



Allegheny County

SEPTEMBER 2026

Retirees Association

NEWSLETTER

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

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NEWSLETTER

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Message from PRESIDENT JACK EXLER

Sometimes it is so hard to believe that fall is right around the corner, and we have a lot on our plate as we kick off the season. I am sure that many of you have heard about the financial deficit experienced by the Allegheny County Retirement pension fund. Despite our efforts, there will be no pension payment increase at this time. However, we have been assured that no current pensioner will be adversely affected by the shortfall. We intend to keep ACRA members informed when we learn more from the current administration as it moves forward to remedy the situation.

Many of you have been asking when ACRA would offer on-line payment

options for membership, donations, luncheons and event registration. I am happy to announce that the moment has arrived. Our new on-line payment method has been launched, and you can now make your reservation with a secure payment on the ACRA website. To find out more please read the article in this newsletter entitled "On-line Payments Come to ACRA."

Here we are, about to get moving with our fall line-up of luncheon speakers. September presents an opportunity to be well-armed with information about scams that target older adults. A representative from the Pittsburgh Office of the FBI will offer valuable information

that could save you from a terrible situation. In October, there will be updates about Retirement and Medicare. November promises to delight and inform with a presentation by Eric Fischer from the Amateur Astronomers Association who will speak to us about our very own moon. To top off another great year we will celebrate with our Annual Holiday Party on December 16.

As always, I wish you all the best as we wind up another great season of ACRA.

Jack Exler

ACRA President

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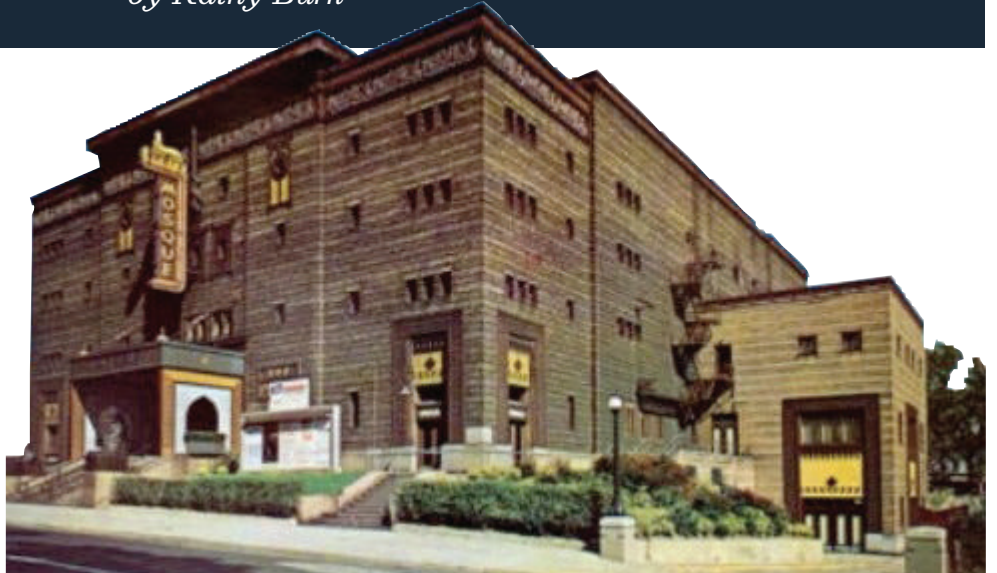
THE SYRIA MOSQUE, A DOUBLE DOSE OF HISTORY

by Kathy Burk

I can't remember exactly what year it was, but I believe it was in the early part of the 1970s. I was in my mid-teens, which I'm reasonably sure falls within the annals of ancient history. We were at the Syria Mosque and the entire venue was filled with a thick cloud of blue smoke from a variety of nefarious sources. There was excitement in the air as the band began to play. The heavy layer of particulates didn't stop me from enjoying a concert that featured one of my favorite musical groups, the Allman Brothers Band. If memory serves me, my ticket cost about \$7.00 for a middle tier seat.

I can't say I remember exactly which songs played that evening, but I am sure they were some of my old favorites. I am equally unclear as to whether fire marshals existed at the time, because after the encore, nearly 3,700 of us stood up in reverence to the band with our open-flamed cigarette lighters, swaying high above us like beacons in the smog-filled night. The other equally interesting part of the evening was the fact that I was there. I mean, actually there, right in the inner sanctum of the most beloved music venue that Pittsburgh has ever known - the one and only Syria Mosque.

Built in 1915 the Mosque was designed specifically for the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine, which I believe had something to do with the Masons. In keeping with the Arabic theme, the building was designed to resemble



a Moorish temple with four stately bronze sphynxes guarding the entrances. The aesthetic may have been a tad overdramatic, but it captured the imagination, nonetheless. As live concerts grew in popularity, the proprietors began to recognize the profitability of hosting musical acts within their acoustically-outstanding music hall.

The Syria Mosque is long gone – razed flat to the ground in 1991 to make way for a lowly parking lot. I haven't thought about the Allman Brothers much lately, until a few days ago when I heard "Sweet Melissa" playing on a 70s music stream. The soulful melody brought back fond memories of those bygone days of seeing the brothers live (and alive), in a grand music venue that no longer exists. A subsequent Google search of the Allman brothers revealed that they are indeed still touring, with only one surviving member of the original band. What I also learned is that an album had been posthumously released in 2022,

featuring all six of the original Allman Brothers Band members.

In a moving sense of irony, the name of that album is "Syria Mosque." Yes, that Syria Mosque! That music was originally recorded in January of 1971, in the Syria Mosque in Oakland, with all the original bandmembers (Tragically Duane Allman passed away only months later in a motorcycle accident.) This recording was a musical artifact that remained dormant for more than 50 years until its release four years ago.

Gone before us are five of the six original band members - Duane, Greg, Butch, Berry and Dickey, with Jaimoe being the sole survivor. No longer with us are the days of concerts in the Syria Mosque, but my teen-aged sense of wonderment remains intact as I continue to marvel at how the various aspects of art, architecture and history have a way of intersecting in the most mysterious ways.

ONLINE PAYMENTS COME TO ACRA

by Connie Przybyla

Many members have requested the option to pay for luncheons and annual dues online. We are pleased to announce that online payments are now live and available through the ACRA website for all ACRA events.

To pay for luncheons follow the directions below.

The screenshot shows the Zeffy app interface for purchasing a luncheon ticket. At the top, it displays the date 'Sep 16' and time '12:00 PM - 2:00 PM EDT'. Below this is the location 'Doubletree Hotel-Greentree' with the address '500 Mansfield Ave, Pittsburgh, PA 1...'. There are two ticket options: 'Member Ticket' for \$22 and 'Non-Member Ticket' for \$25. Each option has an 'Add +' button. At the bottom, there is a light blue banner with a lightbulb icon and the text: 'Did you know? We fundraise with Zeffy to ensure 100% of your purchase goes to our mission!'. The Zeffy logo is at the bottom right.

- Go to the ACRA website <https://acretirees.org/>
- Click on the Events tab
- On the left-hand side click on either Luncheon Meetings, ACRA Picnic or Holiday Party or Special Outings
- Select the event you want to attend and click on “more details”
- At the luncheon event screen, you will find the form to pay online.

*Please note that we are using a free app, which will ask you if you want to add a tip. **THIS TIP DOES NOT GO TO ACRA.** You can bypass the request and mark the tip amount as 0.

You will also be able to pay your yearly dues online. Follow the directions below:

The screenshot shows the Zeffy app interface for purchasing an annual membership. It displays 'Annual Membership' for '\$20' with the note 'Renews yearly on: December 31'. There is a 'Select' button. Below this, there is a section for 'Add a donation for Allegheny County Retirees Association (ACRA)' with a text input field showing '\$ 0.00'. At the bottom, there is a light blue banner with a lightbulb icon and the text: 'Did you know? We fundraise with Zeffy to ensure 100% of your purchase goes to our mission!'. The Zeffy logo is at the bottom right.

- Go to the ACRA website <https://acretirees.org/>
- Click on the Membership tab
- You will find the “Renew Online” form
- Select Annual/Membership and select “1” for one membership and proceed to complete the information.
- *You may also add a donation for **ACRA** if you choose, then type the amount of your donation.
- *Please note that we are using a free app, which will ask you if you want to add a tip. **THIS TIP DOES NOT GO TO ACRA.** You can bypass the request and mark the tip amount as 0.
- At the end of the form, you can check the box to have your dues automatically withdrawn each year.
- Every year thereafter you will receive an email notification that your dues will be automatically deducted from your account. You can change the auto payment for dues at any time by unchecking the box.

By subscribing, you authorize Allegheny County Retirees Association (ACRA) to charge you according to the terms until you cancel.

☐  US bank account

NEW RETIREEES LIST

Congratulations

MAY RETIREES

Beglinger, Gerald
Borek, Denise
Botton, Juliann
Ferralli, John
Godfrey, Robert
Henley-Coats, Linda
Loreski, Susan
Mikell, Lasonia
Moore, Deanne
Noftz, Lauren
Petrucci, Michele
Zaspel, Laura

JUNE RETIREES

Siudela, James
Royster, Alexis
Paul, Eric
Nicotera, Gary
Hall, Keith
Comella, Sandra
Bowers, Eric
Capp, Timothy
Cecotti, Keith
Chambers, Robert
Bowser, Neil
Thomas, Patricia
Bradley, Davon
Ihrig, Bruce
Hughey, Lauren
Stedina, Gregory
McLaughlin, Kimberly
Coles, Jessica
Kowaleski, Mark

JULY RETIREES

Blakeley, Deborah
Brown, Christine
Castner, Kathleen
DeLong, Harold
Dillinger, Richard
Ditzenberger, Jason
Fleet, Daniel
Hann, Clare
Jakiela, Thomas
Jester, Richard
Kreck, Robert
Lancia, Michael
Metz, Clifford
Miller, James
Miller, Nelson
Neugebauer, Jeffrey
Palmosina, Pamela
Priore, Linda
Schmegel, Kenneth
Sheffo, Mark



RECIPES BY PAM

by Pamela Long

CINNAMON PECANS

1 egg white
1 tablespoon water
Beat them together
with a fork

2 ¼ cups of pecans
In a bowl, stir the egg
white mixture with the
pecans

Mix together:

1/2 cup of sugar
3/4 teaspoon salt
1 teaspoon cinnamon
1/4 teaspoon nutmeg
1/4 teaspoon ground cloves

Add the above mixture to the egg white and nuts
Spread on a cookie sheet lined with parchment
paper. Bake 40 minutes at 300 degrees turning the
nut mixture every ten minutes. Cool on the cookie
sheet. Separate and place in an airtight container

ENJOY!

TRIVIA QUESTION

*In the United States there are only
four states that officially use the word
"commonwealth" in their name.*

*Can you name our nation's
four commonwealths?*



FIND **joy** IN
THE **journey**,
NOT JUST THE
destination.

In the Spotlight

EDNA MAE GERNER:

Lengthy Retirement After Stellar Career in Public Health

by Guillermo Cole

While everyone hopes for a long, active and relatively healthy retirement, unfortunately for some it may not always turn out that way.

But it certainly did for Edna Mae Gerner who retired from the Allegheny County Health Department in 1992. She enjoyed 34 years of retirement before passing away peacefully at the age of 94 in February of this year.

Edna Mae worked in the Health Department for decades as a public health nurse, administrator, and district health officer. She served under several health directors, including Dr. Frank Clack, Dr. Mark Richards, Dr. Bruce Dixon and Al Brunwasser, a fellow University of Michigan alum.

In addition to earning a master's degree in public health from the University of Michigan, Edna Mae held a bachelor's degree from the University of Pittsburgh School of Nursing.

Edna Mae also served her country as a longtime member of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard, rising to the level of captain during her stint in the National Guard.

As someone who worked with Edna Mae early in my own career as the Public Information Officer for the Health Department, I can personally attest to the fact that she was an extremely diligent and dedicated administrator. One of our best, in my opinion.

In one instance, I worked closely with Edna Mae on an innovative program she managed that employed a minority lay person who lived in and was known to the community to reach out to at-risk moms and moms-to-be to get them and their babies into care.

KDKA-TV did a feature story about the program and outreach worker. Thanks to this story by reporter Lynn Hayes Freeland, our program



and outreach worker were honored locally and nationally. Lynn and the outreach worker traveled to Washington DC to be honored at a gathering where people from across the country were recognized for community service.

Edna Mae's work on this program was critical to its success and acclaim. The initiative's template for outreach helped create a new standard for doing public health outreach that continues to this day.

Edna Mae had a lifelong love for beagles and gave many dogs a good home over the years. She is survived by her beloved beagle, Mason, and numerous nieces, nephews, great nieces and great nephews.



*"No act of kindness,
no matter how small,
is ever wasted."*

-RALPH WALDO EMERSON

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

*and then come join us
at the upcoming luncheons!*

September 16, 2026 –

A Representative from the FBI
will talk about Scams

October 21, 2026 –

Retirement and Medicare Updates

November 18, 2026 –

LUNA: A Space Odyssey

December 16, 2026 –

ACRA Holiday Party

For more details visit our website at

WWW.ACIRETIREES.ORG



ANSWER

Commonwealth of Kentucky
Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Commonwealth of Virginia

IN MEMORIAM*

Name	Date of Death
MONNING, WALTER	3/25/2026
SEYLER, WILLIAM	3/28/2026
MAGRINI, SARA	4/01/2026
SIEBER, WILLIAM	4/01/2026
MARTIN, RICHARD	4/02/2026
SHEPPARD, WILLIAM	4/09/2026
SCHILKEN, EILEEN	4/10/2026
BATTOCCHI, JOSEPH	4/12/2026
ANDERSON, MARGARET	4/15/2026
NOVICK, RONALD	4/16/2026
REICHMAN, MILTON	4/18/2026
JURATOVIC, CHERYL	4/22/2026
PATTERSON, JOHN	4/25/2026
BRENNAN, JOSEPH	4/28/2026
KERNICK, DANIEL	4/29/2026
FITZGIBBONS, DOROTHY	5/01/2026
FORD, ROLYNDA	5/06/2026
MARASCO, DOMENIC	5/06/2026
SIEFERT, JOAN	5/06/2026
KOTSAGRELOSS, ESTAIR	5/08/2026
FOMZY, HELEN	5/10/2026
BARTEK, EDWARD	5/11/2026
SANSOTA, RUSSELL	5/11/2026
CAMPBELL, JAMES	5/16/2026
CHAPMAN, SADIE	5/16/2026
FUNARO, GENEVIEVE	5/16/2026
GURSKY, ANDREW	5/18/2026
TORRIS, KAREN	5/18/2026
HEALY, MARGARET	5/19/2026
KIM, JUDITH	5/20/2026
TURNER, PAUL	5/28/2026
FEDOR, ANDREW	5/29/2026
RUFFOLO, MICHAEL	5/29/2026
TREXLER, DOROTHY	6/01/2026
PILARSKI, STEPHEN	6/05/2026
ERNY, GEORGE	6/09/2026
RUSS, DONALD II	6/10/2026
GOETZ, CHARLES	6/11/2026
HIRSCHFIELD, RITA	6/11/2026
BABIN, THEODORE	6/15/2026
SINICKI, WALTER	6/17/2026
REGAN, JO ANNE	6/24/2026
SIEG, KEVIN	6/24/2026
MOORE, RUBY	7/04/2026

*As provided by the Allegheny County Retirement Board