

FHWA RETIREES NEWSLETTER

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**ITS NOT TOO LATE TO MAKE YOUR
RESERVATION FOR THE 34TH RETIREE
REUNION IN VIRGINIA BEACH,
SEPTEMBER 15-19**

Perspectives on Retirement and Reunions

Some years ago, a FHWA staffer in the Texas Division observed on the occasion of his retirement that he was going to buy a rocking chair, put it on his front porch, enjoy the view and after six months he was going to start rocking. An employee from the Washington office when asked at his Friday retirement what he was going to do first said, well my wife thinks our home really needs some work, so

on Monday I am going to start painting the kitchen. At another Washington office retirement lunch, the retiree was surprised when his wife was invited to offer some remarks. She had some props and started by remarking that she had made his lunch for 35 years, but that was over. She proceeded to give him a step-by-step lesson in making a baloney and cheese sandwich to gales of laughter from the

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assembled staff.

That's a snapshot on perspectives at the time of retirement. Thirty-six years ago, retirees in the then Region 6, headquartered in Fort Worth, realized that they did not want the BPR/FHWA experience to end on the day of retirement. They decided to hold an annual reunion. Soon people who had moved on before retirement and worked elsewhere wanted to attend and they were welcomed. In a few years the reunions went national. There have been 33 reunions since then. There would have been 35, but 2020 and 2021 were missed because of COVID. The organization scrambled with cancellations, penalties with lost deposits, and renegotiations. The net result is that every proposed host city has had a reunion and with due diligence we are now looking forward to Virginia Beach. Our bank balance is where it was

before COVID.

Where does that leave us? We hope you can leave the rocking chair for a few days and painting the kitchen can wait till you get home. We hope all retirees have learned to prepare their own lunch. We also hope you will join us in Virginia Beach in September.

FHWA, and before it BPR, were male and engineering focused, but admin, right-of-way, law and other skills have always been well represented. The reunions reflect the changing staff, sex and skill characteristics. Wives have always been central to successful reunions and are active in our leadership. While among retirees, engineers are still in the majority, every year the non-engineering disciplines grow as the retiree community reflects the new FHWA. Most every discipline is represented, and male spouses are also active in the reunions.

Virginia Beach Plans and Programs

You should have recently received a package containing reunion plans including a detailed schedule, costs, and an application form. This newsletter was designed to provide our normal coverage, but also to serve as an additional promotion piece to encourage your attendance. The application package should be regarded as the official source of information on the reunion.

The Locale

Virginia Beach is at the center of the

Mid-Atlantic coast. It is bounded on the north by Chesapeake Bay and on the south by the North Carolina Outer Banks. To the southwest is the historic Great Dismal Swamp and to the west are the ports of Norfolk and Newport News.

The beach is a very popular early fall destination for retirees. The ocean waters are still relatively warm and beaches are great. In addition to our scheduled excursions, there are a host of features worth exploring.

Virginia Beach - continued from page 2

Mark your calendar and spread the word about the upcoming FHWA Retiree Reunion in Virginia Beach. For questions, contact Jason Harrington at 703-220-2169.

The registration information and form can be downloaded from the FHWA Retirees website:

<http://www.fhwa-retirees.org>

What's going on at FHWA?

In many ways it's a new world. Rather than monitoring eligible projects on existing federal-aid systems and helping them advance in a cash starved program, the challenge is to continue what you were doing, while accommodating a broad array of new eligibilities. No longer cash starved, with responsibility for administering large amounts of funds delivered through the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act, the agency has a whole new set of challenges. The new political leadership in FHWA has experience in the program and FHWA is looking good in responding to the new challenges. Projects that languished on the back burner have suddenly become possible. Projects such as electric vehicle charging stations, that were never conceived as eligible projects, are proving that the federal-aid system is broadly adaptable.

In recent issues of the Retiree Newsletter, we have covered the transition from everyone working 40 hours in the office each week, to nearly 100 percent of staff and management at

all levels working from home. In a very short time frame, sequential review and approval of paper documents was transformed through an essential "kick in the pants" to a system that worked for years to a new system that could work effectively in a Covid-driven environment. Going from perhaps 70 physical locations for FHWA staff, there were, almost overnight, several thousand when all employee's homes had to become part of the operating environment

Today, a new shoe has dropped and FHWA and the rest of the federal establishment, are being challenged/required to come back to a more normal office structure. While deadlines for this issue have not allowed us to get very specific, it appears that all employees are being required to spend at least four days in the office in each two- week period and everyone is required to be in the office on Thursdays. Everyone is also being encouraged to spend more time in the office, but there is a lot of resistance.

More on this in upcoming issues.

FHWA Retiree Organization

- George Ostensen, chair
- Steve Moreno, moderator of the annual business meeting
- Phil Miller, treasurer
- Kevin Heanue, newsletter editor
- Rita Steinke
- Al Steger, webmaster and mailing list
- Joyce Curtis
- Jerry Heimbuch
- Lyle Renz, past chair
- Sally Myers, silent auction manager

Retiree Humor

"Food for thought" from a recent New England cookbook:

- The only real stumbling block in cooking is fear of failure. To be a good cook, you have to have a "what-the-hell" attitude. Julia Child
- Eat less -- the gates of paradise are narrow. A. J. Cronin
- He who indulges, bulges. Unknown
- Thou should eat to live; not live to eat. Cicero
- Strength is the capacity to break a chocolate bar into four pieces with your bare hands - and then just eat one of the pieces. Judith Viorst

Spotted recently on T-shirts:

- It's weird being the same age as old people
- Not bossy, just aggressively helpful
- Science ruins all the fun of guessing
- Old enough to know better
- You can't fix stupid, but you can divorce it
- I've survived the 70s twice (the 1970s and my actual 70s)

Contact List and Website

Our ability to keep you informed of reunion activities is very much dependent on both our contact list and our website. In fact, our contact list is maintained on our website platform, so the two are fully integrated. To keep them up to date, we need your help.

Contact list

About twice a year, we send out copies of the contact list in Excel format and ask

you to review your listing and send us your updates. Most of you have been doing a great job keeping us informed of changes. But there are always those who, for whatever reason, have not been keeping us up to date. So, if you know that someone has outdated information, please let us know. You don't have to wait until you receive the latest version to respond. Send your changes to fhwaretires@gmail.com. We welcome updates anytime.

These are the items in our database:

- Name
- Mailing address
- Email address
- Primary phone number
- Years worked at FHWA
- Year retired
- Spouse's name (if applicable)
- Alternate mailing address, email, and phone (if applicable)

Hint: When you open the Excel spreadsheet, scroll to the right to see the last several columns.

Invariably, whenever we send out an email to the entire list, some of them bounce. This is often because email accounts no longer exist, mailboxes are full, or the mail is blocked by the recipients' servers (this most often happens with corporate email addresses). Unfortunately, we do not have the time or resources to attempt to contact people individually by phone or snail mail. So, above all, please keep your email addresses current.

In case you are not aware, the latest, up to date, version is always available on the website. It is more reliable than the one we send out because it includes all changes as we become aware of them. To access the contact list on the website,

simply log in and click on **Member Area** on the menu. Next select **Contact List**. It's that easy.

Website <http://www.fhwa-retirees.org>

If you are not registered on the website, you're missing much of the information that is available (including the contact list described above). It also includes information about the FHWA Retirees organization, copies of past newsletters, photo albums of past reunions, minutes of business meetings, obituaries of those who have passed, and a forum for you to communicate directly with other FHWA retirees. It serves as our own social media page available exclusively to FHWA Retiree members. Unfortunately, it has not been widely used to date. More on that in the next issue.

If you are so inclined, send a copy of this newsletter to a fellow retiree who is not on our mailing list and suggest that they sign up and come to the reunion.

If you are not getting **FHWA News**, you can get on the mailing list or make a change in your contact information. Provide your name and street address to: Greggmiller@dot.gov.

**Best wishes to you and your families for an enjoyable summer.
Talk up the reunion with your retiree friends.**

We hope to see you in Virginia Beach!