
RC39 Election Completed, Mail Ballot Not Necessary

Nominating Committee's proposed slate was published in the April issue of the RC39 newsletter and members were invited to submit additional candidates for all positions. Nominations from members had to be received by April 26, 2021, to be considered for this election. No nominations were received, therefore all positions are uncontested. Since there are no contested positions, a mail ballot is not necessary, and as required by the RC39 constitution, RC39 Secretary Shaun Gerien cast a vote for each candidate of the nominating committee's slate electing all the nominating committee's candidates. The three-year terms for all electees will begin July 1, 2021.

Newly Elected RC39 Board of Directors

President, First NYSUT and AFT Delegate: **Kevin Peterman**, Suffolk CC
Vice President, NYSUT and AFT Delegate: **Judy Wood**, FIT
Secretary, NYSUT and AFT Delegate: **Charles Clarke**, Monroe CC
Treasurer, NYSUT and AFT Alternate Delegate: **Joyce Gabriele**, Suffolk CC
Director-at-large: **Gerald Speal**, Suffolk CC
Director-at-large: **Joan Prymas**, Herkimer CC

Special Thanks to the Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee members are: Chair, Marie Hanna, Suffolk CC; James Lombardo, Nassau CC; Shaun Gerien, Suffolk CC; Judith Holmes, Rockland CC; and Bob Stone, Suffolk CC. Thank you for volunteering to serve on this very important committee. Getting members to run for office is a very difficult job. The quality of candidates you proposed is indicative of how serious you took on this task.

Thanks to all who made RC39 possible.

Pete Herron

Thanks to all of who have supported RC39 in so many ways over the past fifteen years. To those have served on the board of directors, those who have contributed articles to the newsletter, the newsletter committee members who corrected my many errors and gave suggestions for making the newsletter better able to serve RC39 members, and the constitution committee.

No member has been more faithful to RC39 than Joan Prymas. She ably served as RC39 treasurer since the very beginning and is now taking on the responsibility of being a director-at-large. I cannot thank her enough.

From the very beginning NYSUT Headquarters has supported RC39 in so many ways. Special thanks go to Floyd Cammeron, since retired, for guiding RC39 over its initial years. Geralyn O'Reilly has enthusiastically supported RC39 from the very beginning. I cannot thank Geralyn enough for her understanding and guidance of all these years.

As immediate past president, I am looking forward to being part of the new board of directors. The newly elected officers come with many years of union involvement and represent regions throughout the state.

Health Insurance Question

I retired from Herkimer CCC in 2013. I was told quite firmly that I was ineligible for health coverage in retirement because I had worked there for less than 15 years. More than 10, but it had to be 15.

Your recent newsletter article on Medicare Advantage states that "many if not most retired teachers are covered by NYSHIP..."

Before HCCC I taught for a year at DCMO BOCES, 4 years in NYC public schools, 2 years at BOCES in Troy, and plenty of semesters as an adjunct at Broome CC, TC3, and elsewhere. (Seven years plus before the ten or eleven at Herkimer.)

I had to buy my own time in NYC schools as their HR never processed my pension papers; this was added into my NYSTRS extremely retroactively.

I was asked at the time of my retirement if the previous years teaching would count toward the 15 required for health coverage and was I was advised that they would not. For the record, was I correctly advised? If you can answer this, please email us at rc39pete@optonline.net.

Retiree Council 39 Board of Directors

President, First NYSUT and AFT Delegate, **Peter Herron**
Vice President, NYSUT and AFT Delegate, **Judith Holmes**
Secretary, NYSUT and AFT Delegate, **Shaun Gerien**
Treasurer, NYSUT and AFT Alternate Delegate, **Joan Prymas**
Directors-at-large, **Tim McLean and Kevin Peterman**

RC39 Addresses

98 Rocky Point Landing Road., Rocky Point, NY 11778, email: rc39pete@optonline.net.

RC39 Newsletter Committee

Newsletter Editor, **Pete Herron**:

Editorial Members, **Ann Fey, Frances Hilliard, Judith Homes, Sivia Kaye, Richard Macy, Tim McLean, Kevin Peterman, Joan Prymas, Ann Smallen, Patti Tana**

RC39 Website

Webmaster, **Pete Herron**:

Website address: <http://rc39.ny.aft.org/>

Get on the RC39 Email List

In order to receive RC39 notices and early colored RC39 newsletters email your name, the community college from which you retired, your email address, mailing address, and phone number to rc39pete@optonline.net.

Address Change

Do not let a new address keep you from receiving NYSUT RC39 newsletters. There are three ways to update your address. Contact NYSUT Member Records at 1-800-342-9810 ext. 6224. Send written changes to: NYSUT Member Records, 800 Troy-Schenectady Road, Latham, NY 12110, or e-mail changes to memberec@nysutmail.org. If you are a snowbird, give Member Records a few weeks notice to change its address records each way.

RC39 Encourages its Members to Attend Regional Conferences

RC39 will pay a member's expenses, up to \$40, for attending a NYSUT regional retiree conference. Check the RC39 website for details.

**YOUR HEALTH CONNECTION
ORIGINS OF INFECTION CONTROL**

By Frances S. Hilliard, RN, MS

Professor Emerita, Nassau Community College

"If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulders of giants."

---Sir Isaac Newton, in a 1675 letter to Robert Hooke

During the summer that I turned five years old, a serious illness led to my hospitalization. The experiences that I had were what planted the seeds of a lifelong interest in the biological sciences, including the fields of medicine and nursing. Already an avid reader, I began to devour books on the early pioneers in health care: Physicians such as Semmelweiss, Lister, Jenner, Koch, Pasteur, and Salk, as well as nurses such as Nightingale, Barton, and Maas. Their knowledge and their contributions to health care have withstood the test of time and have provided the foundation for modern methods of infection control.

Handwashing and Disinfection

Ignacz Semmelweiss (1818-1865) is known as "the father of infection control." In the course of his work in the obstetric ward of a teaching hospital in Vienna, he began to notice a much higher rate of post-delivery infections and mortality among the women delivered by physicians and medical students than among women delivered by midwives. He suspected that the physicians and medical students were becoming contaminated with microorganisms from the handling of bodies during autopsies – something not done by midwives.

Dr. Semmelweiss began a program of mandatory handwashing for physicians and medical students, which significantly reduced the maternal mortality rate from postpartum infection. When he added the policy of washing the medical instruments, this rate decreased even further. Some of the senior medical staff, including his superior, did not approve of this work, and managed to deny Semmelweiss renewal of his appointment on the teaching faculty. He went on to a position at a hospital in Budapest, and published a book on handwashing as a method to prevent the transmission of infection. This book was not well received in the medical community, and Dr. Semmelweiss died in a public insane asylum at the age of 47. Dr. Semmelweiss was the very first health care practitioner to demonstrate that handwashing is an effective measure to prevent the spread of infection. However, it was not until about two decades after his untimely death that his work was looked at again, and he was given credit for this concept. It would take the work of Pasteur, Koch, and Lister to produce further evidence of the germ theory and the importance of antiseptic techniques.

Joseph Lister (1827-1912) is referred to as "the father of modern surgery." In the 1860s, he began testing methods to prevent wound infections and promote healing. He became familiar with the work of Louis Pasteur, and applied Pasteur's concepts to surgical asepsis and wound healing. In the operating room, Dr. Lister introduced new techniques to create a more antiseptic environment and to protect the surgical field and incision. These techniques included the use of carbolic acid as an antiseptic solution to cleanse both the surgeon's hands and the surgical instruments. The results were dramatic: between 1865 and 1869, surgical mortality decreased from 45% to 15%.

As with Dr. Semmelweiss, this new work met with opposition from the medical establishment, many of whom did not believe in the germ theory. In contrast to Semmelweiss, however, Dr. Lister was able to see this change during his lifetime, and his concepts became generally accepted. Dr. Lister's application of germ theory to the practice of surgery built a firm foundation for today's care of surgical patients.

In 1890, **Robert Koch** (1843-1910) developed his famous postulates for establishing the etiology of infectious diseases. These postulates comprise four criteria to determine if a certain microorganism causes a certain disease. Koch was the first researcher to identify asymptomatic carriers of infection, and to differentiate between colonization with a microorganism and actual infection. The work of Koch did much to bring better understanding to the field of microbiology, and led to new inquiries into the relationship between pathogenic organisms and human hosts. These postulates remain useful points of reference for today's research into infectious diseases and for the development of vaccines. Continued on page 3.

Accoutrements of Wealth: ALEXA vs SIRI

by Sivia Kaye

The concept of having a staff sounded fabulous. My background—a middle class home in NYC—put a high priority on education, charity, and religious observance—but none of my parents' aspirations included servants. We did our own laundry [in the basement, with a single washing machine serving the entire 36 tenant apartment house]. Dishes were washed by hand, and phone calls were made by using our index finger to dial the number. The TV was turned on by walking over to the set and choosing the desired channel: there were only 3: ABC, CBS, and NBC. We did not feel deprived. Sam Levinson, a comedian who taught in Brooklyn high schools, earned extra money on weekends when he entertained at Bar Mitzvah receptions. I well remember one of his meanderings: *We never knew we were poor because no one we hung around with went to camp, or had gold ID bracelets, or shopped at Bergdorf's.*

Only recently—when I bought EarPods—did I discover the joys of a personal staff. I could ask **Siri** to call my brother. "Home or cell?" she cheerily implored. "Cell" I'd say, and there was David, 3000 miles away, telling me of New York's Covid disaster. Or I could ask her to play *Beethoven's 5th*, and voila, in seconds I heard the familiar 4 chords that everyone in the world can recognize.

Then I got Amazon's ECHO as a Christmas gift; **Alexa** tagged along with her. She was very skilled at handling requests. No longer did I have to change the TV channel. Alexa would happily do it for me—and with no complaints. "CNN" I'd intone. On would come the orange-haired president himself, advising his TV audience of his defeat because of a "rigged" election.

Tiring of this, I might ask **Alexa** to play *The Amazing Mrs. Maisel*, so that I could smile while seeing how struggling New Yorkers strived to hit the big time. Bored by the *Maisel's*? "*Home Shopping Network, please*" and I'd be diverted into the newest in bra technology (that's the phrase that their marketers came up with)—or—I could order Christmas lights for the whole house that would dazzle the neighborhood.

Life was good. I had paid servants, who charged nothing, never complained, worked 24/7, took no time off for weekends or holidays, requested no overtime pay, and always answered my requests swiftly. I was living the life of the privileged. Not only did I have household help, but I had a staff of 2—and they were live-in at that!! Wow! What a climb up on the social ladder!!

Then one day frustration set in. I asked **Alexa** to call my brother. She did not respond. I asked again, this time I was sure to insert "please." No response. Had she joined an employee union? I had been given no indication that she was unhappy with her work.

Next day—when I was panting to hear the opening remarks of the impeachment session—(virtual history before our eyes)—I poured my morning coffee and asked **Siri** to turn on CNN. She didn't respond. Wow! I thought both of my staff had quit on me—in one fell swoop. How long had they planned this "uprising"? I thought I'd have to go back to being maid-less and turn on my own TV and dial my own phone. Things could be worse, I assured myself.

Then suddenly it hit me—memories fade with age—and mine had faded. I had forgotten whose job description was whose? **Alexa** deals with TV and **Siri** with phone calls. Neither would tread on the other's territory. I quickly fastened post-its everywhere to clearly distinguish between my servants' respective duties.

Lesson having been learned, I said "**Siri**, please play *The Daily*." Immediately I heard the latest news from the New York Times while downing my morning oatmeal. On with the sneakers and Apple EarPods, and off for my walk. "**Siri**, please call my brother." In seconds, he answered from NY and gave me the latest updates on Fun City. So at least one "servant" was back in line. Arriving home, I summoned **Alexa**. "Alexa, please advise when my package of typing paper will arrive from Amazon." "Tuesday, before 9pm," she politely replied.

I was again living the Elite lifestyle. 2 live-in servants, 24/7 work hours, immediately responsive. It seems their only request was calling them by their proper names, and not expecting them to do tasks that were not in their job description.

A small and reasonable request, I thought. Most reasonable.



Continued from page 2. YOUR HEALTH CONNECTION

Vaccine Development

Smallpox is believed to date back as far as the Egyptian Empire, around the 3rd century BCE. The global extension of this disease can be tracked along with the growth and spread of civilizations, exploration, and trade. Smallpox was introduced into the Caribbean and Central and South America during the 16th century; into North America during the 17th century. It was a devastating disease which killed three out of every ten people who became infected.

In 1796, an English physician named **Edward Jenner** (1749-1823) made a very important observation: Milkmaids who had come into contact with cowpox did not get smallpox. Dr. Jenner began to research this finding, and published his work in 1801. Soon after, smallpox vaccination became widely accepted. The last known person in the world to have naturally contracted smallpox was a three-year-old child in Bangladesh in 1975. The World Health Organization officially declared the world free of this disease in 1980.

Louis Pasteur (1822-1895) conducted extensive research which demonstrated that microorganisms are behind both the fermentation process and infectious diseases. He advocated for the germ theory when many scientists still questioned its validity. Pasteur was known as "a great experimenter", and his research dealt with many microorganisms (such as those causing anthrax, cholera, and rabies), as well as the body's immune response, and how infectious diseases are transmitted. His pioneering work with vaccines led to the prevention of rabies in both animals and humans. His successes brought about the establishment of the Institut Pasteur, one of the world's most important biomedical research facilities. Today's work of discovering, testing, and producing new vaccines is carried out by the pharmaceutical company Sanofi Pasteur, an outgrowth of the Institut.

Jonas Salk (1914-1995) was appointed director of the Virus Research Laboratory at the University of Pittsburgh in 1947. His work there caught the attention of the National Foundation for Infantile Paralysis [polio]. This organization, started by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, supported research into polio, and provided funds for Dr. Salk's efforts to develop a polio vaccine. Anyone who lived through the 1940s and 1950s is probably aware of how serious a health problem polio was. The polio virus attacked the motor neurons of the spinal cord, causing problems with walking and sometimes with breathing (resulting in patients being trapped for a lifetime in an "iron lung"). Even when patients recovered, they often faced a lifetime of complications known as "post-polio syndrome".

In 1954, Dr. Salk led a large-scale national double-blind study which enrolled over one million school-aged children. A year later, the results were announced to the world: the vaccine proved both safe and effective, and the polio vaccine became a standard immunization for American children. (Of note is the fact that I was one of the children in this study. When the results were unblinded, my parents received notification that I had, in fact, received the actual vaccine, as opposed to a placebo.) Soon the Salk vaccine was adopted worldwide, and was in use until supplanted by the oral Sabin vaccine in 1961. Polio was eradicated from North America by 1994, but has not been entirely eliminated from other parts of the world.

And so, we arrive at today, experiencing the modern applications of these groundbreaking advances. This is truly knowledge which has withstood the test of time, knowledge that is helping us to fight the COVID-19 pandemic: handwashing, disinfection, and vaccines.

A special note of thanks to Carol Reis, whose suggestions led to this article.

References on page 4.

Retiree Council 39 Voluntary 2021 Participation Fee Form

Name_____e-mail_____

Address_____Phone (_____)_____

City_____State_____Zip code_____

College retired from_____Year of Retirement_____

Please check amount of your voluntary participation fee: \$25_____Other \$_____

Send your check, made out to NYSUT RC39, along with this completed form to:

Ms. Joan Prymas, RC39 Treasurer, 141 Montgomery Street, Ilion, NY 13357

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