

FHWA RETIREES NEWSLETTER

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Report by George Ostensen, Board Chair

I'm pleased to kick off the first in a new and continuing regular feature to the Retiree Newsletter. In September, the Retirees Reunion in Virginia Beach was a great opportunity to catch up with old friends and colleagues and there was more. "Do you remember when" questions that all started with a smile, with most ending with a hearty belly laugh. The Board's thanks go out to host Jason Harrington and his fine team of volunteers.

Unfortunately, the weather didn't cooperate with us 100 percent of the time, but enough to allow some to enjoy the beach and get their toes wet! The mystery after the Family Night dinner was one for the record books. You can read more

about the 34th Reunion in Jason's report later in the newsletter.

The Executive Board urges you to mark your calendars from April 27 to May 1, 2025 and plan to attend the FHWA Retirees 35th annual reunion in Tucson, Arizona. Ron Hill and his wife Pam are leading the Arizona Team in planning a desert extravaganza! You'll also, hopefully, see the inaugural e-registration rolled out along with a report on our progress in implementing electronic payments.

Finally, the Executive Board is always looking for other locations to hold future reunions. If you are interested, please let us know. All current and future retirees will thank you!

34th Retirees Reunion Is a Success

by Jason Harrington

This year's FHWA Retiree Reunion, held September 15 through 19 in Virginia Beach, was about two of life's best things—reconnecting with old friends and making new ones. Virginia Beach typically has a few days of sunshine and a slight cooling breeze from mid to late September. At this year's Reunion, though, it was mostly windy and

rainy, thanks to some big storms starting up in the Atlantic and Gulf of Mexico.

But that did not stop our 86 registered attendees—45 families from all over the United States—from gathering in our hotel's hospitality suites enjoying snacks and libations. But more

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importantly, they enjoyed catching up with friends and reminiscing. Old friends who had often first met during their highway engineer training program days picked right up where they left off last time they saw each other.

Despite the clouds and rain, we were able to hold some outdoor activities. On Monday, the first day of the reunion, we held the traditional Jack Wilkes Memorial Golf Tournament at Hell's Point Golf Club, where 16 golfers competed in four teams for the bragging rights of the best FHWA golfer for 2024. The team of Peggy & George Ostensen, Al Steger and Evan

Wisniewski scored an even par 72 to win.

In the evening, we had our social gathering reception. As usual it was well attended and this year the Board decided to buy the first round of drinks. Big thanks to them.

On the second day, we held two tour activities, which many retirees and family members attended. The first was to the Virginia Aquarium Marine and Science Center, where we saw various aquatic and reptile species. If you wanted, you could even pet some sting rays! Those who attended this tour learned about Virginia's watershed creatures and some Chesapeake Bay water species.



Retirees enjoying the sights Virginia Aquarium Marine and Science Center

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Many of us enjoyed walking along the beach (look closely and you'll see we left our mark) and the nighttime views of the moon shining on the ocean were fantastic.

The second activity was a tour of Naval Station Norfolk and the Norfolk Waterfront aboard the tourist boat, the "Victory Rover." This was an interesting and exciting activity for many of us.

Fortunately, during the tour, the heavy rain abated, and we relaxed on board the ship as it took us around the river to see buildings and hear the history of the area.



On the first part of the trip, we headed north as our guide told us about the old Fort Norfolk, the USS Wisconsin (a WW II battleship), downtown Norfolk and Portsmouth, Portsmouth Naval Hospital, Portsmouth Marine Terminal, Coast Guard Station Portsmouth, Craney Island Fuel Depot—as well as piers, terminals, and supply ships.

It wasn't surprising when we were told that the enormous cargo container ship "Dali," which took down Baltimore Key Bridge in March of this year, was now under repair at the Norfolk harbor.



Retirees looking at Naval facilities and the Dali in Drydock.

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For the rest of the cruise tour, the boat turned and headed south, to where the Navy ships were docked. The two carriers in port were the USS Harry S. Truman and the USS Dwight D. Eisenhower (or the "IKE"). President Eisenhower was



instrumental in creating our Interstate highway system. During this part of the tour, we also saw several destroyers, marine amphibious assault ships, and cruisers in the dock for repairs or maintenance.



Two views of aircraft carriers

That evening, we held our annual Retirees banquet. As dinner ended, the entertainment began. This year, we had an acting troupe perform a "murder" mystery and turned several of our Retirees into participants in the performance. We had a "loan shark," an "enforcer," an "exotic" male dancer and jilted paramours. We all were involved in using clues to determine who was the "murderer." We shared a good deal of laughter and heard comments at the end that we'd never heard this group laugh so much ever

before. So, that sounds like it was a success.



Retirees trying to solve the mystery

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Another fun activity was the raffle drawing of items brought by attendees, with proceeds to support future reunions. Sally Myers has been in charge of the raffle for many years and does an outstanding job making it successful.

Sadly, all reunions must come to an end, and we all drifted back home. With hugs, fond memories and new friends, we said our goodbyes that night or at the next morning's breakfast.

The reunion was hosted by a team, with a great big thanks for their work and information.

Fred and Carolyn Ducca and Jason & Margherita Harrington were co-lead, but it would not have happened without the rest of the team.

The team was: Michael Halladay – golf tournament; Dave and Hazel Geiger – lots of ideas and knowledge; Ken & Sally Myers – Auction Chiefs; Jerry Heimbuch – provided lots of details from the prior Boise event; Gary Hamby handled the registration; Ron and Judy Carmichael – great deal of info and suggestions; Kevin Heanue – VIP of knowledge; and Roberto and Nancy Fonseca – many great ideas and help.

OUR NEXT REUNION

April 27 to May 1, 2025 in Tucson Arizona

Windham Grand Resort and Spa

Tucson and the surrounding area are a national treasure, and the mid-spring reunion will offer an opportunity to experience it at its best. Ron and Pam Hill, FHWA Retiree couple, have taken the lead and done an outstanding job in organizing the reunion. They know the area and have done a lot of research into possible excursions.

They made a presentation in Virginia Beach highlighting the area and identified possible destinations including Sonoran Desert Museum, Tombstone, botanic

gardens, golf courses, Kitt Peak (7,000 ft. elevation), Wine Country and great restaurants.

If you have spent a lifetime along the country's coastal areas this is a not-to-be missed trip. Put it on your bucket list. Where else could you find a historic area with awesome desert scenery, good-value, well-planned excursions with a compatible travel group of many FHWA colleagues, and the assurance of making new friends?

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Highlights of the Virginia Beach Executive Committee Meeting

George Ostensen called the meeting to order and there was a full agenda. Phil Miller, Treasurer, reported the good news that we had carried over \$13,189 from the Boise reunion and that it appeared that the Virginia Beach team had produced a reunion that would cover all expenses and contribute a small surplus to our bank balance. Next, Al Steger our website creator and manager, reported that we are getting 50 to 60 hits per month except in the months leading up to the reunion when it grows to over 200 hits. The website is serving us well.

Ron Hill reported on plans for the Tucson reunion, described above. Plans for the future included possibly establishing an on-line registration process for future reunions and converting our large collection of photos from prior reunions to a format that would allow accessible storage in the "cloud." Lastly, there was a discussion on establishing an "In Memoriam" section on our website. Al Steger reported that it is already on the website and he posts the items he receives in the Obituary Section. See his column later in this newsletter.

Highlights of the Annual Business Meeting

The annual Business Meeting is the last reunion event before the closing dinner. This year Steve Moreno was chosen to join a group of Reunion Chairs, most recently including George Ostensen and Morris Reinhart, who are expected to make the meeting lively, humorous, as well as cover the organization's current programs and future plans. Lastly, its purpose is to solicit volunteers for future reunions who will serve to keep us moving forward.

Steve's first action was to ask George Ostensen to present Lyle Renz with a plaque recognizing and thanking him for his outstanding leadership. Lyle was Chairman of the Executive Board for five years including during the COVID period.

Steve also provided interesting facts about host-state Virginia, and the always eagerly anticipated results of the golf

event from co-chairs Ron Carmichael and Mike Halladay. Conducted in a scramble format, the foursome of George and Peggy Ostensen and Evan Wisnewski and Al Steger were the winners, with Mike Halladay closest to the pin for the men and Hazel Geiger for the women.

Steve then introduced Daniel Suarez, current Deputy Division Administrator for the FHWA Virginia Division. Daniel gave us an update on what is going on at FHWA. He gave policy updates and discussed progress in implementing recent legislation in addition to bill updates. He added that FHWA is embracing a data driven approach toward program management to address how best to use resources. He also said there are discussions about the possibility of reviving a training program for the agency.

What's going on at FHWA?

This report was written after the election, but before the inauguration. Current FHWA employees report that, at this time, it is pretty much business as usual. Delivering funds from the Inflation Reduction Act and the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act along with those funded through Title 23 is keeping everyone busy. FHWA has been getting very favorable coverage on its response to traditional program delivery and to their response to emergency challenges, including the recent I-95 tanker truck fire in Baltimore, which temporarily closed the route, the collapse of the Francis Scott Key bridge, also in Baltimore, following a ship collision and for response to the damage caused by hurricane Helene in North Carolina and surrounding states.

There have been changes in political leadership. Administrator Shailene Bhatt resigned in September. He was a popular, experienced administrator, having served as Deputy Director at Kentucky DOT and administrator at Delaware DOT, as well as in several

significant private sector transportation positions.

Kristen White, Deputy Administrator, was appointed Acting Administrator on September 11, 2024. She previously had been FHWA Chief Counsel. She is reported to be very supportive and appreciative of staff and has good relations with them.

Gloria Shepherd remains as Executive Director.

Lastly, there is great concern about what lies ahead among FHWA employees and among the entire federal workforce. Our retiree pensions appear secure, but current employees are cautiously awaiting updates and hoping for the best.

Late breaking, on November 19 it was announced that former Congressman and FOX TV business host Sean P. Duffy was to be nominated as Secretary of Transportation.

The FHWA Retiree Organization

- George Ostensen, chair
- Steve Moreno, moderator of the annual business meeting
- Phil Miller, treasurer
- Kevin Heanue, newsletter editor
- Al Steger, webmaster and keeper of the mailing list
- Gary Hamby, registration czar
- Jason Herington, past reunion chair
- Evan Wisniewski, past reunion chair
- Ron and Pam Hill, upcoming reunion chairs
- Sally Myers, silent auction manager
- Rita Steinke, historian
- Joyce Curtis
- Jerry Heimbuch
- Lyle Renz, past chair

Retiree Humor

- The path to inner peace begins with three little words: Not my problem.
- Retirement isn't the end of the road, it's the beginning of a highway.
- A retiree once said, I'm out of here -- and lived happily ever after.
- What do lawyers wear under their pants? Briefs.
- A guide for retirement -- Relax, Entertain, Travel, Indulge, Enjoy and that's no joke
- Getting older is just one body part after another saying, "ha ha, you think that's bad, watch this."

Website Insights

By Al Steger

As webmaster, I am continually looking for ways make the website more useful to FHWA retirees. Beginning with this issue, I will be writing a column each time to make you aware of features of the website that you might not otherwise come across. In this issue, I will focus on a subject that is a little on the dark side, the passing of our colleagues.

As retirees, none of us are strangers to the subject. It is a common occurrence, and perhaps more so in retirement years. As webmaster and "postmaster general" for the FHWA Retirees organization, I often learn of the death of one of our members before the rest of you do. When I do, I try to pass the information on to you as soon as I get it, but that is often weeks or even months after it occurs.

Sometimes, I receive an obituary; other times I must scour the web to find one. If I do, it frequently provides an opportunity to leave a message of remembrance. But because it is on a

remote on-line site and often so long after the fact, I usually do not pass that on the you in my messages or on the website. Yet, those messages can be so important in helping us as a community to come together and celebrate our friendships, now and past.

With that as a prelude, I want to share with you today a few aspects of the website that will help to inform you of the passing of one of our members, but more importantly allow us to share our memories. The first place information is available is on the home page. Listed near the bottom of the page in the *In Memoriam* section are the names of the most recent members who have passed and their date of death if known. The next place is in the *Member Area* of the website. Click on *Member Area* on the menu bar at the top of the website. (This area is not accessible to the general public, so you will need a password to access it.) Scroll down the page to *Obituaries*. Here you will find the obits of the nearly 100 members who have passed from 2017 to present.

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The third place of interest on the website is also in the *Member Area*. At the top of the page, you will find an option labeled *Member Forum*. Click on it to view the topics in the *Forum*. The last one listed is entitled *Remembrances*. Here you can leave a thought about the departed colleague you wish to share with those of us who are still kicking. Just click on the category "*Remembrances*," then on "*Create New Post*." This is our opportunity to celebrate the lives

of those who have passed with our FHWA family. All members will receive notices of these posts unless you choose to unfollow the category on the Forum page.

I hope this information will prove useful and informative. As you navigate the website you will likely come across other features you may not have been aware of. I will try to address some of these in future columns.

Please Keep your contact Information current

If you have moved, changed address, have a new email address, or if you received this newsletter from a friend and would like to get on our mailing list, please let us know. Send an email to fhwaretirees@gmail.com with the following information: name, email address, phone number, mailing address, years worked at FHWA, and year retired. If applicable, please also include spouse or partner's name, alternate phone and address information. 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 a 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.

We invite you to look at our website, which is being updated throughout the year. The address is (<https://fhwa-retirees.org>). Any comments can be sent to (fhwaretirees@gmail.com).

**Best wishes to you and your family for the upcoming
holiday season and the New Year**

**Mark your calendars for the Tucson, Arizona reunion
April 27 to May 1, 2025**

**Talk it up with your retiree friends particularly in your holiday
greetings
We hope to see you there!**