



P.O. Box 1974
Springfield, IL 62705-1974
217-634-4317



Current News of Special Interest to State Retirees

RSEA Website: www.RSEA4U.org

Legislative e-mail: RSEAleg@aol.com

RSEA email: Retire@RSEA4U.org

Vol. XXXI No. 8

August 2008

Editor, Marcia Hoos

Executive Board Members

Bill Curry
President

Larry Wort
1st Vice-President

Carolyn Ackley
2nd Vice-President

Jim Clancy
Treasurer

Lorraine Gillespie
Secretary to Board

Standing Committee Members

Ross Buie
Legislative and Legal

Pat Espenschied
*Membership &
E-mail Coordinator*

Muriel Runyen
Publicity and Education

Gladys Hajek
Finance and Budget

Appointed Board Members

Ray Ackerman
Lee Fuchs
Tom McGee
Wendall Messenger
Joyce Lanham Rodgers

Metro Chicago

Sylvia Schluter
Chairman / 1-773-275-1464

Special Committee Members

Alice Griffith
Social-Monthly Meeting

Marcia Hoos
Shirley Hagen
Dorothy Tuxhorn
Bill Curry
Holiday Luncheon

Shirley Dillon
Joanne Riedesel
Dorothy Tuxhorn
Welcome

Bill Pierce
Website Maintenance

IDOT ENGINEER TO TELL SECRETS OF TRAVEL "THUMBS UP"

- Muriel Runyen, Publicity & Education

At 5, he hit the open road, at near 80, he takes a look back.

Ralph D "Corky" Sutherland has written about his hitchhiking adventures throughout the United States during the 1930's and 1940's from one car to the next.

His first hitchhiking adventure took place when he was five years old. He set off to meet his dad, who was returning home from his out of town job. After his first adventure, his parent's enforced what turned into a 10 year hiatus.

In 1944 he started out again, but this time with his parents' permission. During the summers, he thumbed his way through all 48 states, into Canada five times and Mexico once, finally ending in Alaska where he turned 20 while working as a gandy dancer on the Alaskan railroad. (We will certainly want to know more about this).

Mr. Sutherland graduated from Rushville High School in 1946, attended Western Illinois State College, and graduated from the University of Illinois as a civil engineer. In the early 1950's, he served in the US Navy in the 2nd Fleet on a destroyer, then on the aircraft carrier USS Tarawa in the 6th, 7th, 5th and 1st Fleets, which took him around the world.

During his early years at IDOT Sutherland worked in District 6 on a survey team in Pike County. While working there he

became acquainted with many Springfield engineers, who are faithful RSEA members today.

Later he worked in District 4 on a survey team involved with building the Murray Baker Bridge across the Illinois River which is now part of the Interstate System.

He boost that his wife, Marilou, was the First woman to walk on the bridge during a clandestine night time visit by outboard motorboat.

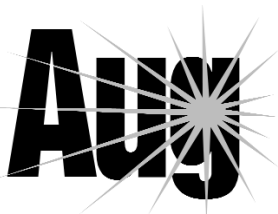
We're waiting anxiously to hear more about that historic event.

Telephone conversations with "Corky" are peppered with references to many familiar names. We're hoping some of them will be in our audience on August 27, 2008 to exchange reminiscence.

In 1955, he married Marilou Lopeman, and the couple had five children. He was employed by the Illinois Department of Transportation for more than 37 years. He and Marilou live in Peoria.

"Corky" Sutherland has also written another book called "Sea Tales" which is about his naval adventures from 1947 through the 1953-54 Tarawa World Cruise.

This is the last of our Summer programs for 2008, and this should be a great one.





The past legislative sessions were both wild, and frustrating, the prospect for our legislation changing almost by the hour. There were periods of optimism, only to be followed almost immediately by disappointment. But, hope remains alive that our bill to blunt the effects of the Social Security offset, will be acted upon in the fall veto session.

But, before we get into the tragic details of our legislative year, let's review just what the Social Security offset is, and just how it might affect you. Maybe the best way to start, is to quote directly from the applicable statutes, 5/14-119. It should also be pointed out that the term widow refers to the surviving spouse of either gender.

(a) The widows' annuity shall be 50% of the amount of retirement annuity payable to the member on the date of death while on retirement.

(b) A widow's annuity payable on account of any covered employee who shall have been a covered employee for at least 18 months shall be reduced by 1/2 of the amount of survivors' benefits to which his beneficiaries are eligible under the provisions of the Federal Social Security Act.

It is extremely important to remember that there are literal-

ly dozens of scenarios, all depending on individual situations. For this reason, we never try to give answers on individual questions about the Social Security offset, not because we don't want to be helpful, but because we don't want to give anyone misleading information. Only the retirement system itself has all the information to give you specific answers.

But, basically, this would be a typical example. A retiree, drawing a monthly annuity of \$2,000 dies, leaving the widow with a widow's annuity of \$1,000. (50%). But, the widow will also receive \$1,000 a month as a beneficiary under the Federal Social Security Act. Under the state Social Security offset, half of that amount, \$500, would be deducted from the widow's annuity, leaving the widow with just \$500 per month, actually a total of 25% of the retirees monthly annuity.

Our Senate Bill 1985 would remove this offset from all widow's how receiving benefits from the widow's of all who retired prior to January 1, 1998, and allowing current, and future retirees, to eliminate the Social Security offset, offset from their widow's by electing a monthly contribution of 3.6% of their monthly annuity. Would this be a good deal for our individual situation? Maybe,

maybe not, but if we are able to get this bill passed, you can do the math, and decide if you wish to participate. Participation, of course, is voluntary.

Are we completely happy with this bill? Of course not! In that perfect world, the state would pick up all, or at least some of the long term cost, reducing, or even eliminating the necessity of the retiree contribution. But, as we have said so many times, politics is the art of the possible. We can only take what we can get at that moment, and then move on to improve upon whatever that might be.

And, of course, there is that big if. If the bill passes. We seem to be in a cycle where we do an actuarial projection to prove that this can be done at no cost to the state, as required by legislative edict, only to have some legislative analyst question that assumption. That requires the time and expense of another, actuarial report, and when the results of that report are challenged, we are forced to go back for yet another projection. Our question is, how do we break that cycle? And, at what point would we come up with an actuarial projection, a contribution figure, that we could no longer support?

MATHESON SHARES IN NICARAGUA ADVENTURES WITH RSEA



Carol Matheson's annual winter holiday would make a good comedy movie, sort of the "M*A*S*H Meets The Road to Morocco".

Her post-retirement dream job is hardly a comedy, but a good sense of humor is apparently essential for survival.

Carol, a former three-term RSEA president, regaled her audience at the July meeting with amazing stories of her annual five month assignment in Nicaragua as a special kind of volunteer missionary, part medical assistant, part goodwill ambassador.

The biggest challenge is getting to her destination, a 24-hour ride in aging trucks over bumpy, unpaved roads from the Managua airport to tiny settlements along Nicaragua's Meskido Coast. Carol carefully spelled Meskido, explaining that it is a geographical name and not the pest to which it is phonetically related. From her description, however, it would appear it might as well be named for the ubiquitous insect because she

spoke of wearing insect repellent instead of perfume or after-shave lotion.

The Matheson's trip last year came shortly after Hurricane Felix had devastated the Nicaraguan coast, leaving its 150,000 residents without homes or personal possessions. Carol said that relief agencies promptly supplied the necessary rice and beans, but there was nothing in which to cook them because they had lost all of their cooking equipment. The next trip they were supplied with pots and pans. Carol was especially delighted when trucks loaded with health kits from Church World Service showed up, knowing that as a member of her own church volunteer group, she had helped pack many of the kits and they might be among those being unloaded and gratefully accepted by the Nicaraguan victims.

Their work schedule is largely determined by Mother Nature. Carol explained that Nicaragua has just two seasons - rainy and dry. They must work from November to April, the only time of the year when the ground is dry enough to permit the building of new structures. The country's proximity to the equator, means the hours of daylight never varies; sunrise at 6 a.m. and sunset at 6 p.m.

Carol's story of their attempt to share a typical Thanksgiving with the Nicaraguans gave credence to the Biblical story of the loaves and fishes. They imported a 15-pound turkey from

the United States at a shipping cost of \$35.00, and managed to share it with over 70 eager celebrants. Nicaraguans never eat meat in large pieces or slices as Americans do, but prefer it chopped or fricasseed.

Carol explained that she has acquired the title of Rebar Lady because while Dave is busily heading the construction crew on a medical center or school, she is constructing the reinforcement material on which the buildings stability depends. Asked about their living conditions in Nicaragua, Carol admitted they are slightly better than living in tents, but they have learned to acquire an appreciation of ice-cold bucket showers after working 12 hours in the tropical heat.

The Matheson's spend much of their time also working as medical aids along side a cadre of physicians and technical assistants involved in a vast de-worming project. (this is another story)

The Matheson's will be leaving again in September and Carol said anyone interested in joining them are welcome.

If you like no hot water, no inside facilities, no beds, but do not mind bugs, hard work, long hours, plenty of heat and lots of love in your heart this is the place to be.

-Muriel Runyen
Publicity & Education

RSEA Members - thank you for the opportunity to share our volunteer missions work in Nicaragua. There always seems to be more to share than there is time. Thank you for your interest and kindness.

- Dave & Carol Matheson

PLEASE NOTE: The program articles in this issue are collaborated efforts of Muriel Runyen and Marcia Hoos. Both of the articles were actually recorded on tape but recording problems caused loss of contents, so stories were painfully reconstructed.

Our Publicity and Education person, Muriel Runyen, has had a bad fall and will be at the Regency for about four weeks. Let's all remember her in our thoughts and prayers and cards can be sent to:

Regency - Muriel Runyen, Room 312, 2120 West Washington Street, Springfield, Illinois 62704

FROM THE PREZ...

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS! RSEA has been in the middle of a recruitment campaign the last few months. Our membership has grown by over 1,000 members. We now have over 8,200 members! This success is due to team work! When recruitment came up at the executive board meeting, everyone worked together to make this campaign very successful!

It is apparent that all state agencies work in teams. I learned the value of teamwork working for the Department of Human Services. My co-board members demonstrated this skill also. A big thank-you to everyone!

New members, please take time to read

"The Reporter". Valuable information can be found inside. If you reside in a 50 mile radius of Springfield, please consider attending a membership meeting. We have members in attendance that travel many miles farther. We thank them for their dedication. Those of you residing in northern Illinois, please consider attending the Chicago Metro Chapter meeting. Sylvia Schluter is the Chairperson. Dates, time, and location can be found in "The Reporter" for both meetings. This information can also be found at the RSEA Website: www.RSEA4U.org.

RSEA meets the last Wednesday of the month except November and

December. In December, we have a Christmas Luncheon. Please watch "The Reporter" for details. Information should be forthcoming.

At our regular meetings we have guest speakers, coffee, and cookies. During this time, friendships are renewed and new ones are developed.

I look forward to meeting you at our next meeting. It is August 27, 2008 at St. John's Lutheran Church, 2477 West Washington Street, Springfield, IL. The meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. Hope to see you soon!

~Bill Curry, RSEA President

CHICAGO METRO CHAPTER

Chicago Metro RSEA is planning a meeting on September 24, 2008 at 1:00 PM
Location to be announced .

You can contact Sylvia Schluter at 1-773-275-1464 or email her at sweetvyce@aol.com

Continued from Page 3.....

The membership application form was updated this year to request some additional information from the new members, i.e. whether they are the retiree or a survivor, the agency they were with, email addresses. Being frugal, we used up old forms first, so not all new members were given the opportunity to provide this information. However, as a result, we now have over 250 email addresses, but no serious plans on how they might be used to help the association or the members. Right now, I envision using it for resolving address problems or maybe mass notices regarding current legislation issues that can't wait until the next Reporter is issued. Who knows?

If you have any thoughts on the subject --send me an email (or note) and let us know at Retire@RSEA4U.org. Also, if you are not a new member, or if you are and have an email address that you didn't submit, and want us to have it, send us an email and we'll get you on the list. One thing we will NEVER do is give your address (email or residence) out to anyone!

For you new members who do access the internet, you might want to check out our website, especially The Reporter archives. The April issue contained a short article on the history of the association. You might be surprised to find out that we are not just a recent whim, but are here to stay. If you don't have internet, and you would like to read the article send me a note, I'll mail you a copy.

MEMBER Q & A

MEMBER:

Greetings! First, let me thank you for all your hard work and efforts put forth for the betterment of all State of Illinois retirees and their pensions. My husband and I are both retired from DOT. HE (Paul Wilson in Dixon, IL), is a member of RSEA. Recently, I also began receiving my pension and I also received a RSEA application. Is there a way I can join, but not receive the newsletter? With the cost of printing and postage, we have no need for 2 newsletters at the same address. This might be something RSEA would want to consider. I know there were and are lots of couples both working at DOT, so I am sure this is true of many departments. You may want to offer an additional choice for membership where both could join, but only receive one newsletter to save RSEA money. Please let me know and again, I applaud you. Thank you for your time.
Carol Wilson, Dixon, IL

RSEA RESPONSE:

Thank you for your interest in joining. We already have many members who are married couples and we have solved the problem of mailing two newsletters. We have our address mailing list coded to address it to them as a couple i.e. John and Mary Smith), therefore only one Reporter is mailed to each household. So, thanks for your concern and feel free to send in your application.
- Pat Espenschied, Membership Committee



Retired
State
Emloyees
Association

Post Office Box 1974
Springfield, IL 62705-1974

PRESORTED
STANDARD
U.S. Postage
Paid
Springfield, IL
Permit No. 723

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

THIS MONTH

Wednesday, August 27, 2008 - 1:30 p.m.
St. John's Lutheran Church
Family Life Center
2477 W. Washington St., Springfield, Illinois

"Thumbs Up at 5"

Ralph "Corky" Sutherland
Peoria
IDOT Engineer, Retired

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Wednesday, September 24,
2008

Annual Legislative Update

Wednesday October 29, 2008
TBA

November - **No Meeting**

Friday, December 5, 2008
Annual Holiday Party
Northfield Inn, Springfield, IL
11:00 to 3:00

