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Current News of Special Interest to State Retirees

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Vol. XXXI No. 9

September 2008

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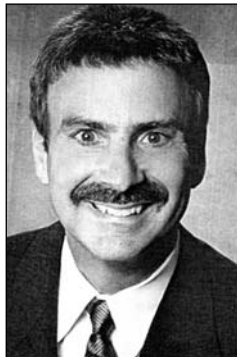
Alice Griffith
Social-Monthly Meeting

Marcia Hoos
Shirley Hagen
Dorothy Tuxhorn
Bill Curry
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Joanne Riedesel
Dorothy Tuxhorn
Welcome

Bill Pierce
Website Maintenance

**THE LOWDOWN ON THE LEGISLATIVE HIJINKS:
BOMKE TO "TELL IT LIKE IT IS"**



In September 2007, Senator Larry Bomke (R-Springfield) presented the newest legislative update to RSEA members at their monthly meeting.

We can still hear his frustrated words and see his look of exasperation as he told of the stalemate in which the General Assembly had found itself, with infighting both in each house and between the houses and with mutual dissatisfaction between the governor and the lawmakers.

Too bad we didn't tape record his speech. We could have played it at our September 24 meeting and Bomke could simply lip-synch the words instead of preparing a new presentation.

Little seems to have changed in the past year. Oh, some progress has been made and the blockade partially lifted. A badly battered budget was finally passed; the two houses are speaking to each other again, guardedly.

But for the issues which most directly affect RSEA members, like our bill to illuminate the Social Security offset, it seems like more of the "Same oe; same oe."

If you've been reading Ross Buie's monthly column in THE REPORTER, you know how hopes have risen to new heights only to be dashed by yet another actuarial report and another compromise.

Still, we look forward to Bomke's appearance on September 24. Ever the champion of RSEA causes, Bomke can always be counted on to give a straight-from-the-shoulder account of what's happening under the State House dome, neither sugarcoating nor concealing the facts.

He'll tell us the good, the bad, and the ugly of the legislative story and will give us a straightforward prediction of what action we can expect in the coming year.

Bomke has been in the Senate since 1995, representing the 50th District. Prior to his election

Continued on Page 5

THIS MONTH

Wednesday, September 24, 2008

1:30 p.m.

St. John's Lutheran Church
Family Life Center
2477 W. Washington St.
Springfield, Illinois

Annual Legislative Update

Senator Larry Bomke

COMING ATTRACTIONS

Wednesday, October 29, 2008

SIU School of Medicine
Speaker: Mary Aiello

November - No Meeting

Friday, December 5, 2008

Annual Holiday Party
Northfield Inn, Springfield, IL
11:00 to 3:00





While the governor rewrites a score of passed legislative bills, adding money to his favored programs, and further increasing the budget deficit, the talk of possible tax increases goes on. Certainly, something has to be done to bring the budget into balance, but, the problem is, additional tax monies would not be used to reduce the deficit, but to pour more money into favored programs. At least the legislators have responded, by voting to rescind their own pay raises. Who could vote for a pay raise, in an election year?

Worse, rather than scale back, or at least hold the line, on some ambitious, and expensive, health programs, the governor has increased the age, and income limits, for participation in these programs. Certainly, it is impossible to argue against affordable health care for children, even low income adults, but when that program is expanded to include children into their late twenties, as well as families who are close to a six figure income,

maybe it is time to say that we have gone too far. It makes one wonder if there might be something to the rumors that the governor's goal is to set up an Illinois version of the Canadian health plan.

Meanwhile, state employees are wondering if they will be the next ones to get the pink slip, the layoff notice. In an attempt to finance all these goodies, parks are being closed, historical sites are either being closed down, or drastically cut back, with, of course, the loss of state jobs. Now, retirees are holding their breaths, wondering if, and when, they will be asked, or told, to reduce, or pay more, for their health care benefits, in order to subsidize health care for relative-ly affluent families.

And, the governor has found a way to kill otherwise popular bills that have already been passed by the legislature, without actually having to actually veto that bill. He simply rewrites the bill, usually expanding it, to the point where no rea-

sonable legislator could accept it, and then, when the legislature has to kill that bill, the governor can shrug, say that he was in favor of the bill, but that big, bad, legislature voted it down.

But, to get the real lowdown on what's happening at the capitol, we invite you to attend our September membership meeting, where our speaker will be Senator Larry Bomke. Senator Bomke is a frequent visitor on our local television, not because of, or in spite of, his political affiliation, but because he has a reputation for telling it like it is. Recently, Senator Bomke joined with legislators from both parties, with local officials, and with labor unions, in filing suit to prevent the costly, and unwise, transfer of state jobs, a move that would disrupt over a hundred state employee families. .

Take advantage of this opportunity to get the inside scoop on what's behind the headlines.

THINK CHRISTMAS! "PARTY GIRLS AND A GUY" READY TO ROLL



Labor day is long past, can Christmas be far behind?

Not for RSEA it isn't. Even before the swimming pool closes and the kids are back in school, our "party girls and a guy" are busily wrapping up the details of our annual Christmas party, a gala event which attracts members from near and far.

Marcia Hoos, REPORTER editor and chief Party Girl, has announced that this year's luncheon will be on Friday, December 5, 2008. A reservation form appears in this issue. It will once again be held at the popular Northfield Inn and Conference Center, located just north of Sangamon Avenue and convenient to I-55 on Springfield's north side.

The Northfield Inn is totally handicap accessible, has ample free parking, and has motel accommodations under the same roof.

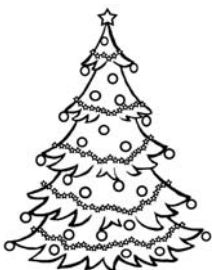
The party will begin with social hour at 11:00 am with a cash bar available, followed by a sit-down luncheon at 12:00 noon. Entertainment, dancing and drawings for door prizes from 1 to 3.

The schedule permits easy daytime driving for those within commuting distance, and ample time for sight-seeing for overnight visitors.

Amazingly, Marcia has kept the ticket price to \$15.00, the same price we have had for several years. If you've eaten out lately, you know that's something of a miracle! The price includes a full meal with a choice of entrees: (1) Sliced Turkey and Celery Dressing or (2) Sliced Sirloin in Mushroom Glaze. Both entrees come with: Tossed Salad with choice of dressings, Green Beans with Onions and Bacon, Rosemary Roasted Red Potatoes, and assorted Cream Pies - Chocolate - Banana Cream - Coconut.

Watch for more party details in the next issue.

- Muriel Runyen
Publicity & Education





RETIRED STATE EMPLOYEES ASSOCIATION ADDRESS CHANGE FORM AND APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

Please Print

NAME _____
First Middle Last

ADDRESS _____
Street Address or P.O. Box # Apt. #

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP _____

PHONE () _____ SOC. SEC. # _____

Mark ALL Boxes that apply:

- New Member Renewal (Annual Payees Only) Address Change
- My check for \$_____ is enclosed for January through December, _____ (Annual dues are \$9.00 per year.)
year(s)
- I hereby authorize the State Employees Retirement System of Illinois (SERS) to deduct from my pension check the amount as certified by the RSEA of Illinois, for my dues, and to remit said amount to the RSEA of Illinois. I also authorize SERS to provide change of address information to RSEA, if requested. (Currently, the deduction is 75 cents per month.)

Signature _____ Date _____

Mail to: Retired State Employees Association P.O. Box 1974 Springfield, IL 62705-1974

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

FINAL FAREWELL TO OUR DEPARTED MEMBERS

Richard Altman, Mount Sterling
 Richard Ball, Mountain Home AR
 Jeanne Cooper, Beecher
 John Cordo, Addison
 Grace Daniels, Rockford
 Marie Devoy, Enfield
 Lynn Dorman, The Woodlands TX
 John Jones, Canyon Lake TX
 Carole Kenyon, Champaign
 Carl Meeks, Mounds
 Margaret Mills, Chesterfield MO
 Delores Parr, Lincoln
 Roy Saettler, Delavan
 Roslyn Schumacher, Salem OR
 Joseph Sherman, Ladd
 Donna Sotak, Springfield

MEMBER Q & A

MEMBER: I am so glad that I joined this group. My husband was collecting benefits when he passed away 3 years ago. They cut and I received 1/2. I then turned 60 last year and was cut just like you describe. The only thing is I am not collecting SS. I still work and if I applied I would not get the amount that the State Retirement people are stating that I would. So I was cut and if I apply for the widows benefit from SS I would get nothing. It was a long and drawn out thing for me to find out this info. I had to take off of work and go to the SS office two times, and just for the record they were not nice to me at all. They seemed to think that I should know what they are talking about. When I called the State Retirement people to try to get an explanation they were very short with me and did not explain things very good. I just gave up in frustration and let it go I really did not know who to talk to about this problem. I now understand what has happened and am glad to know that someone is concerned about this problem. Thank you very much. - *Ruthetta Davis*

RSEA RESPONSE: Thank you for your message. It does get frustrating, doesn't it? The staff people are not helpful, most likely because they don't understand it either. The law changes are implanted into computer programs and only the programmers know the minute details. RSEA will continue to work on getting this changed. We thank you for your support.

Pat Espenschied, Membership Chair

"THUMBING IT" NOT RECOMMENDED FOR TODAY'S KIDS, SAYS VETERAN HITCHHIKER



He wouldn't recommend it for today's youth, but Ralph D. "Corky" Sutherland found his two-year odyssey as a teenage hitchhiker to be a valuable part of his education.

Sutherland, retired IDOT engineer from Peoria, spoke at the August RSEA meeting in Springfield, telling anecdotes from his book, "Thumbs Up at 5," a narration written from the daily log he kept as he traveled the country "by thumb."

The "5" refers to age, not time of day, and refers to his first unauthorized hitchhiking experience when he enticed a passing driver to taking him to the edge of town, hoping to greet his father on his return from work.

Eleven years later, this time with his parents' permission, he took off again determined to visit all 48 state capitals. It took two years to accomplish his mission and in doing so he also ventured into Canada, Alaska (not then a state), and Mexico.

He made his parents two promises - he would write them every day and he would never do anything to disgrace himself or his family.

Along the way, he made a third promise, mostly to himself: always tell the truth. It was a vow that came in handy especially when he found himself in a car being tailed by police.

Now in his 80's, Sutherland can still recall the minute details of each episode which occurred during his two-years of wondering. He remembers the names of each little town,

makes and models of cars in which he rode, the date of each encounter, the weather, and even the physical features of people he met along the way.

There was the hot, muggy night near the New Orleans shipyard when he gratefully accepted a ride in "a big old LaSalle" after a long, two-hour wait, only to realize he was caught in a frightening situation. The sinister-looking driver and the other two passengers, "with a combined intelligence of somewhere between an amoeba and a rock," were chatting endlessly among themselves about their criminal exploits, and laughing about their latest victim. Fearing that he might be the next body found in a bayou, Corky did some quick thinking and feigned illness in order to escape from his benefactors when they stopped at a truck stop for a bite to eat. Declining their offer of a free meal, he remained in the car while they went inside, and then hailed the next passing motorist for a ride out of the scene. It was one time he broke his pledge to tell the truth, and for good reason.

Each episode he related seemed to evoke memories of another, and Sutherland would interrupt himself to say "and that brings up another story," and take his audience to another part of the country with yet another tale.

Although he insists he never became lonely or despondent - "I would have quit hitch hiking if I had been" - Sutherland admits he had a sinking point when he rode from Seward, Alaska to Anchorage, expecting to find an exciting, glamorous frontier town. Instead the Anchorage of the 1940's was a small, desolate settlement with unpaved streets and little activity. (We hope he's returned in recent years to see the thriving, bustling Anchorage of today, with its highways, railroad, seaport and busy airport,)

Disappointed and disillusioned, Sutherland still hung around Alaska long enough to get a job as a gandy dancer on the Alaskan Railroad, which was then under construction. He defined a gandy dancer as a "dirt laborer on a railroad." whose job consisted mostly of replacing the ties, a dirty, back breaking task involving; digging in the gravel, and lifting the tracks", but failed to explain the definition of the quaint term.

During the question period, Sutherland gave specific replies. Where did he sleep during his travels? "Everywhere from a bare floor in Pine Bluffs, AR to a cornfield in Nebraska." What was his longest wait for a ride? "Two and a half hours on the California-Nevada border." How did he get the nickname, "Corky?" "My older brother, Skeezix and I were both named for characters in Gasoline Alley, a popular comic strip of the 20's." Any regrets? "I never hopped a freight train." Would he permit his own kids to take a hitch hiking trip like his? "No way! It's a different world today."

The large audience (85) included a number of Corky's former IDOT colleagues, who reminisced about working with him in both District 6 (Springfield) and District 4 (Peoria). One even brought copies of cartoons which the multitalented Sutherland had drawn to illustrate the IAHE newsletter.

The program was the last in the summer series of "lighter fare" programs, which this year followed the theme, "Interesting People With Interesting Lives."

Next month we get serious again, with our annual "Legislative Update" (see page 1).

- Muriel Runyen

"LETTERS"

To my RSEA friends:

Many, many thanks for the many cards, calls and visits, I have received since it was announced in the last REPORTER that I had been injured in a fall at home (multiple pelvic fractures and a totally disabled shoulder). I am responding to therapy, and I'm hoping to be home by the time you read this. I've been at The Regency since August 4, the longest incarceration

of my life. It's given me empathy for all the inmates I met during my days with the Department of Corrections.

My special thanks go to Bill Curry for getting me to the August meeting and to Joyce Rodgers, Marcia Hoos and Pat Espenschied for enabling me to write my articles for the August and September issues. Joyce brought me a table lamp and writing equipment so I could scribble while sitting in the wheel chair, Pat loaned me a tape recorder so I could dictate my stories

(which I attempted to do though a haze of pain pills and a barrage of visitors only to accidentally erase most of my efforts when I pushed the wrong button). Marcia valiantly transcribed, edited, and reconstructed the whole mess. The issue came out a bit late, but at least we did it!

What a great bunch we have in RSEA! Thanks again to all of you!

- Muriel Runyen

NEWS FROM THE PRESIDENT

I hope you enjoyed the Olympics in August and have been attending the many festivals in Illinois this month. These two events may seem unrelated but have many things in common. Both require months of preparation, meetings, consultations, team work, and many other things too numerous to mention. The most important thing they have in common is that they bring out the best in each participant.

During the Olympics, the participant may not win a medal, but will turn in a personal best performance. Then they resume training for the next Olympics. At the festivals, the participant may not sell very much merchandise, but will

make a big impression on the visitors attending the festival. They too, start preparation for the next festival. The visitor, having a good time, returns the next year.

Retirement brings out the best in people. Many members in our association volunteer many hours a month. They do not do this for honors or recognition, they do this because it brings out their best effort. The person receiving assistance then puts forth their best effort. Everyone wins!

RSEA is looking for a few good volunteers. In the approaching months, we will be electing new officers. If inter-

ested, please contact Larry Wort first vice-president at our next meeting. We have many excellent officers volunteering their time every month. I believe very strongly that people should have choices and not a slate of candidates. What do you think?

Our next meeting will be September 24, 2008 at St. John's Lutheran Church, 2477 West Washington Street, Springfield, Il. The meeting begins at 1:30 p.m. Afterwards, there is always coffee, cookies, and Alice Griffith's big smile. I look forward to seeing all of you at our next meeting.

- Bill Curry

REMEMBERING THE GOOD OLD DAYS

Making the round of the audience at our August meeting in Springfield was a flyer announcing the annual meeting of the Illinois Association of Highway Engineers for 1965. It was held at the popular Wagon Wheel, a rustic resort near Rockton in northern Illinois.

It was the prices which caught our attention, Mixer, which included an ice revue, \$1 per person; men's and women's luncheon, \$1.50 per person; banquet and dance \$6.00 per person; and rooms, \$14.00 per couple. The guest speaker for the ladies luncheon was Phyllis Diller's gag writer. (Made us wonder how much they paid for her!)

The Wagon Wheel eventually went up in flames, and so, unfortunately, did those bargain prices. Oh, for the good ol' days!

Our thanks to Ed Brooks, retired IDOT engineer, who unearthed the flyer from his personal archives.

- Muriel Runyan

CHICAGO METRO CHAPTER

Chicago Metro RSEA is planning a meeting on September 24, 2008 at 1:00 PM

Thompson Center

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

SERS INSURANCE CONTACT INFORMATION

If SSN ends in	Contact	Phone #	E-mail
00-24	Sheryll Clark	217/785-7145	sclark@srs.state.il.us
25-49	Julie Harms	217/785-7150	jharms@srs.state.il.us
50-74	Madonna Palazzolo	217/785-7138	mpalazzo@srs.state.il.us
75-99	Beth Maney	217/785-7093	bmaney@srs.state.il.us

General SRS Phone Number: 217/785-7444

BOMKE TO "TELL IT LIKE IT IS": Continued from page 1

into office, Bomke served as chairman of the Sangamon County Board. He had been a member of the board for 19 years.

As Senator for the 50th district, Bomke led the effort to improve the fairness of pensions for state employees, university employees, and teachers. He also fought for the "Rule of 85", which allows state employees to retire before the age of 65.

Senator Bomke fought for an expansion of the state's Circuit Breaker program to give more senior citizens access to property tax grants and dis-

count prescriptions. He also sponsored legislation to require health plans cover 48-hour hospital stays for newborns and their moms and expanded access to OB-GYN care for women in HMO's.

Senator Bomke also fought for comprehensive crime legislation, including public notification if a known sex offender moves into a community. Through his efforts, expensive privileges are no longer given to prison inmates.

Senator Bomke is active in numerous community organizations, including

the United Way, Greater Springfield Chamber of Commerce, American Heart Association, Sangamon County Farm Bureau, Toastmasters, and Friends of Foster/Adoptive Families.

In private life, he is a successful small business owner. He and his wife, Sally Jo, are the parents of two children.

RSEA always welcomes Senator Bomke and his insightful comments, and we're expecting the usual big turnout in September.

See you there!

- Muriel Runyan, Publicity & Education



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*TICKET ORDER - RSEA ANNUAL
CHRISTMAS PARTY
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5, 2008 - 11:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.
NORTH FIELD CENTER, SPRINGFIELD*



My/ our choice of entree is:

Enclosed is my check for _____ tickets

_____ Sliced Turkey

@\$15.00 each

_____ Sliced Sirloin

Total enclosed \$ _____



Name(s) _____ Phone _____

Address _____

Make checks payable to RSEA. Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope and mail to:

Marcia Hoos - 1241 Urban Ave. Springfield, IL 62704 217/546-1404

DEADLINE FOR TICKET ORDERS: NOVEMBER 30

