Manhole covers with his name on them are said to be prized keepsakes.

Actually, the flush toilet may have been invented, in the 1590s, by Sir John Harington, a smart, funny, literary nephew of Queen Elizabeth the First ...

But that’s for another essay.

*(Mac Nelson lives in Brocton His prize-winning book “TWENTY WEST: The Great Road Across America” [SUNY Press] is now out in paperback.)*



## What your beneficiaries need to know

Don’t forget to remind your beneficiaries that, upon your death, they need to inform the campus Human Resources Department *and* contact UUP Retiree Member Services Coordinator Walter

Apple at (800) 342-4206. If they don’t contact the campus or UUP, they won’t get the survivor’s benefits: that’s \$3,000 from the state and \$1,000 from UUP. Remind them to make the calls!



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