

A Message From Your President

More than six months have now passed since Super Storm Sandy walloped the NY/ NJ area with a vengeance. We are all aware that it has taken a terrific toll on many families and businesses throughout this region. There are a number of PARA members – and their family and friends - - who were directly impacted by the storm and many are still wrestling with the recovery process. To all of them, we extend our heartfelt concern and best wishes for continued progress and a return toward a renewed sense of “normalcy”.

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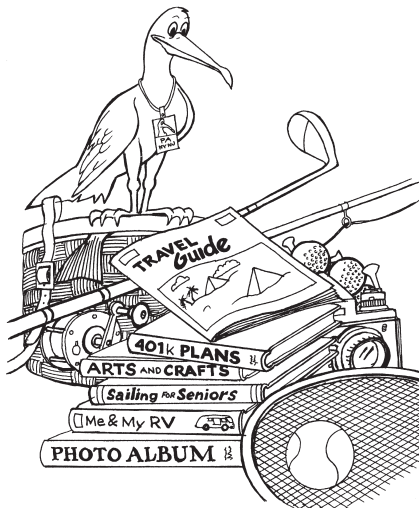
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We tend to remember these kinds of events. Milestones and memories make their mark in the deep recesses of our brains. They are etched in our minds - both the good and the not-so-good. In my own case, this June will mark a personal “good” milestone. It will be 50 years since I began my own career with the Port Authority and I can recall that first day very well when I reported to 111 Eighth Avenue. For me, it’s difficult to accept that five decades have passed since I began to walk that uncertain road we fondly call “career”. But through it all there are an accumulated host of memories - the colleagues, the bosses, the projects, the events, the tragedies and the celebrations. They are all a part of our collective personal and professional experience. They are the fabric of our work life history and we tend to recall these highlights when we gather together at various functions periodically throughout our retirement years.

From time to time, we have an opportunity to reconnect with former colleagues and learn what they are doing in their life after the Port Authority. In some cases, it is of particular – and perhaps unusual - interest to learn what new ventures they are pursuing. In this issue of Para-phernalia, we are pleased that John Jacoby, retired General Manager of Newark Liberty International Airport, has agreed to share some of his experiences with our readers since his retirement several years ago. The pursuit of public service takes many forms and can be exercised in many different locations as you will see from John’s article (see page 4).

PARA itself has developed over the years as an organization which we hope has served to facilitate these personal connections and, concurrently, provide a pathway (via this newsletter, the PARA website and periodic e-bulletins, etc) to keep abreast of issues and programs that affect us in our post-employment years. In that vein, we are continuing to monitor the developments of actions brought by several unions in connection with the unfortunate revocation of our E-ZPass benefit in November 2010. As of this writing, we have been informed that the E-ZPass benefit for Maintenance Supervisors (including retirees) has now been reinstated following the result of their grievance and arbitration process. Other arbitration-based actions are still pending and may be subject to appeal. We are also monitoring a court proceeding brought on behalf of retired New York State employees (RPEA) to reverse an increase in health benefit contributions imposed by legislation passed by the New York State legislature which did not succeed at the trial court level. While the legislation is not applicable to Port Authority retirees, we hope to identify principles articulated in the arbitration

“Don’t forget Where You Put Your PARA-phernalia.”



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Published By:

**Port Authority
Retirees Association, Inc.**

Correspondence:

**P.O. Box 2002
East Millstone, NJ 08875-2002**

Dues:

**P.O. Box 7493
Monroe Township, NJ 08831-7493
bobisaacs@paranynj.org**

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From Your President - continued from page 1

and New York State cases. It appears that the law with regard to diminishment of the benefits accorded to public sector retirees is not well settled and is only now evolving.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you will find the information regarding the election of nominees for the PARA board and our annual voting process (see page 3). **We ask that you please take a moment to cast your vote. It's important - and helpful.** As you know, all board members serve as volunteers but your support is important in order to have PARA continue to be a helpful organization for all of us.

Finally, we ask that you encourage your retiree friends to join PARA if they have not already done so. We now have some 4200 members but there are others who, for whatever reason, have not yet joined the organization. All are invited and all are welcome. Each one of you can be of help in this effort.

Dave Gallagher, President

Board Highlights

The Quarterly Meeting of the PARA Board was held on September 24, 2012, in the Manager's Conference Room at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Guest speaker, Leonard Pack, from the law firm of Wechsler & Cohen gave a presentation on the general findings and conclusions of his firm regarding retiree options in the event of an attempted diminution of retiree benefits. This was followed by a question & answer period. Reports from the various Committees followed including a discussion of the movement of PARA finances as deemed appropriate by the Finance Committee. Members of the External Relations Committee reported on activities in Albany and Trenton as they pertain to the Port Authority. The group discussed ways in which to reach out to prospective retirees to encourage them to join PARA as well as possible participation in a mentoring program for new employees being considered by the Port Authority. It was recommended and agreed that future meetings be held in January, April, July and October so that the fourth quarterly financial reports could include the year end reports.

The first Quarterly Meeting of 2013 was held on January 9 in the Times Square Hall at the Port Authority Bus Terminal. Committee reports followed and it was noted that at year end 2011 PARA membership consisted of approximately 60% of all retirees and former employees. It was also reported that RPEA (Retired Public Employees Association) sued the State of New York regarding the ability of state employees to retain health benefits for life at the level of contribution at retirement and the suit was dismissed. RPEA is considering next steps including an appeal to a higher court. In addition, Tom Westfield has given up his efforts to press an E-ZPass lawsuit. Information has been posted on his website - www.ezpasslitigation.com - for anyone with questions. On the other hand, IBEW Local 3 got a favorable ruling on the reinstatement of E-ZPass for union members and retirees. Upon appeal by the Port Authority, the arbitrator's decision was affirmed. Subsequently the UOAT filed a similar grievance and also got a favorable arbitrators ruling. PARA has since received confirmation that PAMSA members will have their E-ZPass privileges reinstated. It was noted that as of the last report available the NY State pension system is solvent and its contributions timely. And finally, there are several potential openings on the PARA Board for which nominations will be considered.

Jerri Raczynski

PARA 2013 Election & Annual Meeting

It's that time of year again, when you get to exercise your right to vote for members of the PARA Board of Directors. Up for re-election are: George Jensen, Arnold Karvasarsky, Mike Morrow, Jerri Raczynski, and Ralph Verrill. New members nominated for the PARA Board are: Herb Somerwitz, and Maria Malone-Hodges, whose biographies are included below.

The annual meeting will be held at 11:15 A.M. on Tuesday, July 9, 2013 at the Times Square Hall, Port Authority Bus Terminal, in the Borough of Manhattan in the City of

New York. Members who have paid their 2013 dues on or before June 30, 2013, will be entitled to vote. The names of the new candidates and those up for re-election, as well as their proposed term of office, are listed on the enclosed Official Proxy Ballot Card on which you can indicate your vote for all, some, or none of the candidates, or you can submit a write-in candidate of your choice if the individual is a member in good standing. You need not attend the meeting to vote. **Just return your completed ballot in the enclosed pre-addressed envelope postmarked on or before**

June 30, 2013. If you have not already paid your 2013 Annual Dues, you may include your check along with your Ballot. We always encourage members to exercise their right to vote and play an active role in their organization. Since seating at Times Square Hall is limited to approximately 70, it would help with our planning if you advise us of your plans to attend. Please let us know of your intentions by July 1, 2013 by mailing us notice at PARA, PO Box 2002, East Millstone, NJ 08875-2002 or by e-mail to davegallagher@paranynj.org.

Candidate Biographies

Herb Somerwitz - joined the Port Authority in September, 1970 as an attorney in the Contracts Division of the Law Department and served as Chief of the Division from 1992 until his retirement in 2008. He initially practiced in the area of construction law and subsequently concentrated in the areas of procurement, intellectual property and technology law. Principal projects included the bus terminal expansion, and procurement and installation of electronic tolls, and the present PATH fare collection system.

Herb holds a BA degree from New York University and LL.B and LL.M degrees from NYU Law School. Before his career with the Port Authority, Herb served as a Peace Corps volunteer in Lima, Peru and served as an associate attorney with a private sector law firm.

Maria Malone-Hodges - began her 32 year career as an Environmental Analyst in Risk Management in 1979. She

then moved to assignments in Aviation, Port Commerce and the Tunnels, Bridges & Terminals Department (TB&T). Spending 25 years in TB&T, she held various positions in both field and staff business areas including Sr. Executive Assistant, Transcom Communications Manager, Assistant Manager of Staten Island Bridges, Manager of TB&T Customer Services Division, Operations Manager of the Port Authority Bus Terminal and retiring as the Deputy General Manager of the George Washington Bridge and Bus Station in November 2010.

Maria was awarded several Unit Citations and the Award of Recognition from the NYC Fashion Center Business Improvement District. Since retirement she spends her time as a docent at the World Trade Center Tribute Center where she served on the Docent Council. She gives guided tours of the WTC Tribute Center and the WTC Memorial and participates in the school education program. In addition, she sits on the Board of Directors of her condominium association.

Are Your Dues Due?

PARA dues (a very reasonable \$10 per year, but feel free to send more) are collected on a calendar year basis. If you're unsure if you've paid your dues, just go to the PARA web site (<http://www.paranynj.org/Dues/index.htm>) and click on the link at the bottom of the page. This will generate an e-mail to me requesting your dues status. If you know you haven't paid yet, you can print a Dues Remittance Form and mail it along with your check to me.

Thanks for your continued support of PARA.

Bob Isaacs, Treasurer

An Encore Career in Africa

I think it was after the second big snow storm in 2010, I awoke from a few hours of sleep in my office at Newark Liberty International Airport (EWR) to the sounds of snow operations on the radio and dawn breaking with snow still falling. I went to wash my face looked in the mirror and decided that if I wanted to do anything else with my life, I'd best not wait too much longer.

After college I had been a Peace Corps Volunteer in Nepal in the early 70s. It was a life changing experience and I left the Peace Corps thinking that my life's work would be international development. A series of events brought me to the PA as a Management Trainee in 1977, and with a few years of work for the World Health Organization in the early 80's, here I was General Manager at EWR. I determined it was time to return to international work, and being such a pivotal experience in my life, I submitted an application to the Peace Corps for a Country Director position.

The application and selection process had many steps and took close to a year. I fashioned myself an Asia expert and it was with considerable surprise when the Peace Corps called and offered me a position as Country Director for South Africa, giving me 24 hours to decide if I was interested. My wife and I weighed the pros and cons and as with so many things in life made a gut check call and accepted the job. The offer was finalized in September 2011; I went for a month of training in DC in October and in mid November 2011 landed in Pretoria.

The Peace Corps, which celebrated its 50th anniversary in 2011, has about 9000 Volunteers serving in over 70 nations around the world with a total global budget of about \$375 million (or just over half the operating budget of EWR). Over 200,000 Americans have served as Volunteers and the key mission has remained the same for over fifty years:

- Contribute to strengthening a country's human resource base through skill building, skill transfer, and the empowerment of communities;
- Share American culture and diversity to increase a foreign country's understanding of and appreciation for the people of the United States; and

- Use their overseas cultural experiences to help the people of the United States gain a better understanding and appreciation of the people of other nations.

South Africa is the world's 28th largest economy and most tourists witness the beauty of the landscape, visit the amazing wildlife parks and go to the scenically breathtaking and culturally diverse Cape Town. You might ask why the Peace Corps would be needed in South Africa? The tourist's South Africa is not the one seen by our Volunteers nor the one lived in by a vast majority of South Africans. Volunteers serve in the most underserved communities, mostly in rural villages and in a South Africa still dealing with the legacy of Apartheid. The South Africa they experience is one where 50 percent of South Africans live in third world conditions and only 25 percent of households have access to electricity and running water, high unemployment (80% in some areas), one of the highest HIV/AIDS incidence rates in the world and an inadequate education and health system – especially in the rural areas. Our Volunteers work primarily in education and health development. The average age of Volunteers here is about 28, ranging from 22 to almost 80! About 60% are female, all have at least a college degree, 20% are from minority groups, we have married couples serving together and a diversity that attempts to reflect America. The projects the Volunteers undertake are amazing and the relationships they develop in their villages are inspiring. You would be proud of the work these Americans do and the positive image they create of our country (vs. the image of the US playing on local TV of Jerry Springer, Jersey Shore and Judge Judy). If they represent our next generation of leaders, our nation is in good shape.

So how has this been for me and my wife? We do miss our children and friends, but have met interesting - if transient - people from the diplomatic and aid community. It has been a gift to learn about and experience a new continent. This complex nation is only 18 years young as a democracy and fighting the stigma of racial politics and isolation. Working for the Peace Corps has its challenges. I wasn't sure I had another big bureaucracy in me; I still worry most about safety and security and still sleep with a BlackBerry next to my bed. Mostly I feel fortunate to have this opportunity to continue to do work that I find of value and interest.

John Jacoby