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Washington County Retired Teachers Association

An Affiliate of the Ohio Retired Teachers Association

May 2011

"And what is so rare as a day in June?
Then, if ever, come perfect days."

James Russell Lowell (1819-1891)

June is almost here, another school year is nearly finished, and it seems to me that time passes much too quickly. I can't believe I've been retired for ten years already. I also can't believe that many of the things I promised myself to do in retirement have yet to be done. I loved teaching while I did it, but I love my life in retirement just as much, and maybe more. I keep in touch with several of the people I worked with; one way I do that is through my involvement with WCRTA. In addition to seeing old friends, I have gotten to know some new people and made more friends. Our June meeting is at the Lafayette Hotel Wednesday, June 8, at 12 sharp. Helen Drake reports that the menu this time is fried chicken, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, plus the usual bread, beverage, and salad, along with strawberry mousse for dessert. Helen and her faithful assistants always make the room look really nice with her seasonal decorations, and she usually has a treat bag for everyone. The price of the meal remains at \$13.00, which includes the gratuity. Make a reservation by calling Joyce Ross at 373-2359. You can also make a reservation by e-mail at:

jross1007@sbcglobal.net

The deadline to make a reservation is Sunday, June 5, by 8 P.M.

Attendance at the April meeting wasn't as good as usual, but the 35 or 40 members and guests who attended had a good time. The choir from Phillips Elementary in Marietta provided the entertainment following lunch. J.D. Benson, a Warren High School graduate, is the music teacher at Phillips, and he does a great job working with the children. As I mentioned in the last newsletter, art, music, and physical education programs often suffer when schools have financial trouble, since the State of Ohio requires only minimal instruction in these areas. I think that's a shame because the fine arts and physical activity are so important in developing children. All of us in Marietta who support public education were relieved that the operating levy passed. As a teacher retired from the Warren District, I was very sad that their levy to build new schools apparently failed by only eight votes. I view this as an opportunity lost that is unlikely to come again. I feel especially sorry for the families that will suffer hardships caused by staff and program cuts, the elimination of busing, and "pay to play."

A word
about
how our
newsletter
works

For the past five years or so, Karen Burton and I have been in charge of writing and publishing the WCRTA newsletter. Most of the time, it is more or less a hodgepodge of news and developments that affect our members. We try to keep up with events in Columbus that may affect current and future retirees. We don't very often talk about politics as such, mostly because ORTA has not, as a rule, taken stands on political issues, unless they are very closely connected to the well-being of teachers who have already retired.

A good example of ORTA's reluctance to get actively involved in partisan politics can be found in the Senate Bill 5 debate. The executive board of ORTA voted to support placing the issue before the voters but did not endorse the effort to repeal the law. Karen and I are not constrained by a similar policy. In the last issue, we spoke clearly against Senate Bill 5, and we haven't changed our minds. In our opinion, it is bad legislation designed to punish public employees who belong to unions.

We understand that there is another side to the story. In the interest of fairness, we would invite any member of WCRTA to write a letter in support of Senate Bill 5. We will publish it in the July newsletter, well ahead of the vote in November. If you wish to submit a letter to the editor, please mail it to WCRTA, 21200 SR 676, Marietta, OH 45750, or send it by e-mail to

jimwms14@suddenlink.net

JW

June Program

Since we get the best feedback from members when we have music as our program for the bi-monthly luncheons, we are having musical entertainment once again at the June 8 meeting. Rusty Kidd, a member in good standing of WCRTA, belongs to a men's choir called the Treblemakers. He and three additional members of the group perform as a quartet. Rusty and his comrades have kindly agreed to perform for us at the June luncheon.

As Curly sings in *Oklahoma*, "June is Bustin' Out All Over," so why don't you bust out of the house and invite a friend to join you down at the Lafayette? It will brighten your day, and based on the weather the past few weeks, not to mention the forecast for the week ahead, we could use something to brighten up the days. Of course, by the time we write the next newsletter, I'll be whining about the heat and the drought, longing for a nice rainy day.

Jim Williams, who is serving another term of vice president of WCRTA, is in charge of our luncheon programs. If you have a suggestion for a program you think the members would enjoy, please give Jim a call, or send him an e-mail. He's always looking for something different to entertain the "troops." Even if you have a suggestion about the type of program folks might enjoy, pass that along too. Jim's phone number and e-mail address are included in the newsletter.

This and That

I know that we are in tough economic times and that the budgets of local government, including school boards, are going to become tighter and tighter. I believe that hope lies in public education. One of the great strengths of our country has been our ability to provide opportunity to everyone. As the world becomes smaller, and almost everything becomes more global, we must find ways to maintain those opportunities for all Americans. We cannot risk becoming a country where opportunity is available only to those who can afford it. Bashing public education has almost replaced baseball as our national pastime. And don't get me wrong: I know that many, many improvements can (and must) be made in our public institutions, including schools. I also know that throwing money at the problems is not in itself the answer. It is my honest opinion, though, that the public schools are about all that stand between society as we know it and anarchy. If our public schools are allowed to fail, our nation is likely to fail as well.

It is very important that we urge our representatives in Columbus (Sen. Stewart, Rep. Thompson, and Rep. Phillips for most of us) to work on a fairer way to fund public schools. For more than a decade, state government has been dancing around the constitutional question of school funding, with very little to show for it. Band-aid efforts are not going to solve the funding problems of public education in Ohio. Some day, and in some way, the General Assembly is going to have to find the courage to do what's right and ensure an equal educational opportunity to all of Ohio's children.

KB & JW

In Memoriam

Bonnie Bagwell taught for many years in the Marietta City Schools, primarily at the Middle School (formerly Marietta Junior High). My friend Jody tells me that she was an excellent art teacher and a lovely person. **Wilma Jurden** also taught in Marietta and tutored children who were home bound in the era before handicapped children were permitted to attend "regular" school. **Jane Edwards** had taught for a while in Wood County before coming across the river to head up the Head Start Program sponsored by the Washington and Morgan Counties Community Action Organization. We extend our sympathy to the families and friends of these educators.

As always, we apologize for errors or omissions. If you know of one of our colleagues who has passed away recently and would like to write an article for the newsletter, we invite you to do so. We also would appreciate any corrections to our memorial tributes.

We are thinking of inviting members of WCRTA to submit articles about their favorite teacher, beginning in the fall. Jim Williams went to grade school in New Matamoras, and he is planning to write about some of the teachers who taught there in the early 1960's. He tells me that his first three teachers had well over a hundred years of teaching experience among them. So be thinking about your favorite teacher(s), and consider putting pen to paper to write a tribute to an unsung hero.

"The whole art of teaching is only the art of awakening the natural curiosity of young minds for the purpose of satisfying it afterwards."

Anatole France (1844-1924)

KB
