

Here we go...

Beginning July 1 there will be a new RC39 Board of Directors. Fortunately, the new board will have as its members Pete Herron as immediate past president and former treasurer Joan Prymas as a director-at-large. They are founding members of the RC39 BOD and have been on the board since its beginning fifteen years ago. We welcome your guidance as we move forward and engage our community college retirees.

I want to welcome all our BOD members:

Judy Wood, Vice President, NYSUT and AFT Delegate; Fashion Institute of Technology

Charles Clarke, Secretary NYSUT and AFT Delegate; Monroe Community College

Joyce Gabriele, Treasurer, NYSUT and AFT Alternate Delegate; Suffolk Community College (full disclosure, Joyce is my wife)

Joan Prymas, Director-at-Large, Herkimer Community College

Gerald Speal, Director-at-Large, Suffolk Community College

Peter Herron, Immediate Past-President, Suffolk Community College

I also want to thank outgoing BOD members for their service — Vice President Judith Holmes; Secretary Shaun Gerien; Treasurer Joan Prymas; and Director-at-large, Tim McLean. We look forward to your insightful suggestions as well.

Currently NYSUT represents more than 240,000 retirees and we hope to engage the members of RC39 to stay connected and build on our unique statewide RC. We welcome your feedback so we can better serve you, advocate for union values and assist NYSUT in helping both in-service members and retirees.

Reminder, as NYSUT retirees you are entitled to NYSUT Member Benefits. Check out all MB has to offer: <https://memberbenefits.nysut.org>

On behalf of the RC39 BOD, safe travels and have a great summer. Feel free to email me with any concerns, questions or suggestions you may have.

In Solidarity,
Kevin Peterman,
RC39 President elect
kevinp50@aol.com

Editor's note: Kevin has also been elected to First NYSUT Delegate and AFT Delegate.

Protecting retirees rights against "ageism"

I look forward to working for the Retiree Council 39, its members and its leadership. I am especially interested in protecting retirees rights against "ageism."

Gerald Speal, Director-at-large elect

YOUR HEALTH CONNECTION

By Frances S. Hilliard, RN, MS
Professor Emerita, Nassau Community College
Should You Take an NSAID?

About ten years ago, the pharmaceutical company Merck took the drug rofecoxib (Vioxx) off the market. Their action was based upon findings suggestive of an increased risk of heart attacks and strokes associated with this drug. Vioxx was one drug in a family of medications known as ***nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs)***. Researchers then began investigating all the drugs in this category, and they determined that all NSAIDs – except for aspirin – can be linked to these risks. Individuals who have or are at high risk for cardiovascular disease are most likely to develop problems from NSAIDs; however, studies suggest that even people without heart disease or significant risk factors may still be susceptible to the negative effects of NSAIDs.

The FDA then mandated that a warning label be placed on NSAIDs (both over-the-counter and prescription) stating that *"NSAIDs, except for aspirin, increase the risk of heart attack, heart failure, and stroke. These can be fatal. The risk is higher if you use more than directed or for longer than directed."*

Despite the FDA decision, many health care practitioners – including cardiologists – continued to recommend or prescribe NSAIDs for their patients. This practice has slowly been changing, and today most cardiologists are very cautious about allowing their patients to take these drugs. It is best to avoid NSAIDs completely, but should you absolutely need to take one for a medical condition, it is advised that you take the smallest dose possible and for the shortest length of time. If you have chronic pain or inflammation, Continued on page 4.

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 Smullen, 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.

Last Month Health Insurance Question Answered

The May issue of this newsletter had the following question:

I was told quite firmly that I was ineligible for health coverage in retirement because I had worked there for less than 15 years.

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

From where I retired I had about ten years and seven more years at other schools. 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?

Florence McCue provides the following answer.

You were correctly advised. Health insurance is provided by the local agency, school district or community college. This means the eligibility for health insurance in retirement is determined locally which usually means the number of years at the local school district or community college. Years at other public agencies and public educational institutions are not considered. This is very different from New York state retirement systems including the NYSTRS. Years of service at more than one public agency can be combined to determine state retirement benefits.

Florence McCue is no ordinary NYSUT retiree.

This year Florence was awarded The Sandy Feldman Outstanding Leadership Award. In a career going back 50 years, Florence McCue has demonstrated that the goal of leadership is not to create followers, but to create more leaders.

From her second year of teaching in 1970 until her retirement in 2004, McCue served the Yonkers Federation of Teachers in numerous positions. As a building rep, she helped protect contract rights and worked closely with teachers and administrators. She initiated a "buddy" program that partnered seasoned teacher leaders as mentors with non-tenured teachers — helping new teachers succeed while schooling them about the value of their union.

McCue went on to serve the YFT as treasurer, political activist, member of the negotiating team, and NYSUT and AFT delegate. In 1997, she became a delegate to the AFL-CIO Westchester-Putnam Central Labor Body where she still focuses on legislative, political and community service activity.

In retirement, McCue continues her activism as executive vice president of the NYSUT Retiree Council of Westchester and Putnam counties. She is the Retiree At-Large Director on the NYSUT Board, representing all 240,000 retirees in the state and Florida, and serves on the NYSUT Retiree Advisory Committee.

Thanks Florence.

Obituaries: A Passport to Memories

Sivia Kaye

A neighbor, knowing I love quotes, used to tell me her favorite: “When an old man dies, it’s like a library being burnt.” The implication being that he takes much knowledge with him to the hereafter.

Well, here I am in my senior years, and you’d think that with all the knowledge I’ve gained — just by virtue of years—I would be a font for younger people. ***But I must confess that no one has asked for my advice on ANYTHING. Ever.***

Since I never step in my kitchen except to click on the Keurig coffee maker, I wouldn’t expect to be asked about how to make a soufflé. Because I’d been certified as tone-deaf by my piano teacher years ago, I wouldn’t expect any queries about what concert is the best not to miss. ...But surely, I know *something* worth imparting.

Decades of teaching at the college level made me aware of student needs and how they differ from those of the professor’s. And I’m familiar with organizing material to prepare before a group; and how to wash socks so that one doesn’t disappear when you unload the washer; and how to make explanatory charts (I LOVE charts); or why *Hamlet* is superior to any other Shakespearean play; or why Emojis are bad for the soul.

While it’s true the younger generation might not agree with my assessment on these topics, one would hope that they might at least benefit from some volumes in my “library” before it is “burnt.”

My children have attained education levels beyond mine and my grandchildren are headed to even higher perches. So, I must content myself with reading the obituaries of the recently deceased and see what I can learn from them. I am fascinated by the OBITUARY page in the *New York Times*; it is the first thing I turn to each morning when the fresh copy of the paper lands on my doorstep.

Recently, there was an obit of **Charles Van Doren**. While I was a college undergraduate in the ’50s, he had been in the headlines for weeks on end. I was attracted to his story at the time because a career in Academia was always my goal and here was a college professor at a renowned and respected university accused of lying (and even being tutored on lying convincingly) on a national TV quiz show. To read his obituary brought me back to the ’50s and my tremendous disillusionment with TV and what it purports to be.

The obit was fairly sympathetic to him; he was shown to have tried hard to repair his damaged reputation. He’d had many advantages, including a highly regarded father, Mark Van Doren, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who had written many notable books on literature (books I used years after the Quiz show scandal when I was teaching literature), so he had not needed to cheat.

Another obit that brought me back in time was that of **Joel Cooperman**. He was one of the original WHIZ KIDS in the early 1940s before television made the popularity of radio obsolete. The *NYT* referred to him as “one of the most famous children in the country and also one of the most loathed.” Why loathed? “... because he was held up as an exemplar of braininess to a generation of children.”

Further tugging at my memory, and placing the program in the WW II era, was that the Whiz Kids were paid in war bonds — for their on-air radio appearances.

Cooperman later recounted how difficult his childhood had been because of his renown for braininess. While reading this brief bio, I found inordinate irony in the path his life took. Despite how he dazzled his radio audience with difficult math computations, he eventually focused on ethics and aesthetics: he became a professor of philosophy. To explain such a dramatic switch in academic areas, he said it was his desire to “reinvent himself, since he felt so loathed in his radio days.”

The other ironic twist was that for many of his last years, Joel Cooperman was felled by dementia, which continually worsened. The brightest child in the country had become a nonverbal elder. I was so taken by his biography that I ordered from Amazon *All the Answers*, a book written by his son about the bitter aftermath of his father’s radio fame.

Still another thing I noted about the obits is that during the height of the current Covid-19 pandemic, the *NYT* is publishing pictures of many whose lives ended because of this virus. It brought to mind the *NYT* special sections that the paper ran regularly after 9/11--with pictures and biographies of the victims.

I noticed in many of these Covid-19 obituaries, there was mention of the deceased’s alma mater: often Brooklyn College. Of course, I swelled with pride— largely because it is unusual for *Times* obits [those smaller ones that one must pay for] to mention a college other than an Ivy League school. Money brings with it distinction, and so the longer obituaries of famous people almost always mention an Ivy League school that the deceased had attended before he achieved his fame in government, or business.

My pride in Brooklyn College and its **50-cents-a-semester tuition fee** (you read that right!) is still very fierce. At the time I attended, it was known as “the poor man’s Harvard.”



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

Continued from page 1.

Should You Take an NSAID?

work with your health care practitioner to find the best treatment options, starting with non-pharmacological interventions. And check with your health care practitioner before taking any over-the-counter drugs, even topicals. [In 2020, the FDA approved a topical NSAID – diclofenac or Voltaren. While a topical NSAID might be safer than oral drugs, it is still advisable to ask before deciding to use this.]

This column is not intended as a substitute for medical advice, diagnosis, or treatment. You are urged to seek the advice of a health care practitioner for any questions about your medical condition or treatment.

References

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