

# BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICER

LOCAL 964

--STAFF--

STEPHAN G. FUGATE -- TOM NOSEK

*By and For the Professional Fire Officer*

IN UNION

THERE IS STRENGTH

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## From the Desk of the President

*By Stephan G. Fugate*

### **DROP2, Finally!**

By the time you receive this newsletter, City Council Bill 09-0295 will have gone through "Third Reader" and will lack only the signature of the Mayor for final implementation, bringing to a close a nearly five-year effort to retain a DROP benefit for our members as a permanent feature of the Fire & Police Employees Retirement System Plan Document. You will recall that the original legislation from 1996 included a "review" clause due primarily to the relatively unique nature of DROP in general and our version of DROP in particular. DROP was a rather new concept in public pension plans and, as such, there was simply no demonstrable experience with such benefit structures and the multiple actuarial assumptions relating to participation and ultimate costs either did not exist or varied wildly.

The benefit of DROP to the Plan participants was actually very easy to calculate, but every benefit comes with a cost that can best be determined through experience. The objective of DROP, from the City's perspective, was to lengthen the career of the Plan participants and if the objective would be met, the overall costs of the Plan could be reduced. In the cold world of mortality rate assumptions, we have a collectively predictable post-retirement life expectancy whether our Plan contains a DROP benefit or not. So if we, as a group, work longer, con-

tribute to the Plan longer, and retire at an older age than we otherwise would have, both pension and survivor benefits will be paid for a shorter period of time. I'll grant you that a longer career also means a higher benefit, but trust me when I tell you that there's a savings in longer careers. Think, Social Security.

As one who was "there" in 1996, I have been asked MANY times why we ever agreed to a "review" clause at all and while the question often came with accusatory finger-pointing, I don't mind easy questions. Very simply stated, there would not have been a DROP at all without the "review" clause and it's really no more complicated than that. What that "review" clause stipulated was that at the end of the first full cycle of DROP (which originally was eight years) there would be a "DROP Test" in FY '05 of the costs and if the benefit failed the test, it could be adjusted or eliminated. The "DROP Test" was an actuarial assessment of the costs incurred in providing the benefit and anything above "cost neutral" would be viewed as a failure of that test. As an aside, the Board of Trustees did not wait until FY'05 to conduct an initial DROP Test but initiated the annual practice several years in advance. Those early year DROP Tests held no weight in the statutory "review" clause, however, and the irony is that the benefit passed the DROP Test every year until FY'05.

Having failed the FY'05 DROP Test, the then O'Malley Administration undertook the task of "fixing" DROP to reduce or eliminate what was estimated to be an annual costs of approximately \$8 million to \$10 million. City Council Bill 06-0370 was introduced on April 4, 2006 that would have all but eliminated the

benefit and the three Unions contested the proposed changes vigorously. The reaction of the O'Malley Administration was that our only option was to convince the City Council to amend the legislation favorably by lobbying the City Council. With the unwavering support of then Councilman Keiffer J. Mitchell, Jr., who was also Chairman of the Taxation and Finance Committee at the time, the legislation was indeed amended. So successful were we in that effort that the legislation languished in Committee through the fall of 2006. Not coincidentally, 2006 was a Gubernatorial Election year with then Mayor O'Malley becoming the Democrat candidate and we all now know the history. On January 22, 2007, with now Governor O'Malley safely in Annapolis and Council President Sheila Dixon Acting-Mayor, the legislation was very quietly withdrawn and original DROP remained in place.

Though I can neither reveal nor confirm the source of the cautionary advice given to the fledging Dixon Administration during the Mayoral transition, I do know that "DROP" was identified as a "top priority" needing to be addressed. And though I can only speculate, I think it fair to assume that the pending Mayoral Election a mere eight months (in Baltimore, the Primary Election IS the Mayoral Election) away very likely influenced the apparent decision to leave DROP as it was. Remember also that the aforementioned Keiffer Mitchell was a Primary Election opponent of then Acting-Mayor Dixon and though the Public Safety Unions had already endorsed Mr. Mitchell, I seriously doubt that a controversial pension issue was wanted.

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## From the President's Desk.....

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The rather convincing election of Mayor Sheila Dixon would have seemed to provide the standing to address almost any issue from the start, but the very first foray involving the Unions into the "DROP issue" occurred late on Friday, February 13<sup>th</sup>. The three Union Locals were directed to meet with Deputy Mayor Christopher Thomaskutty in his office at City Hall at 3:00pm and I do not recall that we were told what was to be discussed. The Fire Locals were in contract negotiations with the City at the time and I'm not sure that either Bob Sledgeski or I anticipated what was to come and we surely did not anticipate particulars of the plan that was to be proposed.

Mr. Thomaskutty outlined the legislation that was to be introduced as a First Reader on February 23, 2009 and while there's really no need to elaborate on legislation that never saw the light of day, suffice it to say that Fire personnel would have been completely cut-out of any such benefit, effective July 1, 2009. I won't say that we panicked, but we were certainly taken-aback and launched into a lengthy and very pointed debate over not only the content of the proposed legislation, but the manner in which it was being presented. To that point, there had been absolutely no discussion with the Unions and though, as your Pension Board Trustee, I was certainly aware of the "interest" being expressed at City Hall, ANY change to our pension benefit structure simply DEMANDED collaboration with the three Unions.

By the end of the meeting, it was agreed that the Unions would be given time to develop a counter proposal with a target savings of \$5 million per year. So adamant was the Administration about moving forward, however, we were only given ten days to respond, counting the weekend ahead and it was nearly 5:00pm by that point. Quite frankly, I was convinced that we would not be able to respond with a reasonable counter in such a short period of time and I viewed that entire process as a recipe for failure. Developing actuarial cost savings that are accurate and defensible takes

time and would require significant "back and forth" between the Unions and our actuary and this would be an appropriate time to sincerely THANK Mr. Tom Lowman of Bolton Partners for his Herculean efforts on our behalf. On February 23, 2009, the Joint Unions presented a five-point plan that provided the \$5 million in cost savings while preserving (in my opinion) ninety percent of original DROP.

Following the submission of the Unions' counterproposal, the three Unions and the City engaged in several weeks of intense negotiations, bringing all interested parties to the table. In the end, we all mutually agreed to what we now know as DROP2 and actually signed an agreement stipulating that we would endorse and support the legislation throughout the deliberative process and only offer amendments that would be supported by ALL signers of that agreement. I would point out that there will be two versions of DROP2, one for Fire and one for Police, but we believe that both fit the career tracts of our respective members.

On March 16, 2009, City Council Bill 09-0295 was introduced as a First Reader and assigned to the Taxation, Finance and Economic Development Committee Chaired by our friend, Councilwoman Helen Holton. Working with Councilwoman Holton and Committee Vice-Chair, Councilman Bill Cole, the original version of DROP2 which was mutually agreed to by the three Unions and the Administration has been amended slightly and, as mentioned early on, the final version will go to Third Reader and final passage on August 10, 2009. We will re-print a bullet-point version of the new DROP2 provisions once the legislation is signed by the Mayor and make the entire content of CC Bill 09-0295 available on our web site though I would caution that the full version of the legislation requires some knowledge of our Pension Ordinance (Article 22 of the Baltimore City Code).

Mayor Dixon's signature will bring to a close one of the most difficult issues that we have dealt with in quite some time. Truth be told, the writing and adoption of original DROP was MUCH less arduous and, in terms of difficulty, the campaign for Binding Arbitration in 1977

is likely the closest issue in comparison. Certainly though two very opportune election cycles played a major roll in the delay, the fact is, however, that what could have been a major disaster for our members has truly been a win-win for all. The nearly five-year delay in changing original DROP will have allowed more than 250 members of our Department to enroll in original DROP since FY'05 and the implementation of DROP2 on January 1, 2010 will continue the benefit in a form previously unimaginable and GAURANTEES that our Pension Ordinance will contain a DROP benefit in perpetuity.

There are MANY people deserving of THANKS from our members and their families and we will do our best to acknowledge all of them in a future edition along with the details of DROP2 but for now, I do want to THANK my colleagues Local 734 President, Bob Sledgeski and FOP Lodge 3 President, Bob Cherry. Couldn't have gotten it done without you, Brothers! And finally, no claim of success could have been possible without the hard work and sincere cooperation of Deputy Mayor Christopher Thomaskutty and F & P Executive Director, Tom Taneyhill. Thank you, my friends!

### Post-Retirement Benefits

One could only wish that a report on our post-retirement benefit structure would have as possible a resolve as the previous writing on DROP2, but that is far from the facts as we know them at this point. You likely know that City Council Bill 08-0220, which was introduced on October 27, 2008, would have eliminated the existing "Variable Annuity" benefit structure that currently exists and replace it with a "guarantee" of a minimum 1.5% per year and a very complicated formula for potential increases beyond the minimum guarantee based upon strong investment returns over multiple, consecutive years.

Though it is something of a moot point, it is my belief that the real potential for increases above the 1.5% minimum would have been very remote as the "pool" of funds would be a rolling, cumulative balance year over year factoring-in losses as well as gains. The

current Variable Annuity, in essence, is an annual "snapshot" of every single fiscal year, literally ignoring any losses from previous years and is thus a much easier hurdle to make in providing increases. But, again, it's something of a moot point as the legislation was withdrawn by the Administration on May 18, 2009 due, in large part, to the visceral reaction displayed by hundreds of our active and retired members at the Council Committee hearing on the Bill conducted on March 19, 2009. If you were there, we THANK YOU for your support and if you were not there or could not be there, you would have been proud of the turnout and you can rest assured it will happen again if necessary.

When I learned of the Administration's plan to withdrawal the initial legislation, I announced the "good news" at the Retiree Association meeting on Thursday, May 14, 2009 but I cautioned that we should always be cautious about what we ask for. I can't claim brilliance and would submit instead that my concern was based upon years of experience in the world of politics and, sure enough, my concern was well founded. It's difficult to imagine that the Administration would withdrawal the initial legislation, in large part, due to the negative reaction by both Police and Fire and re-submit legislation even more onerous, but that is precisely what has happened.

Without so much as a single moment of dialogue between the Administration and the Unions, City Council Bill 09-0348 was introduced on June 8, 2009 that, like 08-0220, would completely eliminate the existing Variable Annuity structure. Unlike the compromise of 1.5% offered in 08-0220, however, 09-0348 does not offer ANY post-retirement benefit structure whatsoever, leaving our retired members with NO post-retirement increase at all unless the Trust Fund exceeds "market value" funding levels that might easily take a decade or more to achieve.

Simply stated, there are two ways to value the "funding level" of a pension fund; one is the "actuarial value of assets" which takes into account expected future investment earnings and the other is a "market value of assets" that compares the current dollar value of assets to the accumulated actuarial liabilities.

It may or may not be obvious but the actuarial value of assets "smoothes" the outstanding liabilities over a number of years and assumes investment earnings not yet realized whereas the market value of assets presumes that the accumulated actuarial liabilities, that are the total value of benefits promised, would be paid TODAY. An appropriate analogy for individuals is that of a home mortgage with payments amortized over as much as thirty years. You likely know that you can make those payments over time and that is the equivalent of a pension fund's actuarial value. If your mortgagee, however, demanded full payment of the total value of those monthly payments TODAY, that is the equivalent of a pension fund's market value. Quite frankly, the market value of assets may be of academic interest but it has no place in determining benefits.

If there is any "good news" to report, it is that Councilwoman Helen Holton, the current Chairperson of the Council's Taxation, Finance and Economic Development Committee is, like former Councilman Mitchell, a good friend and supporter of the Public Safety Unions. We have met with her on several occasions to discuss this and other pension issues and she has committed to working WITH us to arrive at an amicable resolve. As I write, however, the legislation on the table would simply eliminate a benefits enjoyed by our retired members for twenty-six years and the work ahead to preserve that benefit in some reasonable form will be difficult at best.

Councilwoman Holton has indicated that there will not be a Committee hearing on CC 09-0348 until sometime during or after September and we will have ample opportunity to give advance notice. It is our hope that we will have the same level of support that was demonstrated back in March in opposition to CC 08-0220 and we acknowledge that it is OUR responsibility to keep our members informed. To that end, please monitor our web site if you can and pass information along to others that may not have internet access. We know that there exists a very effective network amongst our active and retired members and if you're concerned about your pension benefits, you need to be informed and involved.

### **GBC to the rescue!**

And if all of the above is not cause enough for concern, rest assured that the Greater Baltimore Committee has our best interests at heart in their "review" of our pension system. Right. If you don't already know, Council President Rawlings-Blake enlisted the "expertise" of the GBC to have a close look at our retirement system and, ostensibly, come up with recommendations that will reduce the escalating costs to the City. Having had more than our share of experience with the GBC, this is much akin to giving end-of-life health care delivery to undertakers and I'm not exaggerating.

The first official meeting of the GBC in review of our pension system included what I would describe as ad-hoc "presentations" by the Unions as well as presentations by Mr. Taneyhill and Deputy Mayor Thomaskutty. Suffice it to say that we clearly agree to disagree over the root-cause of the funding level of OUR plan, and I'm not convinced that any outside review will reveal anything that we don't already know. The GBC review committee is a "who's-who" of anti-labor business people and I would suggest that ANY recommendation coming from this group will be something that we will oppose by any means necessary. I really do hate to sound so pessimistic, but it is pessimism born of experience as this is the same group that recommended the closure of TEN suppression Units at the outset of Mr. O'Malley's first term as Mayor.

I served on the "Public Safety" Committee of the transition committee and on the evening of the very first meeting, I overheard an O'Malley-ite telling a committee colleague about how our stations were located in the days of horse-drawn apparatus and that we were "FAT" with resources. Of course, this punk would not have known which end of a ladder was up, so I ignored his ignorance but his comments were prophetic in terms of results. That committee was obviously a "stacked-deck" as was the GBC in general so I'm not at all optimistic about what their findings might be.

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## President's Desk

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And yes, we are currently working without a current MOU but Article 36 of the FY '09 MOU is clear in terms of a continuance of contractual benefits and obligations absent a new agreement. You may already know that the arbitration process went on for SIX DAYS resulting in more than 1,900 pages of transcript in addition to a combined seventy-plus exhibits. An outsider might think that we were arbitrating the death penalty instead of a TWO PERCENT salary increase, but the record is clear and the time, energy and resources expended are, quite frankly, an embarrassment on BOTH sides of the debate. That this Administration would invoke the proverbial "nuclear option" is reprehensible at best and there seems to be no end in sight.

The contested matter is, and has been, in the hands of a single arbitrator and the deadline for filing closing "briefs" was 1600 hours on August 5<sup>th</sup>, so we trust that we're only thirty days from that date away from a ruling and we'll have to live with whatever happens. I only wish that I could be more forthcoming in my personal opinion of the process that we're obliged to follow but I doubt that it would be helpful, so I'll refrain. Finally, the term "brief" is, I suppose, one of those legal terms that I'm just not smart enough to grasp. The "brief" on behalf of the Union Locals is SIXTY-FOUR PAGES; thank God they don't call it a "lengthy"!

## Announcing Nominations for Union Office

*Nominations will be held the first two meetings in September 2009. The following offices are up election for a three-year term starting in January 2010.*

- First Vice President
- Recording Secretary
- One Trustee

## From the Desk of the 1st Vice President

*By Michael Waldner*

Congratulations to all the retirees who recently decided to leave us just prior to July 1<sup>st</sup>. It seems as if Christmas in July was being celebrated in the BCFD as well as most of the malls around the area. I am sorry that I did not get to attend all the "last night" at the many firehouses, but the list was long and notice was short. I will miss all of you and the Department will miss your leadership. My shift will not be the same without Lt. Bill Webster E2 and Capt. Gerry Shedlock E57 (retiring again). I hope the move of E2 into the 6<sup>th</sup> was not the cause of Bill's retirement. Maybe, just the thought of my daily visits was too much for Bill to endure. Enjoy your retirement life as much as you enjoyed your BCFD career. I hope the retirement lasts even longer than your careers.

The summer picnic was yet another fabulous event sponsored by your Local. Attendance was up again this year as word of mouth has continued to impress upon our membership to enjoy an opportunity to share with your co-workers and their families in a day of swimming and great food. The weather, food and company could not be beat. Congratulations to Chris "the champ" Quick (LT. - R1, my C shift) for dethroning Captain Hooter Gibson as the new and reigning "Iron Man" of Local 964. Thanks for bringing the trophy and bragging rights to Steadman. We can store it in T2's old office/bay.

Here it is August and we still have no word on the Arbitration ruling. We were informed that the Arbitrator has requested briefs be submitted this week to rule on the City's argument for throwing out our whole case due to their claim that pension issues are not negotiable and therefore our request to apply 1% to our pensions makes the whole offer illegal. It might have been prudent for the lawyers to argue this first and get the Arbitrator's ruling before we invested sooo many hours of testimony and sooo much money into this case. With a ruling against us, we could have dropped

the Arbitration process right then and avoided all the costly testimony. We will see how it plays out.

When meetings begin this September, I will be up for reelection as 1<sup>st</sup> VP, along with Secretary Tom Nosek and Trustee George Jones. Please take the time to attend the September meetings for nominations for our positions and vote when the ballots are received at your home mailbox. It's your Local, your votes dictate how it will be run, so use your power to make this Local work for you.

## Truck Company #2

To quote Maxwell Smart (several times) from the recent movie about an old TV series, "Would you believe - they closed T2 again"? T2 "was that close" to celebrating its 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September and they were closed two months before reaching that milestone. It is with a heavy heart that I must say goodbye to Truck Co. # 2 and its members. It was officially disbanded again, but I was able to attend the "last night" alumni dinner held by my very own shift at Steadman. They did a great job hosting and preparing the food for this event, especially considering they knew few of the attendees personally. There was quite a cast of previous members of T2 accompanied by a lot of former members of the Steadman Station (and other adjacent units previously disbanded - E7, E59, WT1, T4, T13, etc.) who traveled from near and far for a final tribute. There were many stories told from past exploits. I really enjoyed seeing all who attended and thank them for a final show of old school camaraderie.

It was surprising to see how many people passed through the Steadman doors over the years. Many Officers got their start, as I did, when promoted to LT. T2 "F" and many even came through as the Captains of T2. I know in my eight years there, I had at least 8 Captains if not more. I guess I must have been hard on Captains. I followed the likes of John Cole and Frank Uhlhorn when I was assigned there in 1979. That's pretty good company to be associated with right there and there were many more fine officers who precede them, as well as followed me. It was a breeding ground for many of our Department's leaders. If

you could survive T2 / Steadman, then you were prepared for anything to come your way. You would have encountered just about anything and everything during your time served there.

T2 was a "hook and ladder", then it was a Water Tower/Snorkle, then it was an Aerial Tower, and finally served as a rear mount ladder truck. There were many driver's over these many reincarnations as well as Officer's who served there. Recounting the adventures on the road with many of those drivers were probably the most stories remembered and shared that night.

### **Safety and History**

Two topics mentioned by the Chief and the City Administration as important subjects in speech writing, but not so important in actions. Safety seems to be just what we talk about in meetings. Our member's as well as the citizen's safety is in jeopardy every day we continue with rotating closures. Since all the furor over a lost fire cadet has died down, this City's administration and the Fire Department Command Staff have dismantled the Safety officer positions and no longer concern themselves with proper staffing if those things cost money they would rather spend elsewhere. There is no downtown truck company to service all the high rise dwellers since the close of Truck Co. # 2, unless you count the ones transferred into T2's vacancy, and thereby depleting their own district's resources. Just seems to be shifting the danger. That makes perfect sense, doesn't it?

We are encouraged to celebrate the Department's 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary by attending more speeches and purchasing commemorative badges and year books. In the meantime, they close T2 two months before it can celebrate its own 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Mixed messages are the loudest sounds I can hear concerning all of this. "Sorry about that, Chief". (see earlier quote reference)

### **Softball**

The season has concluded for the Firehouse Softball team and we had an enjoyable season and even won a couple of games. Thanks to all those who par-

ticipated and anyone who would be interested in playing next year (me included) in our 2010 season should contact me to be added to the email notification list. All members of the Department are welcome to join us.

Our spot in the "forty and over division" of the IAFF / MDA tournament on September 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, and 13<sup>th</sup> in PG County is secure and all members who turned forty this year (or in past years) are eligible to participate. We may start as early as Thursday night, Sept. 10<sup>th</sup>, but the schedule is not finalized as I write this today. Normally, we play early Friday morning and again Friday evening if we win the first game. Contact me if you are interested in playing this year.

### **Heart/Lung Scans and Physical Assessments**

So far this summer, we have had consistent usage of the Program as far as the number of participants. Do not wait to avail yourself of this important preventative medical procedure as the handwriting is on the wall of its future termination. If you haven't done the scans since the beginning of this program (4-5 years ago) check with your cardiologist or principal health care provider about refreshing your profile and participating again. This will allow you to also take part in the physical assessment portion of the program that was not offered in the initial start up of the program.

**The Heart/Lung scan program is now being offered on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1100 – 1200 hours for scans only.**

**Our full testing program is now only offered on Tuesdays between 1200 – 1400 hours at the Fitness/Rehab Center.** This will include a wellness background questionnaire screening and blood test panel. There is also a cardio evaluation performed on a stationary bike. **These programs (Assessments and heart/lung scans) at Union Memorial are offered to ALL interested members, active and retired of both Locals (734 & 964) and their spouses and widows.** The results will be available only to you or a doctor you designate. There will still be a fee of approximately \$150 for the scans but the as-

essment is free. The entire program including the heart/lung scan will take less than 1 hour of your time. Please take advantage of it. You are never too young or too old to monitor your health. **Again, these are only open to active and retired members of Locals (734 & 964), their spouses and widows.** Please take advantage of these appointments while they last.

Below are the directions, instructions and contact information to schedule appointments for the Assessment and heart/lung scans. You will have to contact the heart/lung phone # to coordinate your appointments for the same Tuesday or Thursday that you do the assessment.

### **FITNESS ASSESSMENT PRETEST INSTRUCTIONS**

Guidelines recommended for the most accurate test results:

- Wear comfortable, loose-fitting clothing. Sneakers preferred.
- Avoid food, tobacco, and caffeine for at least 3-4 hours before testing.
- Abstain from alcohol consumption within 48 hours of the assessment.
- Avoid moderate or vigorous physical activity within 12 hours of the assessment.
- Ingest no diuretic agents, including caffeine, prior to the assessment.
- Get an adequate amount of sleep (6 to 8 hours) the night before the test.
- Drink plenty of fluids over the 24-hour period preceding the test to ensure normal hydration prior to the testing.

### **Directions to Fitness Center**

Park in garage "A" (1<sup>st</sup> garage on your left) and take elevator to main lobby. Walk across bridge to security desk. Sign-in at desk. Go to 33<sup>rd</sup> Street Building which is straight ahead down the hallway past the pharmacy and to your left. Walk down the ramp past the Conference Center. Elevators will be on your left. Take elevator to 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor and turn

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left and proceed down the hallway to the Fitness Center. You will receive a voucher to cover the parking fee.

For questions regarding the assessment test and scheduling contact: Rebecca Winch at 410-554-2167

She will refer you to 1-877-744-3278 to set up the coordinated heart/lung scan. Let them know you are a Firefighter and need a Tuesday/Thursday appointment to coincide with your assessment.

**Community Outreach Program**

As always, I will mention again about the Community Outreach Program (parents/siblings, friends etc.) conducted by Union Memorial Hospital offering the heart/lung scans to the general public only on Saturdays at **the rate of \$75 each**. The phone # is **1-877-744-3278**. *Getting both for a combined \$150 is a great bargain.*

**Please Note:** Unfortunately, Franklin Square Hospital (sister hospital to Union Memorial in the same Health group) has ended their Program due to budget cuts and it was a duplication of services.

***In these trying times, we are being asked to do more with less, yet again. I know we have always accomplished our mission, but now our resources are so minimized that I fear the conditions are becoming unsafe in much shorter time frames due to fire spread before that first line goes in service or that first truck ventilates the premises. Please Remember, if I am your second due Chief (and I usually am), I am your Safety Officer and I will have your back. I will look out for you, but most importantly, you look out for you. All I want is for everyone who comes to work, to return home in the same condition. I don't want to be the next Battalion Chief who loses a member (and it will happen if things don't get better) due to the manpower shortages. So if the order to back out is given, DO IT. Lives are at stake, and they are your lives and your crew.***

***Remember too, this is your Union. I can be contacted to answer any questions or try to help with any problems at (C) 410-908-2179, (H) 410-879-4545, or (W) 443-984-1737 and I promise to return your call ASAP or email at [captal@aol.com](mailto:captal@aol.com).***

**From the Desk of  
the 2nd Vice President**

*By Mike Campbell*

By the time you receive this Newsletter I will have begun my 3<sup>rd</sup> assignment as a BCFD Battalion Chief. I began work on 7/22/09 as the Fire Communications Battalion Chief. Attempting to fill Pat Walsh's shoes will be a daunting task, but I am undertaking this assignment just as I have done with all of my previous work whether it is Fire Department or Union related and that is giving it a 100% effort! I am still continuing my fight to return to Suppression based on the fact that I have been cleared by my Neurologist and the fact that I am no more a risk in the field than I was before my stroke. It is my belief that the Union's and the Chief of Department need to create a return to work policy when your doctor, especially a specialist and PSI disagree. There was a policy in place some years ago that included a third party, but this became too costly for the Department. It's no fun being pushed out of a job that you love and too many of our members have suffered because of the fact that PSI has the final say! During my rehabilitation and recuperation I found out rather quickly that I was not only fighting the Fire Department and PSI, but also some members of our Union who would circle like a vulture for any piece of **my** Department and Union positions. With that said, I must acknowledge two of my **loyal** Union brothers who were by my side and without their support these last 5 months things would've been more unbearable than they already were. Tom Nosek, throughout my ordeal remained in my corner and was in constant contact to offer whatever it was that I, or my family needed. The next guy truly is a dear friend and one helluva Union official. President Stephan Fugate was with me every step of the way during my many PSI and Fire Department struggles and provided me the best representation, as he does for everyone that can be ex-

## **Annual Medals Day and Memorial Service**

### **Saturday, October 10, 2009**

#### **Location: War Memorial building**

Memorial Service will start at 11 am, this service will honor all members both active and retired from the BCFD who died this past year.

Medals Day ceremony honoring members who are being honored by their peers will follow @ 1 pm, after a brief intermission for refreshments supplied by Box 414 Association.

The Chief of the Fire Department, Board of Fire Commissioners, Baltimore Firefighters Local 734, Baltimore Fire Officers Local 964 and the Medals Day committee encourage all members both active and retired, family and friends to attend this event honoring our past and present Firefighters and Fire Officers.

The past few years there has been limited participation and some apathy towards Medals Day and the Annual Memorial Service. A new committee was formed in October 2008 with the motto "Medals Day and Memorial Service for the members by the members". Please plan on attending this day for you and your colleagues both past and present, IT IS YOUR FIRE DEPARTMENT.

pected. As the brick walls against me began to pile up there were times that my willpower began to wane only to have Steve offer his support and to assist me in keeping the fight to return moving forward. Thanks Steve and Tom, I'll never forget! Last but not least, my family. Leisa, Jason and Megan you provided the hope that kept me pressing on during this time and to know that whatever happened we would work it out. Thanks and I Love you dearly!!! To those members who were shoveling the dirt on my grave while I was still breathing you can put away the Campbell voodoo dolls. I am thankful to continue working in what I believe is the best job in the world and God willing I hope to be around a little bit longer. You may also want to look up the word Brotherhood. You certainly don't know the meaning!

Engine 36 was spared the axe, but T-2 was disbanded on 7/8/09. I would like to offer my support to the Brothers and Sisters of Truck Company 2. It is never easy seeing a fire company close and this one is no different. On top of that the Fire Department is closing up to 6 companies day and night on a rotating basis along with the Airflex before callbacks are made. The Fire and City Administrations do not believe that this will alter the safety of our members. This cannot be further from the truth! Any closing will alter response times and put lives at risk. This practice of rotating closures and manning the Critical Alerts has injury and possible death written all over it. Whether, it is Civilian or Fire Personnel. Mayor Dixon's Administration was supposed to be the **SAFETY** Administration. Well, this is one of the least safe things you can do to Public Safety and our department. I hope that our members take extra precaution out there, because your family loves you and wants you to return home just as you left! G.O. 43-09 was issued on July 10, 2009 with "Conditional Promotions" as per MOP 355. Steve and I are on top of this and are keeping track of the retirements that will impact the projections. These will be the last projections from a

Fire Suppression Lt and Ct's list as the MOP was revised for all promotional lists after May 1, 2009. Congratulations to all of our members who chose to retire. Good luck in retirement! Four members of our Executive Board listened to a presentation from a representative of Kaplan University on August 3rd. Kaplan University allows members to obtain Associate, Bachelor and Masters degrees online. This was only tentative and we will look into their programs and get back with the membership with more info. The Chief of Department wants to add education as a requirement for future promotional exams and this has the potential to assist you. The Memorial Service/ Medals Day will be on 10/10/09 beginning at 1100 hrs. in the War Memorial building. Light refreshments will be provided by Box 414 in between the two events. I would like to thank Bob Jordan for another fantastic John L. Seiss Memorial Golf Tournament. You could not have asked for a better day of golf. The proceeds from the golf tournament benefit our VEBA Fund, which provides benefits to our widows and orphans. Bob has suggested that this may be his last time at the helm of this very important endeavor. Bob, I hope it isn't, but if so, thank you Brother for all of your hard work. Our Union needs more **dedicated** workers such as you! Now that BINGO has been terminated, the golf tournament is the largest provider of funds to the VEBA account and we are in desperate need of some other fundraising ideas. Steve Horchar came up with a Christmas ornament that the Local will be selling at Union meetings and at various other functions. I would like to thank Steve and Tom Nosek for taking the time to kick-off this project by selling the ornaments at the Fire EXPO. They sold 104 ornaments at this event. Without these types of ideas we will most likely have to look at canceling some of our social functions. That would be a last resort, but it is not out of the question, so please help out when called and let us know of any ideas that will assist the VEBA Fund! I also want to give kudos to

Tom Nosek for this years Family Picnic. Tom, along with his Entertainment Committee did a tremendous job for our members and their families. A special thanks goes out to Gil Brooks and his family for handling the children's games at the last minute and to Mike Stacharowski and his wife Marie for providing the children's prizes. Lt. Chris Quick was the winner of the Ironman contest. Chris had to beat out none other than Retired Lt. Russell "Colt" Carter who drove for hours from Delaware just for the chance to crush Hoot Gibson! Well Russ, you should've saved the money on gas! Naptown sure has made a difference in you Brother. Don't know what the hell it is! It still was great to see you and the family.

Please keep Donald Fout Sr. and his family in your prayers. Don's wife Pat is going through some extremely difficult health issues at this time. Also, Heather Cate who gave birth to a baby girl only to have some health concerns of her own to contend with. Get well soon.

An RFP was issued to search for a Plan Administrator for the Deferred Compensation Plan as the contract with ING expires on November 30, 2009. Great-West has been recommended and accepted by the Committee. The only difference you should notice is a change in the materials that are mailed out and the web address. If you have questions or concerns contact the Deferred Compensation Plan Office at 201 E. Baltimore Street, Suite 120 or call 410-332-0809. Their hours are Monday thru Friday from 0800 to 1700 hrs. I am handling the Fire Officer organizational automobile/motorcycle tag applications. If you need applications for either auto or motorcycle, drop me a line. When you receive your tags please remember to send back the letter that is provided and include your tag number. The 964 store is up and running and will be open at Union meetings in the future along with other Social Affairs. Items available: shirts, decals, patches, license tags etc. Please keep abreast by logging on the Fire Officers website at [www.iafflocal964.org](http://www.iafflocal964.org).

...continued on page 8

**1st V.P.** ...continued on page 8

### Health Care

After many years of searching I finally located a Labor Representative for United HealthCare. If you have any issues concerning UHC or the other providers, please give me a call! Open Enrollment should begin in October or November. I have had some calls concerning the NEW optical plan. The City no longer provides vouchers. CareFirst has issued cards that you show at the provider's office. I would call ahead of time to make sure that your vision provider accepts the CareFirst card.

### Safety and Health

I attended the Safety/Health meeting on 7/16/2009. The Department is preparing for an increase in the H1N1 virus. With the Department's approval I have included a Bulletin (page 10) explaining the importance of washing your hands and the dispensing of the hand sanitizers. We also spoke of the Leather Helmet issue. As usual, the Department pulled off another knee jerk reaction with the banning of the leather helmets due to a possible singular issue. The S&H Committee is looking at guidelines along with the Health and Safety office that the Chief of Department will accept to allow our members to begin wearing their helmets again. Stay tuned! Engine 55 should have their ceiling painted by the end of the summer. Work should begin on T-15's roof soon, followed by E51 & E52. The highway Safety Vests should've been delivered to each company by now. If they haven't, contact the Safety Office. A Bulletin should be out soon for the vests as well. The Ward Diesel systems are still being installed. By the time you read this, Communications will have their new chairs. I cannot emphasize any more than I have in the past. **STOP AT ALL STOP SIGNS AND RED TRAFFIC SIGNALS!!!!**

Make sure that you e-mail the Safety Office at ([FDSO@baltimorecity.gov](mailto:FDSO@baltimorecity.gov)) if you have any safety related issues along with contacting me. If you are e-mailing Health and Safety Officer Bill Jones, you must e-mail William H. Jones, not Will-

iam Jones! You must also continue sending in Special Reports as is policy. The next meeting is scheduled for 8/20/09. Contact me with any issues. **BE SAFE!**

### President's Club

I am in the process of distributing the Presidents Club shirts. Retirees cannot contribute to the Presidents Club by way of dues deduction, but can still donate the full amount of \$100.00 by way of cash or check! Please make checks out to: Local 964 PAC Fund! The PAC Fund is our most important tool to have the **local** politicians listens to our concerns. The Fund can **only** be used for Local and State politicians and **cannot and will never be used** for Federal politicians, (President, Senator etc.) If you contribute \$4.00 or more a pay you are automatically included in the Presidents

Club. Thanks to those who have contributed and to those who haven't, contact me if you need a dues deduction card.

**As always, keep your Beneficiaries up to date and don't hesitate to call or e-mail me at any time.**

Cell – 443-629-0216

Work – 410-396-5773

E-mail: [capttain16@hotmail.com](mailto:capttain16@hotmail.com)

### Words to twirl by...

Holy Moses I have been deceived,  
Now the wind has changed direction  
and I'll have to leave.

Won't you please excuse my  
frankness, but it's not my cup  
of tea

Holy Moses I have been deceived!

Elton John

## BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICERS IAFF LOCAL 964 ANNUAL CRAB FEASTS

**September 23 and 24, 2009 - 7-11 pm**  
**American Legion Post # 38**  
**3300 Dundalk Ave.**  
**Dundalk, Md. 21222**

**Menu: hot steamed crabs, crab soup, Italian sausage, hot dogs, corn on the cob, pasta salad, dessert, cold beer, soda and more**

**Cost \$15, tickets purchased in advanced only**

**Directions for members coming from the south take the Key Bridge and get off the first exit, all others take 95, south, get off at O'Donnell St exit proceed east to Dundalk Ave, turn right on Dundalk Ave, go approx 1 mile, American Legion Post on the right hand side**

**IAFF LOCAL 964  
BALTIMORE  
FIRE OFFICERS**

**FIRE OFFICER'S INAUGURAL  
W & O PUB TOUR  
FEATURING-MILLER LIGHT**



**WE WILL VISIT:**

- NACHO MAMA'S
- MAMA'S ON THE  
1/2 SHELL
- COBURN'S
- COSMOPOLITAN'S
- WALT'S
- LEERS 2
- J D'S SMOKE-  
HOUSE
- CLADDAGH'S
- LOONEYS
- Canton Station
- DELLA ROSE'S
- PORT SIDE
- SPEAK EASY
- FINS

We will be hosting the event in the:

**HISTORIC CANTON SQUARE!!**

This event will benefit the **BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICERS  
WIDOWS AND ORPHANS FUND** aka ( The VEBA Fund).

**SIGN UP Starts at 10 am at the following locations:**

**FIRE OFFICERS HALL-Linwood and O'Donnell St ,  
CANTON STATION—Conkling St. and O'Donnell St.**

**DELLA ROSE'S— 1st Mariner Tower Boston St. & Clinton St.**

**Must Have EVENT WRIST BAND FOR REDUCED BEER PRICES**

**\$2.00 MILLER LIGHT BOTTLES**

**FIRST 400 TO SIGN UP RECEIVE FREE EVENT SHIRT!!**

**DATE: SEPTEMBER 19, 2009**

**TIME:11:30 am till 5:00 pm**

**COST: \$ 15.00**

**DRINK  
RESOPNSIBLE  
NEVER DRINK  
AND DRIVE!!!**

**BALTIMORE CITY FIRE DEPARTMENT****BULLETIN****Subject:** Hand Sanitizer Distribution

**Information:** In preparation for the upcoming influenza season and the potential return of H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu), the Fire Department has been aggressively procuring personal protective equipment (PPE) including wall-mounted and individual bottles of hand sanitizer.

Field preventive measures of infection control for influenza include hand washing, gloving, respiratory PPE, and environmental cleaning. Remember, hand washing is one of the single most important factors in preventing the spread of influenza.

Over the next few weeks, each company throughout the department will receive four (4) wall-mounted dispensers for hand sanitizer, four (4) cases of the hand sanitizer solution for use with the dispensers, and two (2) cases of the 4 ounce hand sanitizer solution (individual bottles). The quantities will be increased for areas like Headquarters, Fire Prevention, Fire Communications and the Fire Academy. In addition, medic units, the offices of Battalion Chiefs and EMS District offices will receive two (2) dispensers and solution, as well as, one (1) case of the individual bottles of hand sanitizer.

The dispensers are mounted to the wall using double-faced tape that is supplied with the unit. The wall-mounted dispensers are to be placed in the following areas:

1. Watch Desk
2. Bathroom
3. Kitchen
4. Apparatus

If the apparatus already has a hand sanitizer dispenser, the 4th dispenser can be placed in another suitable location like sleeping quarters.

In addition to the wall-mounted dispensers, each member will receive a 4 ounce bottle of the hand sanitizer to be kept in each member's locker or on their person. The sanitizer will be distributed by the Company Commander or their designee.

The quantities of hand sanitizer that are being distributed should provide an adequate inventory for 6-12 months. Additional hand sanitizer solution can be obtained from Fire Supply. The Fire Department is monitoring the developing situation with the H1N1 Influenza (Swine Flu) outbreak and is in close contact with state, local, and hospital partners, including the Health Department and Mercy/PSI.

Contact the Infection Control Office at 410-396-2710 if there are any further questions.

## From the Desk of the Recording Secretary

By Tom Nosek

The GOOD news first, over 160 people enjoyed themselves on July 12 at the annual family picnic @ Cascade Lake in Hampstead, Md. The weather cooperated and folks enjoyed the pool, lake, food and friendship. The 1<sup>st</sup> annual Iron Man contest was won by Lt. Chris Quick of Rescue 1 he was given a run for his money by last year's inaugural Champ Hoot Gibson, Tom Skinner, Eddie Hall, Vaughn Kaszak, Gil Brooks, Annapolis FF Colt Carter and the first ever woman contestant Raquel Ryer the daughter of retiree Earl Ryer and the "Colonel's" cousin. I want to THANK the grill staff for their hard work at the picnic, thanks to George Jones, Frank Schlosser, Gil Brooks, Jake Van Gelder, Jim Murray, Kevin Rock, John Baublitz and Mike Campbell. Special thanks go to Mike Stacharowski and his wife Marie for their efforts in providing the toys for the kids and Gil Brooks wife Shauna for coordinating the games. Thanks to my daughters, Erin and Emily, for their efforts in packing and unpacking all the supplies from the Union hall.

On July 10, the annual John Seiss Memorial golf tournament was held at Compasse Pointe , in Pasadena , Md., retiree Bob Jordan and his staff did another fantastic job in raising money for the VEBA fund. Thanks Bob and all the members who assisted, another fine day of golf and friendship.

In July the end of the promotional list expired and we had numerous last minute retirements and promotions. Congratulations and thank you to the members who retired for their years of service to the BCFD, may you have a long and healthy retirement. Good luck to all who promoted and for the newly promoted Lt's, our Union meetings are the first and third Monday's of the month (however due to Labor Day, our first meeting in September will be Wednesday September 9 !!! )

I would like to thank both Locals, FOP and the retired Fire and Police who marched on City Hall and attended City Council meetings these past few

months against company closures, pension benefits and fiscal budget issues. The City Council was aware of our presence!!

Thanks to Brother Steve Horchar, Steve sold 104 Christmas ornaments at the Fire Expo, proceeds to the VEBA fund, great job Steve!!!!

Now for the BAD news, July 8 saw the closing of Truck 2 and the beginning of rotating closures on both day and night shift. We have been down this road before and a reminder be SAFE and don't let it work for politicians and bean counters, meaning walk to the wagon, put your turnout gear on, seat belts and stop for all red lights, the only numbers that matters to ANYONE is RESPONSE TIMES!!!!

The next subject has hit a nerve with me, does anyone in either Local ever heard the phrase "NEVER WRONG A BROTHER"!!!! I recently represented two members on discipline hearings and the rumblings I heard at kitchen tables and two phone calls asking if these members would be reduced or possibly dismissed, which would entail create two promotions. Members have rights, trial boards , appeals etc., to the self serving that is what UNIONS DO, represent their members. We also have a few members on medical leave and there has been the same attitude , well when does their time expire and who will get that spot, these members have careers and families, we should respect that, or have we lost OUR FOCUS as a labor Union!!!!

### Important Dates

- Muscular Dystrophy Association MDA Fill the Boot , September 3-7, 2009, watch for kickoff party on September 3!!!

- Inaugural Pub Crawl , September 19, 2009 from 11am to 5:30 pm in Canton, benefits the VEBA fund ( see flyer )

- Annual Crab feasts September 23 & 24 - location to be announced, tickets \$15

- September Union meetings: Weds. September 9 and Monday September 21

## Sick and Injured

*provided by Bob Hatoff*

Porky continues to improve. On June 20th the Retiree's honored him at our bull roast. He was able to attend with his family.

Bob Hatoff had surgery on his left eye to correct macular pucker. Everything went well, and he is able to check out the pretty girls again. If he can keep his mouth shut, he won't get punched in the eye.

Charlie Williams had surgery to repair a bone chip in his elbow. The surgery was successful, but his bowling and golf temas put him on the disabled list.

The rest of our guys continue to improve. Please keep us in your prayers!

**THE BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICERS****Local No. 964***Meetings -- 1st & 3rd Monday*

1030 S. Linwood Avenue

Baltimore, MD. 21224

PHONE: 410-276-6964

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## Tired and Retired

by Bob Hatoff

Well it's time to write my column. It seems like there's never any good news to write about. To be honest my column is the only thing I can read without getting depressed. I was reading the Sun and found murder, suicide, drugs and concealed weapons. Then there was a dog fighting ring with illegal betting. Now even though the Orioles are tanking again, I decided to turn to the sports section for some relief. That's when I realized I was already reading the sports pages. Did you ever have one of those days when nothing is going right?

In June's column I reported the awards that Mike Waldner, Frank Reinsfelder and I had received. Then I received a picture from the event. It shows Frank and I proudly displaying our awards, while Mike is showing the back of his. It makes you wonder how a man can rise to the rank of Battalion Chief and Union Vice President without being able to tell the difference between the front and back of a plaque.

Bucky Muth sent me an article, from an Ocean City paper, about D-Day. One of the veterans mentioned was our own retiree, John J. Sauer. Another one was Elmer Muth, but Bucky doesn't remember him.

I called Roger Eichelberger to see how he was doing. He's fine but his wife has some serious medical problems. One bright spot was he remembers Hugo Warns. I hope when I'm closing in on 100 years old some of you will remember me. In fact I hope I'll remember me!

Roger Melchior called to let me know his daughter's prize bull was not bought by Outback Steakhouse. A local family purchased it and invited them to a steak dinner. However his daughter declined the invitation. The least Roger could have done was ask me to take her place. I tell you I get no respect!

Anita and I took the two youngest grandchildren and went to Disney World for a week. Janice and others doubted I was up to all the walking. I told them I would walk from one ride to another. Then I could sit and rest while the kids were on the ride. I didn't even make it until noon. Anita took me back to the motel and got the paramedics to check me out. On the other days Anita rented a wheelchair for me. Then in her own words, "She pushed my geriatric ass around the park." The easiest thing I had to do was when the kids wanted to ride the brand new roller coaster there was a waiting time of one hour. So I was able to sit for the hour with a cold soda. This is a perfect example of the exciting life I live.

Now let me remind you about the Annual Retreat. It's scheduled for September 16 & 17<sup>th</sup> and I highly recommend it. If you need more information you can call Chief Devilbiss or me. I guarantee you'll have a good time. To be perfectly honest I feel my nonstop adlibs are worth the trip. More important if you're in need of a savior, we can help.

Well that's it for now. I hope you enjoy the rest of the summer. Let me hear from you, especially if you have some good news. As always I can be reached at 1805 Greencastle Dr., Baltimore, MD 21237 or 410-866-3235.