



Allegheny County

December 2024

Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER

P.O.Box 15285 • Pittsburgh, PA 15237 • 412-459-7674

Website: <http://acretirees.org> • Email: acretireeassociation@gmail.com

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NEWSLETTER

Kathy Burk, *Editor*
Guillermo Cole, *Contributing Writer*

Message from
PRESIDENT JACK EXLER

Autumn is here! The leaves are beginning to turn and fall. I am enjoying the warm sunny days and the cool evening nights.

It has been a very busy year for the ACRA members. Programs included George Westinghouse and His Legacy; Notorious Pittsburgh gave us a look into some of the shady side of Pittsburgh's past; There was a big turnout for the Annual Picnic; In July, we saw the Pittsburgh Pirates beat the St. Louis Cardinals; and as always, had a wonderful time playing games at the September luncheon. I even got to hand out "Gold Medals" to the winners of the Family Feud Game. There are still two events for the year. In November, the Allegheny County Pen-

sion Fund and Medicare Updates; and on December 11th, the Annual Holiday Party. Hope to see you there.

In addition, the ACRA Board is hard at work pulling together 2025 programs, educational speakers and events. The complete list of programs, events and dates will be listed in the February 2025 ACRA Newsletter; and on our website at www.acretireeassociation.org.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the board member, Pam Long, who will be transiting off the ACRA Board at the end of the year. Pam is a dedicated and hard-working member of the board. Pam handled all the arrangements for the Pittsburgh Pirates games over

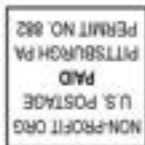
the years. But Pam is most notable for "RECIPIES BY PAM" in each of ACRA Newsletter. At the past October board meeting everyone was raving about how delicious and easy it was to make Pam's Zucchini Pie (Recipe in the September 2024 ACRA Newsletter). Do not worry, Pam has agreed to continue to send recipes for the newsletter. Thank you, Pam! On behalf of the ACRA Board and myself, I would like to wish you and your families a safe and happy Holiday Season!

Take care and I look forward to seeing you and meeting you in 2025!

Jack Exler
President

Address Service Requested

Allegheny County
Retirees Association
P.O. Box 15285
Pittsburgh, PA 15237



Congratulations

NEW RETIREES LIST

SEPTEMBER

Ahearn, Susan
Baird, Mark
Booth, Kimberly
Brown, Leacy
Colbert, Denise
Davis, Cynthia
Eichenlaub, Edward
Esposito, Kathleen
Fisher, Deborah
Hatcher, Galen
Horst, George
Johnson, Bruce
Hyland, David
Kraus, Lori
Kress, Jodi
Naylor, Lisa
Nevin, Bradley
Patterson, Kimberly
Pischke, John
Powers, Carolyn
Rawlings, Robert
Scanlon, Margaret
Schwartz, William
Thomas, Demetrius
Thor, Lynne
Warnelis, Deborah
Weber, David
Zvolensky, Stephen

OCTOBER

Baechle, Andrew
Barnhart, Brian
Callahan, Carolyn
Cima, Jeffrey
Clark, William
Ehrman, Nancy
Fazio, Anthony
Pisciottano, Nickolas
Rayer, Frank
Rue, Marcella
Somma, Peter
Stock, Angharad
Verdetto, Leonard Jr.
Wain, Jennifer
Walsh, Maribeth
Whittaker, Barbara

Annual ACRA Holiday Luncheon

DECEMBER 11, 2024

Please, join in the fun and festivities as we celebrate another good year of ACRA fellowship. There will be sing-a-longs, Pick-A-Prize Auction, games, prizes, good food and good friends.

Wednesday, December 11th at Noon
at the Double Tree Hotel, Greentree
500 Mansfield Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 15205

Driving Directions

Take exit 67 off Parkway West
Turn left onto Mansfield Ave
Turn right at the Doubletree sign

Make your reservation early!

ACRA members \$25, guests \$25 per person

Reservations are required to ensure adequate food and space. Checks must be received by December 4, 2024, to guarantee the reservation. No refunds past the RSVP date or for non-attendance.

Tickets are unavailable at the door.

Please send checks to
ACRA, P.O. Box 15285, Pittsburgh, PA 15237

Board meetings are held at 10:00 am
in the Salk Room on the day of the regular luncheon meeting.
All members are welcome to attend

Check on Your Elderly Neighbor

For many elderly people, winter can be a very isolating time, leading to loneliness and increased health risk factors. Reaching out to the homebound or socially isolated is so important, particularly in the colder months. Your concern can make all the difference in the world and might even save someone's life.

One way to break the ice and bring joy is by sharing the comfort of homemade soup. When you make soup for yourself, why not make a little extra and hand deliver it to a homebound neighbor. (Even if your soup is not homemade, it's the sentiment that matters.) Not only is it an opportunity to provide comfort and nourishment to another, but it is also a way to check on their well-being and let them know that you care.

Help ACRA Save a Tree, and Some Postage As Well

In this age of email and websites, more people are gathering their information by way of the web. Allegheny County retirees are no different. We are becoming more tech-savvy, and we are looking to cut costs while doing our part in saving the trees. So, if you have internet access and are interested in opting out of receiving a paper copy of the newsletter, please call and leave a message, or send us an email stating that you wish to opt out of the paper copy.

And not to worry, you will continue to receive your quarterly copy of the newsletter by way of email, or by visiting the ACRA website. The ACRA phone number, email address and web address are all listed at the beginning of this newsletter.

In the Spotlight
ERIC BUNCHER:
When the Day After Changed Everything
 by Guillermo Cole



When Eric Buncher started his job on September 10, 2001, as Manager of Planning Services for the Allegheny County Airport Authority, business was booming at Pittsburgh International Airport. It was using all of its 125 gates; passenger traffic was at an all-time high and an expansion plan was in the works to accommodate the burgeoning growth. The day after, however, changed everything.

Eric was told he would play a significant role in the planned expansion at Pittsburgh International Airport, but September 11th and its aftermath left him wondering if he would be out of a job.

"It was such a frantic day. The airport was being evacuated, all outgoing flights were cancelled, and we had way more than the scheduled number of incoming flights because air traffic throughout the country was being diverted for safety reasons to land at the nearest available airport," Eric said.

"The airport had activated its emergency operations plan. It was only my second day on the job and since I had not yet been briefed on the details of the plan, they sent me home. Days later, I returned to work when flights resumed but to an airport that was forever changed by 9/11."

Instead of growing, the airport's passenger traffic plummeted as U.S. Air, its primary carrier, went through bankruptcy and closed its hub that accounted for 70 to 80 percent of the traffic.

Fortunately, Eric did not lose his job after 9/11 and went on to have a successful career with the Airport Authority. He continued in his position as Manager of Planning Services and retired in September 2020, when Covid-related layoffs presented him with the opportunity for retirement.

One of the most important projects Eric worked on was the environmental assessment for the fracking operation used to produce natural gas, which provides a significant amount of revenue to help fund operations at Pittsburgh International Airport. The review ensured that the fracking complies with all environmental regulations and has a minimal impact on the surrounding area.

Another satisfying project was extending the safety area beyond a runway at the Allegheny County Airport in West Mifflin after an aborted takeoff resulted in a plane rolling off the runway and into a nearby trailer park. Eric led a multi-year

effort to remove the trailer park and work with its residents on a relocation plan that offered fair and just compensation for alternative housing elsewhere.

Eric grew up in Pittsburgh's Morningside and Highland Park neighborhoods and graduated from Peabody High School. He attended Purdue University for two years and transferred to Penn State, where he earned a bachelor's degree in Environmental Resource Management.

After getting married, Eric and his wife Kathleen moved to Penn Hills. They have a daughter, Shannon; son-in-law, Nick; and two young grandsons, Cole and Chase, who live nearby. The entire family takes an annual summer vacation to the beach town of Nags Head, North Carolina.

Eric and Kathleen also enjoy visiting small towns of historical and cultural significance in Pennsylvania and bordering states. They have visited Gettysburg; the Brandywine Valley of southeastern Pennsylvania and northern Delaware; Hagerstown, Maryland; Harpers Ferry and Shepherdstown, West Virginia; Antietam battlefield in Maryland; and the Amish country in Ohio.

Eric's other interests include flower gardening and playing racquetball three days a week.

IN MEMORIAM*					
Name	Date of Death	Name	Date of Death	Name	Date of Death
AMES, RAYMOND	10/23/2021	CONNER, ANN	6/20/2024	TORHAN, ELAINE	8/4/2024
CRAY, PATRICIA	10/7/2023	MACKEY, RICHARD	6/25/2024	TERLESKI, CATHRYN	8/5/2024
BROWN, JAMES W	10/15/2023	VERCELLI, JOHN	6/25/2024	SNINSKY, DONALD	8/10/2024
ANGELO, KAREN	12/10/2023	SANDS, ARLENE	6/26/2024	FAGAN, JEAN	8/11/2024
WIECHELT, MARY JEANNE	2/29/2024	HOLIDAY, DARLA	7/3/2024	PHILLIPS, WAYNE	8/19/2024
WISEMAN, WILLIAM	3/29/2024	SANDHU, KULTAR	7/4/2024	GLEESON, IDA	8/20/2024
MATUSZAK, TERENCE	4/21/2024	WALNOHA, CAROL	7/4/2024	KOCHIRKA, GEORGANNE	8/20/2024
TRAPANI, ANGELO	5/23/2024	KASKA, ROSEMARY	7/10/2024	HENDERSON, RAYMOND	8/24/2024
BARRETT, JAMES F	5/24/2024	FRAIETTA, FRANK	7/15/2024	GIBBS, AUDREY	8/30/2024
ECONOVICH, AGNES	5/29/2024	NOVOSELSKI, MARTIN	7/19/2024	CASCIATO, RALPH	9/10/2024
RAEHN, RONALD	5/30/2024	PARKE, TAMARA	7/27/2024	CARROS, THOMAS	9/11/2024
MOOG, DENNIS JR	6/9/2024	SMOKER, GRACE	7/27/2024	HANSEL, PATRICIA	9/11/2024
DESANO, JOSEPHINE	6/11/2024	INDINO, DEBRA	7/29/2024	LANG, TECKLA	9/15/2024
BEST, GEORGE	6/17/2024	MYERS, ROBERT	7/29/2024	ALEXANDER, KATHRYN	9/19/2024
TORTELLA, ARLENE	6/18/2024	ZABIEROWSKY, SANDRA	8/2/2024	KAUFMAN, JACQUELINE	9/29/2024
BERGER, MARGARET	6/20/2024	DEVORE, VIRGINIA	8/4/2024		

*As provided by the Allegheny County Retirement Board

The September Luncheon

Fun Times Repeat

Much in the style of last years "Fun Times" luncheon event, Fun Times Repeat engaged the participants with Scavenger Hunt, Family Feud and The Price is Right. There were winners and prizes, of course, and everyone had a great time sharing in the fun and fellowship of other Allegheny County Retirees.



ACRA President Jack Exler presented medallions to the winners of the Family Feud final round. The lucky and skillful winners were Ron Hutson, Mary Ann Sapienza, Michele Orsini and Billie Shanahan.



The October Luncheon

The Pittsburgh Trolley Museum

Attendees of the ACRA October luncheon at the Doubletree Hotel were treated to a fascinating journey through the rails of history as it pertained to what was once referred to as "the trolley." Morgan from the Pittsburgh Trolley Museum was our "conductor" as the audience both reminisced about their own youthful days on the trolley and learned more about an integral part of our regional legacy.



ACRA Annual Membership Renewal

In the upcoming weeks you will be receiving an ACRA membership renewal letter in the mail. Please fill it out and return it by January 31, 2025. Once again annual dues are \$20 per year. We hope that you will join us for another great year.

SEEK AND FIND

In this special holiday Seek and Find you will find names of items that are often associated with this time of year. If you can find all of them, you are truly one smart holiday cookie. There may even be a few that are not on the list.

- | | | |
|----------------|-------------|------------|
| ❄️ Cookies | ❄️ Wreath | ❄️ Grinch |
| ❄️ Carols | ❄️ Toys | ❄️ Santa |
| ❄️ Evergreen | ❄️ Menorah | ❄️ Snowman |
| ❄️ Sleighbells | ❄️ Reindeer | ❄️ Feast |
| ❄️ Sweater | ❄️ Church | ❄️ Cards |
| ❄️ Stockings | ❄️ Gifts | ❄️ Icicle |
| ❄️ Mistletoe | ❄️ Lights | |

Mystery Word:

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G	W	O	M	S	L	E	I	G	H	B	E	L	L	S	G
R	N	D	E	V	E	R	G	R	E	E	N	J	A	C	K
I	I	A	N	V	R	T	J	E	X	M	U	S	S	A	R
N	C	O	O	K	I	E	S	I	W	A	M	C	N	R	N
C	A	N	R	R	I	N	G	N	E	C	A	R	O	L	S
H	R	Y	A	A	L	E	V	D	T	E	R	O	W	S	E
N	D	O	H	D	A	M	B	E	L	L	S	O	M	N	M
K	S	N	E	H	O	S	P	E	T	A	L	G	A	A	I
L	R	P	A	V	L	A	O	R	N	A	M	E	N	T	S
S	T	O	C	K	I	I	N	G	S	R	V	R	E	W	T
A	S	E	H	M	G	C	T	C	G	I	F	T	S	R	L
N	Z	J	U	U	H	I	Q	U	E	X	C	O	B	E	E
T	Z	N	R	T	T	C	R	J	E	T	E	Y	O	A	T
A	A	N	C	E	S	L	U	N	F	E	A	S	T	T	O
Z	X	P	H	B	L	E	S	W	E	A	T	E	R	H	E

MY POSTCARD HOBBY AND THE MYSTERIOUS KEENAN BUILDING

by Kathleen Burk

I am not sure when I began my casual hobby of collecting antique picture postcards, but I can tell you it was long before the age of the internet descended upon us. My routine was to purchase old postcards of Pittsburgh whenever I would see them, generally at flea markets or yard sales. I would then attempt to physically locate the sites of the buildings depicted on them. Some of the buildings were easy to find but others had fallen into the scrapheap of a bygone era. Generally, it took some research and a lot of driving around to locate the ones that were still standing.

One that had me particularly baffled was a postcard that had been produced more than a hundred years earlier during the prosperity of the Pittsburgh industrial era. It held the image of an eighteen-story building that had been topped off with a glorious golden dome, somewhat reminiscent of the iconic Duomo in Florence, Italy. My only clue was the name of the building that appeared above the post-card picture. It was simply called "Keenan Building."

There were no Keenan Buildings listed in any of the city directories, and none of the older folks that I had asked about it had any recollection of it either. Many-a-lunch hour was spent in search of a lost building that I wasn't sure even existed—until one day it happened. Long after it had slipped away from the forefront of my mind, I was driving on Sixth Avenue toward the Steel Building, and there it was, in my rearview mirror, the Keenan Building in all its majestic glory, dome and all! However, the gilded tiles of the dome had been painted red, and the eagle was gone, rendering it even more like the Duomo than it had in its original form. I knew I had to park the car to look at this magnificent structure that now sits lowly in the shadows of other newer, larger skyscrapers of the post-modern era.

The object of my quest had been renamed "Midtown Towers" in 1971 after it was designated for federally subsidized



housing. The building is situated at 643 Liberty Avenue, not far from what is now known as the cultural district. A 7-Eleven convenience store occupies space on the first floor.

This building can easily be passed by without ever taking notice of the magnificent bas relief medallions of famous founders of Pittsburgh that can be seen just above street level. Among the subjects are historical figures such as William Pitt, Stephen Foster, and Mary Schenley. There are also depictions of George Washington, Teddy Roosevelt, the then mayor of Pittsburgh and the governor of Pennsylvania.

The Keenan Building was built in 1907 as the tallest skyscraper in Pittsburgh. At 239 feet it held a commanding presence over the city. The golden dome was, in reality, a globe with an American Eagle attached on its highest point. At the time the globe was rumored to be a tribute to the bald head of its owner, Thomas Keenan.

Thomas Keenan was a 24-year-old city editor of a newspaper called the Pittsburgh Penny Press that later became known as the Pittsburgh Press. He was also a philanthropist who carried out various events to raise funds to build a home for newsboys who had been orphaned. Among his other achievements, he was responsible for the installation of the now controversial Stephen Foster statue in Lawrenceville. During the Spanish American War, Keenan organized a squad of young men, known as the Press Cadets, in a military style drill team in preparation for their enlistment. This earned him the rank of Lieutenant Colonel in the National Guard.

Most of the buildings that once surrounded the Keenan Building are long gone, but Midtown Towers, as it is now known, stands mightily as a tribute to those who brought prosperity to our city and the philanthropists who helped to redistribute some of that wealth. It may not shine as brightly as the crown jewel that it once was, but it remains steadfast as a testament to an era that helped to define Pittsburgh as the great city that it is today.



THOMAS J. KEENAN, JR.

FOUNDER PITTSBURGH PRESS; INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE PRESS CLUBS AND PUB. ASS'N.

Don't Let Scammers Deceive You! SSA's Cost of Living Adjustment is Automatic

Are you wondering what to do to receive a cost-of-living increase in your Social Security benefits for 2025? No worries, the answer is "nothing." The annual Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) is automatic. The Social Security Administration (SSA) announced its new COLA of 2.5 percent on October 10, 2024. Notices will arrive by mail beginning in December.

Further, Social Security account holders can see their COLA notice online. Beneficiaries will see the increase in benefits payable in January 2025. "Annual Social

Security cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) are automatic, and beneficiaries do not need to take any action or provide additional information to receive the legitimate increase," said Hannibal "Mike" Ware, Acting Inspector General for the Social Security Administration. "Be wary of any communication that asks you to take extra steps or provide personal details for this increase, as it's likely a scammer attempting to steal your identity or financial assets. Our office is dedicated to protecting the public and deterring these criminals from exploiting

honest, hardworking people."

Scammers often disseminate false information about steps you need to take to get your increase. That is why the SSA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) is advising the public to be keenly aware of any attempts from people seeking to gain your personal information for you to receive a COLA from SSA. The annual cost-of-living increases issued by SSA are ALWAYS automatic. No additional information is required for you to receive the legitimate COLA increase.

—Press release issued by the Social Security Administration Office of Inspector General, October 11, 2024

The Allegheny County Retirees Association Board wishes you and your family a joyous holiday season



RECIPES BY PAM

by Pam Long

RUEBEN QUICHE

- 9-inch pastry shell
- 1 tbsp. caraway seeds
- 8 ounces corned beef, shredded
- 1 tbsp. Dijon mustard
- ¼ cup sauerkraut squeezed and drained
- 2 cups grated Swiss cheese
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 cup light cream
- 1 tsp. grated onion
- ½ tsp. dry mustard

Preheat oven to 375 degrees.

Sprinkle caraway seeds over pastry shell. Prick pie shell and bake for 7 minutes.

Fill the pie shell with corned beef.

Spread mustard over meat, top with sauerkraut and cheese.

Mix eggs, cream, onion and mustard together. Pour into pie shell and bake for 40 minutes.

Let stand for 5 minutes before cutting.

Enjoy!

Congratulations to the newly elected ACRA board members:

Donna Johnson-Smith, Hugh Hachmeister, Sharon Silvestri, Eric Buncher and Connie Przybyla. Their collective talents and years of experience will undoubtedly serve as an asset to the members of Allegheny County Retirees Association. They will each serve a two-year term.

SEEK & FIND
ANSWERS



The mystery word is ornaments.

With Gratitude

The Allegheny County Retirement Association wishes to extend its heartfelt gratitude to outgoing board member Pamela Long. Pam served the board in various capacities, from 2017-2024. She has been sharing her delicious recipes in every newsletter and thankfully will continue to do so. She has also been instrumental in planning many of the social outings, including our attendance at the Pittsburgh Pirate games. Her commitment to ACRA has been carried out with dedication, resourcefulness and grace.

Best Wishes, Pam, in all that you do going forward!