

Staying Connected

PCC Retirees Association

Oct 2012

Retirees Visit North Korea And Find It to Be a Place Like No Other

On hearing that my wife and I went to North Korea, many have asked: “Can U.S. citizens travel there?” Yes, you can, but you need a visa from North Korea, and you have to fly there from Beijing—on Russian made aircraft. Not surprisingly, our state department does not recommend that you go and warns about dire consequences if you do.

But most of these dire consequences are for illegal actions, such as entering the country without a visa. We had our visas and our itinerary had been arranged by Koryo Tours, the official travel agency for the DPRK, the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. We didn’t expect any dire consequences.

“So what’s it like in North Korea?” The quick answer is, “Like no place we’ve ever been.” We were not alone in this feeling: all nine of us on the tour had similar feelings.

I had read about the personality cult in North Korea, but that still didn’t prepare me for the extent to which people revere the country’s former leaders—Kim Il Sung and his son, Kim Jong Il, shown above. Kim Jong-un, son of Kim Jong Il, is now the third member of the Kim dynasty since his father died last year.

Nearly every place we visited was a monument to the worship of the Kim dynasty, especially the two 65 foot bronze statues that were recently unveiled to honor the 100th anniversary of the birth of the “Great Leader,” Kim Il Sung.

These statues are a must visit for every citizen of Pyongyang as well as those throughout the country who get permission to visit the capital. When we visited, we saw groups of women from the countryside wearing brightly colored dresses over their work clothes. They quietly walked up a hill to the statues of their exalted leaders. They waited until it was their turn, then approached the statues, bowed, and solemnly placed flowers at the foot of the statues. This scene is repeated all day long. Good business for the flower vendors.

Most North Koreans look upon the Kims as gods, not just leaders of their country. Their biographies ascribe all sorts of powers to them. One official legend about Great Leader Kim Il-Sung is that he walked on water and turned “pine cones into bullets and grains of sand into rice.”

His son, Kim Jong-Il, didn't walk on water, but he is supposed to have written more than 700 volumes of various works; a 15 volume set of books describe his achievements in guiding the country's literature and art.

Besides the numerous statues and murals depicting the two Kim's, all the adults wear gold-framed enamel badges, with portraits of the two leaders, pinned to the left breast. (When I inquired about getting one, I was told that it was not possible). So revered are the images of the Kims, that it is considered a crime to "deface" pictures of them. Within minutes of meeting our tour guides, Ms. Kim, who did most of the talking, told us that we should take great care not to fold a newspaper or magazine that had a picture of the Kims on it. Worse yet would be to sit on a copy of a picture. These are considered crimes in North Korea. I'm not sure what the punishment might be, but I've read about a student who had studied overseas, looked at the underwear made in North Korea, and commented derisively: "Who would wear such underwear?" His comment landed him in a political prison.

Not long after we arrived, it became clear that North Korea was a place where everyone was watching everyone else. We soon worked out that not only were we being watched by our guides, but our guides were also watching each other.

Ms. Kim is a single, attractive 25 year old, and Mr. Bong is a young looking 40 something, who is married with one child and had just started working in the travel business. They watched each other, and the bus driver, who only spoke Korean, watched both of them. On occasion, we had the feeling that all of us were being watched by members of the huge security apparatus that maintains rigid control over the DPRK.

One morning, just as we got off the subway Metro in Pyongyang, someone from state security accosted our other guide, Mr. Bong, wanting to see his papers and asking what he was doing with a group of foreigners—further confirmation that, as one former North Korean defector put it: "In North Korea everyone is watching each other."

All this watching makes people very cautious about what they say. For example, one of our group, Lisa Davis, commented that she was hungry (it being around dinner time) and asked our guide: "Ms. Kim, are you hungry too." Ms. Kim replied: "I'm never hungry." In North Korea, to say you are hungry might well be taken as a criticism that the government didn't supply enough food for its citizens. People appear to be well fed in Pyongyang but widespread hunger is reported throughout the rest of the country.

Not only were we being watched, but also every place we visited was like a scene in a carefully scripted play. The most striking example of this occurred during a visit to a Sunday service at Pongsu Protestant Church. We were first greeted by the minister and then led into the church where places had been reserved for us—up front. We took our seats and watched the service unfold. It appeared to be an ordinary church service—the sermon and occasional singing by the choir, seated next to the altar. The congregation

was comprised of middle age and elderly women—with a few elderly men—no young people or children.

What was most surprising about the service is that during his sermon, the minister spoke about the plight of Korean comfort women during the World War II and about the American aggressors in the Korean War. (I found this out later from one of the Korean-American members of our group). The minister, of course, was being supported by the government, and had to tow the party line.

I noticed that all of us were being watched by a video camera on the side wall that projected pictures of the service and the congregation on a screen above the altar. That video camera reminded me of George Orwell's "Big Brother" in 1984.

But what struck all of us as most strange happened at the end of the service. The members of the congregation quickly walked out without saying a word to each other. And once outside, instead of visiting with each other, they kept walking down the hill away from the church. Later we found out that in each apartment building in Pyongyang there is an intercom that sends out notices to residents when they need to appear for various activities, trimming a lawn with a scissors or attending church services.

So why did we visit North Korea? Our original purpose for going was to visit one or two orphanages supported by a local foundation in Pasadena, the Han-Schneider International Children's Foundation, whose founder, Sam Han, was a Korean orphan. However, we were told beforehand that it was not possible to visit any with a tourist visa. Instead, we had arranged to visit the North Korean Red Cross, who—we were told— could help us connect with orphanages. But a day before we were scheduled to visit, we were told "permission hadn't been granted" for the visit. No reason given. We later heard that the head of the Red Cross office wasn't even aware that we wanted to visit. We guessed that maybe our visit was cancelled because we had laughed during a video at the Pueblo, the American spy ship that was captured by the North Koreans in 1968; it is now a scheduled stop on the tourist itinerary.

Dramatis personae: Frank Tripicchio, Jane Hallinger, Jim Dawes (tall guy), Lisa Davis, Alan & Sheila Lamson, Harry and Young Oh, Amy and Ted Chung.

Despite this disappointment, our tour ended on a positive note. We were able to visit with Jim Dawes, acting head of the International Red Cross in Pyongyang. We met him at the Diplomatic Club where we had dinner on the last night of our stay. He was surprised that I was able to contact him by phone since he has an international number and our tour guides with cell phones could not access these numbers. (We weren't allowed to bring in cell phones). I told him that I called from our hotel where there is an international phone service.

Jim explained that the IRC is involved primarily with disaster relief, especially helping rural villages prepare for the frequent floods that ravage the country. The IRC also helps to distribute medications to health clinics throughout the country. He couldn't help with

connecting us with orphanages but suggested that we might have success by contacting the North Korean mission at the United Nations.

After 10 days in North Korea, we were glad to be leaving this hermit kingdom where everyone is watching everyone else, where many places are off limits, and where nearly all the tourist sites are monuments to the Kim dynasty. It is a place, best described by the title of Barbara Demick's book on North Korea— "Nothing to Envy."

Even with All of the Turmoil at PCC, Harry is Still Optimistic About the College's Future

By Harry Kawahara

When I am out and about town, I often run into friends, and in the course of our conversation a frequent question is, "Hey, Harry, what the heck is going on at PCC?" Well, there's a lot going on at PCC, and the news I hear is not good. There seems to be a gloomy pall on campus which derives from a number of causes.

We got a hint of what was coming when it was announced last year that the administration would grow into six vice presidents (Six!). The Human Resources Dean became a VP; there would be a VP of Information Technology; and a General Counsel was selected with VP status. The other Vice Presidents would continue in Academic Affairs, Student and Learning Services and Administrative Services. I was quite surprised that our Board of Trustees went along with this expansion of administrators. I can recall that there was controversy years ago on campus when we grew to three vice presidents.

The newly chosen Vice President of Human Resources departed suddenly due to some internal differences. Then last December, Dr. Jackie Jacobs retired as Vice President of Academic Affairs. Clearly, more big changes were looming on the horizon.

Not long after, we heard some shocking news. Vice President of Administrative Services, Richard Van Pelt, and Alfred Hutchings, Facilities Supervisor, were fired for alleged conflict of interest. The district attorney continues its investigation of the two men. (See story on Page 15) It has been reported that Hutchings has a very shady past, so it is quite surprising that he was hired at PCC in the first place.

Further, a radically new structure for the teaching divisions was recently approved by the board. The divisions were reduced from 13 to five—Humanities and Social Sciences, Science and Math, Arts and Design, Career, Technical and Professional Education, and the Community Education Center. The proposal calls for cycling of faculty members as head of each school. Even more disturbing is that this new structure was approved in the face of strong resistance from shared governance committees that wanted the college to retain the current academic divisions with all the deans in place.

I served as academic senate president in the mid 1980s when AB 1725 was passed in Sacramento. Central in this legislation was the concept of shared governance. In collaboration with the administration, the faculty developed a comprehensive shared governance policy with broad input. To observe the diminishing of this critical concept is very troublesome.

Additionally, due to the departure of three Vice Presidents, another administrative structure was recently approved which includes two senior Vice Presidents, six dean positions and four executive directors positions. This is extremely heavy in administration; we call this “top down” management style. Then too, there are also some differences in the ranks of the faculty. Some faculty are not happy with the Faculty Association (union) citing a growing dissatisfaction with the lack of transparency and responsiveness by its leadership. This resulted in the emergence of the Coalition of Progressive Faculty to urge the union to pay greater attention to broader faculty concerns.

Last year, almost 90 experienced staff retired, taking advantage of the retirement incentive. This year 23 more people retired. The consequence of this exodus was the loss of highly experienced staff with vital institutional memory. This leaves huge gaps in the operation of the college and puts an undue strain on those who remain.

Of course, this was all aggravated with substantial state funding cuts due to the economic crisis in California. In fact, the cuts were higher than expected. Employees were shaken by the possibility of job losses. Many are reluctant to express their unhappiness about the rapid changes taking place for fear of being laid off. This is, a major source of worry for staff.

In 1970, Alvin Toffler’s best seller, “Future Shock” was published. Toffler defines future shock as a certain state in institutions that is caused by “too many changes in too short a period of time.” The consequences are anxiety, malaise, uneasiness and loss of morale. I believe this is precisely what is happening at PCC. There have been too many radical changes in the overall structure of the PCC culture in a short two-year period. The college is clearly coping with some form of future shock. For many years, the wheels of change moved very slowly; that was part of the PCC culture. One can become frustrated with the slow pace of change, but there were some advantages with gradual transitions. Certainly, one was to avoid the daze of future shock.

Unfortunately, this does appear to be a rather grim and dismal picture of what is happening at PCC. However, in my many years at PCC, I have seen us agonize through painful struggles and somehow we seem to “hang in there” and survive. The key to this amazing endurance is the commitment and talents of a quality staff. Despite all these earth-shaking changes taking place, I am betting on the superb staff we have to see us through these tough times. We will survive these next few years and emerge stronger and better. I guess I am an incurable optimist. Go PCC!

This is the last column I am going to write as President of the PCC Retirees Association and the last two years have certainly been a rather turbulent time for an institution that has played such a large part of our lives. I think of the ancient Chinese curse, “May you live in interesting times.” It has certainly been that. As always, the one piece that keeps me strongly connected to PCC is the people — my colleagues. We have many quality people among our retirees and I am privileged to be numbered among them. I want to thank the Retirees’ Board of Directors for their loyalty and vigorous support of PCC despite many discouraging events. I believe most of them join me among the ranks of incurable optimists.

Trip to Medieval Times Was Fun for All

By Hans “Skip” Morkisch

Twenty-two PCC retirees and their guests shared a Medieval adventure when they ventured to Buena Park to wine, dine and watch a colorful show where jousting was the game of the day.

A tour of the extensive facility was hosted by the King, his Queen, gallant Knights and their Ladies, and of course, their Pages.

They mingled and welcomed the many guests. Refreshments were available, as were many, many timely souvenirs and gifts from that period. Dinner consisted of a huge portion of roasted chicken, ribs and potatoes — all served on metal plates (no silver, of course). However, there was an ample supply of napkins and even bibs to help out.

Before the main course, there was the traditional porridge and flat bread served by young maidens — a real royal feast.

Then the games began! The lavish production opened to a packed house (twas Spring vacation) with the Knight of Honor introducing the King, the Queen and then the Knights of the Court.

They paraded about the arena mounted on their beautiful white Spanish horses. The Knights were dressed in full regalia. Each rode carrying his colors with the Pages assisting. Each of six jousting knights claimed a section of the audience as a rooting section. This made the event even more exciting — shades of a Lakers game.

There were dancing and prancing horses—a marvel to witness. The main jousting event was interesting to watch, and at times it seemed so real.

PCC retirees shouted their approval, clapped their hands and cheered as OUR Knight won. At the end of it all, everyone was a winner including a most captivated audience.

What You Need to Know About the 1440 Lifetime Benefit for PCC Retirees

By Dorothy Burns

Whenever people decide to retire from PCC, they often hear about the 1440 they will be getting, but most of the new retirees don't know what it is or what they have to do to get it.

A common question when the big day comes is: what is the 1440?

The 1440 was originally adopted by the PCC Board of Trustees on June 7, 1990 with a retroactive effective date of January 1, 1990. It is a life-time wraparound health supplement of \$1,440 per year and is provided to all certificated and classified retirees with 14 years of service with the District. The retiree is eligible to receive this benefit following retirement from the District and after the age of 65.

This is a taxable benefit. Although this benefit was originally intended as a Medicare supplement in order to assist the retiree with the expense of purchasing Medicare B, the recipient may use the money for any purpose or any purchase.

Your first payment will be issued the month after you turn 65. From that point on, all checks will be mailed in late March as this is an annual benefit. Retirees who turn 65 in December and January will receive their first check in March in order to avoid duplication.

A return postcard is mailed to all eligible retirees in January each year. The postcard should be signed by the retiree requesting a continuation of the benefit and verifying the address. No check will be issued unless a postcard has been received by the District. To ensure that the small postcard arrives, it is usually best to put the card in an envelope and return it to the college.

If you are eligible and have not received a check or if you do not receive a postcard in January, contact Fiscal Services.

The Carters Experience Life in Morocco

By Bruce Carter

In March and early April, Bruce and Kathy Carter traveled to Morocco where they crossed the High Atlas Mountains and explored the Anti Atlas Range and the Sahara Desert. Traveling with a group from the Los Angeles Natural History Museum, the focus was on mineral deposits, mines and collecting mineral specimens. Along the way, of course there was ample opportunity to enjoy the food, shop for souvenirs and marvel at the dramatic scenery.

After a few days in Marrakech and a day in Essaouira on the coast, we left behind the tourist crowds and crossed the High Atlas into the much older Anti Atlas Mountains and the beginning of the Sahara Desert. The highest range in Africa, the Atlas Mountains are basically the same as the Alps, made up in part of 200 million year old limestones and other sedimentary rocks uplifted during the most recent collision of Africa and Eurasia just before the opening of the Mediterranean Sea.

If you watched the recent Olympics, you likely saw a number of Cadillac ads featuring dramatic roads in the High Atlas. As the only geologist in the group, Bruce presented a number of lectures on the geology of this part of Africa. Once across the Atlas, passing tree-climbing goats and many stork nests on minarets and other high points, they spent most of the time in the more arid Anti Atlas, particularly visiting ore deposits and mines.

Riding camels, sitting out a massive dust storm (out in the dunes) and experiencing torrential rain with even a little snow, they headed out on the rough four-wheel drive roads of the Sahara. One mine is an enormously rich silver mine first worked in 800 BCE with hand tools. The pit is now about 1000 feet deep, but the mining continues much farther below in huge tunnels deep below the surface pit. A tour of the separation plant and smelter led on into the warehouse where ranks of heavy pure silver ingots are stored for shipment back to France.

Bruce was particularly interested in the Bou Azzer cobalt arsenide deposit that supplies a significant portion of the world's cobalt production. He described how the deposit formed about 650 million years ago, and speculated about how these types of highly toxic deposits likely have a bearing on speciation and the development of new forms of microbial life just before the Cambrian explosion that led to all the higher forms of multi-celled life such as fungi, plants and animals.

The trip was only 3 1/2 months after Bruce's ankle fusion surgery. He was still in a walking boot, but managed to navigate the rough terrain fairly well. Kathy's challenge was to deal with the cold weather. She was prepared for warm Sahara weather, but in the mountains of southern Morocco, it was the rain, snow and wind that proved the real challenge.

It was a fabulous trip that took them into very remote country after a little taste of the more common tourist destinations. They are looking forward to the next Natural History Museum trip, perhaps to Columbia and its rich emerald deposits next year.

Retirees Group Gives Six Scholarships

Six students moved on from PCC to universities with some financial help from the PCC Retirees Association. The scholarship committee members, Mikki Bolliger, Harry Kawahara, Joe Spiro and Alan Lamson, met with the students before presenting each of them with a check for \$600.

As the committee listened to the students tell about their time at PCC, their interests and future plans, they were impressed with the caliber of these outstanding young people. The students were thrilled to receive the scholarships which would help them buy books and other incidentals. The students transferred to universities for the fall semester—three of them went to UC's— either Berkeley or UCLA—one to USC, one to Pepperdine, and one to Cal State L.A.

This year's scholarship winners, their majors and transfer institution include: Max Beletto, Linguistics, UCLA; Jimena Cuenca, Geography, Berkeley; Bethel Haile, Biology, Pepperdine; Tom Leung, Economics, Berkeley; Brittany Ulloa, Biology, Cal State LA; and Mona Zhang, Biology, USC.

The Retirees Association Board wants to thank all of you who have contributed to the Retirees' Scholarship Fund. If you haven't donated to the scholarship fund, please think about doing so. These students and so many more definitely need financial help to continue their education.

An Appeal from the Board's Scholarship

Chairman

Dear Retirees:

Our students need our help now more than ever. Please send a taxdeductible contribution to the PCC Retirees' Scholarship Fund at the PCC Foundation, 1570 E. Colorado Blvd, Pasadena 91104. You can also call the office and contribute by using your credit card.

The Foundation office number is: (626) 585-7065. You can also contact the office by e-mail at: pccfoundation@pasadena.edu. The Retirees Board is looking into the possibility of scheduling a fundraiser in the Spring with all money going into the scholarship fund. As details become available, we'll keep you posted. Please send your email address to Lisa Sugimoto at lisasugimoto@yahoo.com

Thanks, Alan Lamson,
Chair Retirees' Scholarship Committee

Two Gallery Exhibitions Feature Photos by Wilhelm Bleckmann

Wilhelm Bleckmann, who taught photojournalism at PCC for 35 years, was selected to display his photographs in two exhibitions at the Time and Space Gallery in LaCanada

over the summer. The first show, “Blue Bird of Happiness” featured artistic images taken of oak trees throughout California that Wilhelm calls “Mother Nature at her Best.”

Wilhelm said he got the idea for the photographs of the mighty oak trees in California as he drove on rural roads from San Diego to Redding and was astounded by the formations of some of the trees that are hundreds of years old. As he viewed the shapes of the trees and their intertwined branches, he visualized animals and even human faces and figures. That led to him documenting the timeless wonders that exist right before our eyes that few people take time to notice.

In the second exhibit, Treasures — The Hidden Gems of Los Angeles, Wilhelm selected from his impressive collection of photojournalistic images of movie stars in fluid rather than posed, static moments. The images in the show were taken during the mid 1970s when he served as director of photography for Society West, a magazine “primarily for the Bel-Air and Beverly Hills crowd, which gave him access to charity events and award shows attended by some of the most popular film and television personalities of the day.

Now that Wilhelm is retired, he has time to concentrate on the artistic side of photography. Plans for future exhibitions of his images are being planned.

Digital History Collaboration Wants to Record Family Stories About Pasadena

The Pasadena Digital History Collaboration (PDHC) is looking for Pasadena’s family stories. The Shattford Library, Pasadena Public Library and the Pasadena Museum of History are working collaboratively to record oral histories and capture photographs of long-time Pasadena families.

Susie Ling, professor of history at PCC and Linda Stewart from the Shattford Library are working with independent study students to “capture the memories” and artifacts related to Pasadena history. A student will be assigned to interview you and digitize selected photographs which then will be entered into the PDHC database.

We are asking the PCC retirees group to help us. If you would like to be interviewed and involved in this project, contact Mary Ann Laun at maryannlaun@yahoo.com or call her cell at (626) 827-8492. To see the database, go to <http://www.pasadenadigitalhistory.com/>

Trip to Colorado Includes Gold Mine 1,000 Feet Underground

By Mikki Bolliger

With the temperatures in the Valley hovering close to the 100 degree mark for days on end, Dave and I decided to head for cooler country and visit our son, Josh, in Centennial, Colorado. Unfortunately, the weatherman in Colorado didn't get our request for cool temperatures, and we ended up enduring blistering heat there as well. Thankfully, the weather wasn't the only reason for getting out of town, so we were able to soak up a bit of history as we played tourists for a week.

Although the area had been hit by a rash of wildfires, by the time we arrived, most were under control and didn't affect our travel. A few clouds threatened rain periodically, but they only served to increase the humidity and did nothing to snuff out the fires. Our trip had many highlights, so I thought I would focus on two places we enjoyed the most.

Our first excursion was a trip up the cog railway to Pike's Peak. The gift shop at the railway station was selling oxygen in cans—something I thought was a joke. It wasn't. When we got to the top of the peak, 14,100 feet, several people on the train pulled out their cans and were puffing away. Luckily, we had spent several days visiting places at elevations of 8,000 and 9,000 feet, and we didn't need assistance to breathe.

As we stood at the top admiring the majestic scenery, a man approached us and asked if we had driven to the top. When we told him we had taken the railway, he said that he was looking for someone willing to drive his car back down the mountain for pay. He then described the terrifying drive to the top of the mountain, and how he had never been that frightened in his life. (Not exactly the best sales pitch to get someone to take his driving offer.) Of course we had heard how perilous the drive was, and we would never consider making the trip by car. I didn't even ask how much he was willing to pay, because no amount of money would lure us onto that winding dirt road without guardrails. I should also mention that the man had no intention of being in the car with the paid driver. He was hoping to get an empty seat in one of the cog railway cars. We returned back to the spectacular scenery as he approached someone else.

The train trip only allows for 25 minutes at the top, so you need to take advantage of the short amount of time to soak in all that beauty. As we boarded the train for our return trip, we didn't see the man in any of the railcars. He was probably in his car trying to summon the courage to drive down the mountain. I was a lot more relaxed on the way back down knowing I didn't have to drive on that treacherous road. If you ever visit Pike's Peak, the lesson here is do not drive.

The next place on our "to see" list was a gold mine in Cripple Creek, Colorado. When Dave bought the tour tickets, I had no idea the mine was 1,000 feet below ground. When our name was called to go in, I was horrified to see that we had to ride down in a cage elevator that had a sign indicating that the elevator is inspected every day before anyone is allowed on. If that was supposed to make people feel more secure, it had the opposite effect on me. (However, I am the first to admit that I am a chicken of the first order.)

The open elevator, which had four adults and two children standing sardine style inside, took three minutes to reach the bottom—the longest three minutes of my life. It was a relief to get off the conveyance, but I kept thinking that we also had to go back up in that rickety old thing.

The tour was even better than we hoped. Not only did the guide fill us in about the history of the area, he demonstrated several pieces of heavy equipment used by the miners to extricate the gold.

We even got to see a vein of gold high up in one of the tunnels. It is still there because removing it would undermine the stability of the tunnel.

However, it was easy to visualize how exciting it must have been for prospectors working their claims to finally discover gold. If you take a drive around the area, you will see a lot of holes in the ground that look like they were made by man-size gophers. There are 5,000 of those holes—all of which were dug by prospectors hoping to strike it rich.

In the event that you don't want to brave the cage elevator to go inside a mine or take the cog railway to the top of Pike's Peak, there are plenty of other things to see and do in Colorado. And if you want to stay in Cripple Creek, there are several small casinos on the main street that can offer you yet another kind of adventure.

[VP Talks About Alliance for Retired Americans](#)

Hollis Stewart, 1st vice president of the retirees' board, presented information at the last meeting about the California Alliance for Retired Americans. Hollis, who is a member of CARA, encouraged others to learn more about the organization and encouraged retirees to follow the group's suggestions for voting on the ballot propositions.

CARA is California's largest grassroots senior advocacy organization, representing more than 900,000 seniors and their families. CARA works on issues to improve the quality of life for seniors.

Hollis explained that CARA took positions on four Propositions that will appear on the Nov. 6 ballot that the organization feels will have an impact on seniors. The group recommended a Yes Vote on Proposition 30, temporary taxes on millionaires to fund the state, and the group opposes Propositions 31, 32 and 33.

Proposition 31 changes the state budget process and imposes spending caps and limits. "The proposal would set caps on how much the state can spend on any program— regardless of changing demographics or unforeseen disasters. It ties the hands of policymakers to make timely decisions based on the real needs of Californians.

Proposition 32 “seeks to limit the ability of seniors and working people to engage in the political process and fight for their rights and services.”

Proposition 33 changes the law to allow auto insurance companies to raise the rates on anyone who has a lapse in coverage due to illness, injury, military service, school or unemployment.

CARA also encourages seniors to vote for the presidential and congressional candidates who represent “our” interests. For more information on CARA, check out <http://www.californiaalliance.org/>.

Kawahara Appeals to College President on Behalf of Retirees

Dear Dr. Rocha:

We can appreciate that California community colleges are faced with a severe budget shortfall, but we are deeply troubled about the decision by the PCC administration to notify 45 of our retired faculty colleagues—on very short notice— that they could be either not be teaching the courses that had been assigned or would have their assignments reduced. Many of these faculty members were shocked to be informed of their dismissal just one week before classes and were disappointed that the College had treated them in such a disrespectful manner.

It is difficult to see how such a move would result in a huge saving to the College. In fact, we were informed that the savings was not nearly what was expected. But more importantly, it is unsound academically. How can new hires hope to prepare for courses on such short notice, especially those with little familiarity with the courses they have been assigned as well as the standards of the College?

We believe the College has violated the decades old past practice of giving opportunities to retired faculty who wish to teach part-time. Additionally, this decision could be construed as age discrimination. We therefore support the efforts of the faculty to reach an amicable resolution to this unfortunate decision.

We strongly recommend that the College return to past practice and give priority to faculty retirees to teach on a part-time basis. The College needs these highly experienced and effective teachers in the classroom. Our students will be the biggest beneficiaries of this decision.

Thank you for your thoughtful consideration of our recommendation.

Respectfully, Harry Kawahara, president

Pension Reform Act Explained by CalSTRS

This analysis of the Pension Reform Act is reprinted courtesy of CalSTRS to explain the changes in the retirement system.

CalSTRS has conducted an initial assessment of AB 340, the California Public Employees' Pension Reform Act of 2013, and its impact on CalSTRS members and operations and outlined key changes. A detailed analysis is expected to be released by next week. However, the most significant reform issue for CalSTRS continues to center on closing its \$64.5 billion funding gap.

Although a specific funding plan is not included as part of AB 340, CalSTRS is encouraged by the approval of Senate Concurrent Resolution 105 (SCR 105), which states the Legislature's intent to take action to address the long-term funding needs of CalSTRS in the 2013-14 legislative session.

"We have been working for some time to raise awareness of our funding shortfall, the cost of waiting to address it and the ultimate risk failing to do so presents to the state General Fund," said CalSTRS Chief Executive Officer Jack Ehnes. "SCR 105 establishes a framework for the development of a funding solution and we are hopeful legislation that addresses the longterm funding needs of CalSTRS will be enacted in the 2013-14 session."

The total impact of the new legislative changes may not be fully realized for decades to come. CalSTRS analysis of the proposed changes has identified three key areas: Future CalSTRS members will be required to work longer to receive full retirement benefits. A valuable anti-spiking tool will further enhance existing CalSTRS safeguards against pension spiking. The strength and appropriateness of CalSTRS current plan design is validated.

Changes in the normal retirement age from 60 to 62 with a 2 percent age factor will mean that new employees will need to work until age 62 to receive full retirement benefits compared to the current allowable age of 60. CalSTRS estimates the total fund savings from the changes to the benefit formula to be \$22.7 billion over 30 years.

Primary savings to the fund reflect: A reduced benefit formula, a required final compensation based on three years, and a cap on compensation allowed to calculate a defined benefit, otherwise known as creditable compensation.

Initial changes to the normal, ongoing cost of benefits are estimated to result in a contribution rate of 8 percent of payroll for new employees.

Based on legislative changes set forth in AB 340, which requires that employees pay at least 50 percent of normal costs, a normal cost of 15.9 percent of payroll is projected for future members.

This represents a reduction from the existing plan structure projected normal cost, for those same future members, of 18.51 percent. Normal cost is the present value of benefits attributed by the pension formula to employees.

AB 340 establishes a limit on compensation that is counted toward calculating a member's pension which will further enhance existing CalSTRS safeguards against pension spiking. For new Cal-STRS members (starting on or after January 1, 2013), who like existing members, are not covered by Social Security, the initial limit is 120 percent of 2013 Social Security wages, which will be approximately \$132,000. Preventing pension spiking is a priority for CalSTRS. Since last fall Cal-STRS has made aggressive changes to strengthen its anti-spiking efforts, including creating a toll-free Pension Abuse Reporting Hotline and a dedicated Compensation Review Unit to investigate suspected pension spiking cases.

The CalSTRS \$64.5 billion funding shortfall can be managed with thoughtful action. With the Legislature's approval of SCR 105 on August 31, plans are underway to work with affected stakeholders to develop three alternative plans as requested in the resolution.

The plans will consider gradual, incremental increases in contributions to address the long-term funding needs of the Defined Benefit Program. Once completed CalSTRS will submit the plans to the Legislature early next year as outlined in the resolution. The Legislature has expressed its intent to address the long-term health of the fund in the 2013-14 legislative session.

Faculty Association Charges Administration with Breach of Contract for Ignoring Shared Governance

The PCC Faculty Association has filed four complaints with the PERB, The Public Employment Relations Board, charging that the administration has disregarded PCC's shared governance process and violated the negotiated contract by imposing a new calendar on the faculty.

In addition to the PERB action, the FA surveyed the faculty to see how the organization should respond to the numerous workplace violations including the cancellation of the Winter Intersession "and the imposing of a trimester calendar in violation of legal contractual obligations."

The workplace violations were listed in the survey along with a number of choices for possible action by the faculty.

The survey said the administration “unilaterally imposed the new calendar for the remainder of 2012-2013 while disregarding the decision made by the Calendar Committee and the PCC College Council, both made up of all constituent groups—faculty, staff and students.”

The administration “realigned the college and disregarded PCC’s shared governance and the decision made by the Reorganization Realignment Committees in which dozens of faculty spent months assessing all options.”

The FA indicated that “on Aug. 27, 2012, the President told the Academic Senate leadership that no Board action would be taken on a new calendar until full collegial discussions had taken place—however, on Aug. 29, the new calendar was presented to the Board by the President and passed.”

The FA charged that “the President falsely stated at the August Board of Trustees meeting that the Calendar Committee proposed and supported the trimester calendar.” The organization also stated that “the President falsely claimed the “shared governance process is broken” at the college.

The charges also indicated that “the District has admitted it is not in a financial crisis in its official documentation to the state, yet it has increased reserves from 14% to 20% while cutting more than 1,000 classes in the past four years.”

The faculty members were then asked to vote on how the FA should proceed as well as which of those actions they would personally participate in. Some of the choices included a vote of no confidence for the President; support for a student walkout/strike; support for a faculty job action; an organized letter-writing campaign to the Board of Trustees; faculty flu; picketing at the board meeting; picketing on campus and continued negotiations.

The survey results were not available when the newsletter went to press.

District Attorney’s Investigation Leads to the Firing of Van Pelt and Hutchings

By Nick Saul
PCC Courier Editor-in-Chief

Editors Note: Since the last newsletter, there have been a lot of changes at PCC with the firing of Rick Van Pelt and Al Hutchings. For those who do not live in the area, the following story is being reprinted courtesy of the Courier. Actually, two stories have been combined to bring you up-to-date.

Former Vice President of Administrative Services Richard van Pelt, and former Facilities Supervisor Alfred Hutchings – both under investigation in a bribery probe – were

officially replaced on Aug. 29 when the Board of Trustees approved an extensive realignment of the college's executive cabinet.

Van Pelt and Hutchings were fired by the Board of Trustees on June 18, a week after officials announced that the Los Angeles County District Attorney's office was investigating them for "conflicts of interest." They were immediately placed on administrative leave.

One of the "conflicts of interest" that the DA may be investigating pertained to van Pelt's and Hutchings' founding of a company together. The company, Sustainagistics, was based in van Pelt's Altadena home and, according to data compiled by the California Secretary of State, specialized in import logistics.

The District Attorney is moving on with the probe, but officials are not willing to disclose investigation details nor can they predict a timetable for completion. "It is a matter of law," said Jennifer Schneider, assistant head deputy of the District Attorney's Public Integrity Division.

"The investigation remains confidential and we cannot predict how long or short it may be. Our goal is to find out what the facts are."

Since learning about the investigation, the school has conducted an audit into its own financial records by hiring the outside accounting firm of Vicente Lloyd and Stutzman which updates the administration at every board of trustees meeting.

"So far so good," President Mark Rocha said in regard to the audit's progress. "It appears that there's been no financial damage as a result of the actions of the two former employees.

A recent lawsuit filed by LED Global, a firm that lost the bidding for new lighting on campus, reveals some details of the bribery allegations that may be the centerpiece of the District Attorney's investigation of van Pelt and Hutchings. John Schmocker who represents van Pelt and Hutchings, said, "My clients are outraged; it's a total fabrication. The problem is [LED Global] are fraudsters and tricksters, and they're trying to manipulate the District Attorney."

In the complaint filed July 26 in the Los Angeles Superior Court, LED Global LLC and its two principals Robert Das and Saila Smith accuse van Pelt and Hutchings of a host of hedonistic requests on top of a solicitation of bribes.

According to the complaints, van Pelt and Hutchings had offered LED Global a "purchase agreement" to the tune of \$5 million after the company agreed to numerous requests, including expensive travel for van Pelt and Hutchings to Mumbai for a factory site visit. "During the course of making arrangements for the factory site visit to Mumbai, Hutchings and van Pelt began to make unusual and expensive requests," the court document says. The requests included business class travel, accommodations at five-

star hotels (the Four Seasons in Mumbai), an excursion to the Taj Mahal, more than \$2,000 worth of Cuban Cigars, and the demand for prostitutes, which, LED Global denies providing.

According to the court documents, van Pelt and Hutchings also requested they be paid \$250,000 in commission for the contract they made with PCC, and after introducing LED Global to other community colleges. "A 5 percent commission was to be personally paid by [LED Global] on the value of any contract entered into between LED Global and any other college in the State of California." These commissions were to be paid to an off-shore bank account, according to the lawsuit.

Last week, Van Pelt and Hutchings filed a cross-complaint in which they claim "[LED Global] conspired and agreed among themselves that if they did not receive the substantial lighting contract with Pasadena City College, they would instead accuse [Van Pelt and Hutchings] of alleged wrongdoing and would seek substantial damages against [Van Pelt and Hutchings] to compensate for the lost contract money." The court document then alleges LED Global's acts were "done knowingly," with "malicious intent," and the "statements and representations about [themselves] have caused each of them [van Pelt and Hutchings] to lose his respective job and income from Pasadena City College and may have far reaching consequences as far as future ability to obtain other employment.

The District Attorney's probe of the two men continues. The DA confiscated computers and files from the men's offices and homes.

In Memoriam

Championship Swim Coach Passes Away

By Robert Lewis

Ron Ballatore, head coach of a Pasadena City College record five state champion men's swimming teams, passed away Friday after a long bout with bone cancer. Ballatore, 71, died at a hospital in Gainesville, Fla., where he resided.

Ironically, Ballatore's passing occurred on the first day of the CCCAA State Swimming and Diving Championships, an event in which he earned his early fame as a PCC coach.

A member with a bronze bust of his likeness in the prestigious PCC Court of Champions, Ballatore coached the Lancers to state team titles in 1971, 1972, 1976, 1977, and 1978.

He coached recent PCC Sports Hall of Famers in All-American swimmers Jack Tingley, Eric Marks, and Glen Aiken. In his time at PCC (1967-1978), he produced 10 conference team titles and seven Southern California team champion squads.

Nicknamed “Sticks,” Ballatore later guided UCLA to the 1982 NCAA championship. He served on the coaching staff at five Olympics, including for the U.S. national team in 1984 and 1988. He also coached Peru in 1968, Ecuador in 1972, and Israel in 1976. He was a three-time, Pacific 10 Conference Coach of the Year at UCLA, where he coached for 16 seasons. In 2009, he was inducted into the American Swim Coaches Association Hall of Fame and was named to the UCLA Athletic Hall of Fame earlier this month. Ballatore also served as head coach at Brown University and at the University of Florida.

He coached 28 Olympians, including gold medalists Brian Goodell and Tom Jager. Besides a slew of California Community College state and national records, Ballatore’s swimmers produced 11 American and NCAA records. Jager would set the 50-meter freestyle world record.

Ballatore is survived by his wife Ann, daughters Lisa, Jenne, and Angelina, and sons Ronald and Brent.

Butz: Counselor and Dean

Cleon Butz, former Dean of Guidance and Counseling, recently passed away. He started his career in education at PCC on Sept. 12, 1949 as an English teacher when PCC was a combination high school and junior college. In the fall of 1959, Cleon became a counselor, and he helped hundreds of students work out their class schedules along with their educational and career goals. He had a lot to do with student success at PCC.

After working five years as a counselor, Cleon was promoted to Dean of Guidance and Counseling. He served in that position from July 1964 to 1971.

Cleon was such a kind, caring individual who loved working with students and counseling them. After seven years working on the administrative side of counseling, Cleon opted to leave the dean’s position and return to counseling where he was able to once again work with students.

In addition to his counseling responsibilities, Cleon served as the faculty adviser to Alpha Gamma Sigma, the college’s honor society. He retired on July 5, 1993.

Joe Sargis Served 12 Years on the Board of Trustees

Joseph E. Sargis, former member of the board of trustees, passed away at his home in Monrovia on March 25, 2012 at the age of 84. He was born on January 11, 1928 in Arkadelphia, Arkansas. He joined the Navy and was stationed in California, but wasn’t ready to settle there yet. He returned to Arkansas and graduated from Henderson

College in Arkadelphia. He moved to California in 1951 and settled in Sierra Madre where he began career in banking.

Joe served on the Pasadena City College board of trustees for 12 years and twice as president. He served on the board of the PTA, National Little League, Arcadia Auditorium Foundation, the Arcadia Historical Society, and he was a founder trustee of the Arcadia Educational Foundation.

Joe was proud of his Arkansas heritage and the feeling was mutual. He was honored by his home state by being named a continuing ambassador.

Mary Jane Cordon, Math Professor and Dean

Mary Jane (Vogler) Cordon passed away April 10, 2012 in Palm Desert. She was born to Martin and Louise Vogler in Jasper, Ind., on July 29, 1938, the third oldest of 14 children. After high school she entered the order of the Sisters of Providence where she served as a nun for 18 years teaching in schools in Indiana, Illinois and California.

She left the order in 1974, and she married Emilio Cordon in 1979. The couple was married for almost 30 years. Mary Jane taught mathematics at Pasadena City College for 20 years, and she also served as Associate Dean of Economic Development for several years. She holds the title of Professor Emeritus from Pasadena City College.

She was also the author/co-author of four college mathematics textbooks. Mary Jane was an active member of St. Francis Assisi Catholic Church in La Quinta and was involved in many charitable organizations and projects. She was an avid tennis player and loved dancing and reading.

Mary Jane was preceded in death by her husband, Emilio F. Cordon; her parents and her one brother, Donald Vogler. She is survived by her two step-daughters, Lisa O'Donnell and Sabrina Ball; her two sons-in-law, Bill O'Donnell and Cy Ball and two grandsons, Justin O'Donnell and Cade Ball. She is also survived by 12 siblings.

Ralph Gutierrez, Counselor, Developed the Cooperative Education Program for the College

Ralph "Doofie" Gutierrez passed away March 29, 2012 at the age of 80 in El Monte from complications of Alzheimer's disease. Ralph was born and raised in Boyle Heights, went to Bridge Street School, Hollenbeck and Roosevelt High schools, and he graduated in the Summer of 1950.

He served in the Army, returned and married. He went on to graduate from Cal State L.A. with a bachelor's degree in Vocational Education.

He began teaching in the LAUSD schools before joining Pasadena City College, where he was a Special Counselor and Administrator.

While at PCC, he developed the Cooperative Education Program, and he traveled all over the country talking about educational issues.

He returned to the classroom where he retired after 39 years.

Ralph served on the El Monte High School Board for eight years and two years on the Rio Hondo College Board of Trustees. After he retired Ralph worked for the El Monte High School District as the District Welfare and Attendance "Hookie Cop."

Ralph held a lifetime membership in the Tournament of Roses. He also held membership in the American Legion Post 216, Veterans of Foreign of Wars Legion Post 10218. He was also a 32nd degree Shriner.

Ralph loved deep sea fishing and he didn't mind traveling if he could manage to haul in a good catch. In addition to fishing, Ralph enjoyed his motor home. And of course, he loved USC football.

Ralph left behind his wife Lorene of 57 years, four children Dennie, Denise Rubin, Jolie Eritano and Ralph "Sam" Jr., four grandchildren, a great-grandson and his son-in-law.

Jennie Cook Started a Family Tradition at PCC

Jennie H. Cook, a familiar face in the Records Office for more than 30 years, passed away in August at the age of 92.

Jennie was born in Indiana and came to Pasadena when she was 3 months old with her parents and siblings. After high school, she worked in Photo Finishing during World War II.

When the war was over, she opened her own photo finishing shop. When she decided she no longer wanted to run her own business, she applied for a job at Muir in the photo department where she worked for several years. Jennie eventually saw the light, and when her sister, Vivian, suggested she apply for a job at PCC in the early '60s, she did.

She moved up quickly and soon became supervisor of the Records Office. Even though she retired in 1985, if you mention her name to anyone who was around the campus during that time, they still remember her and always have a good word to say about Jennie.

Because Jennie enjoyed her job and the people she worked with at PCC, she started a family tradition. She blazed a trail for her two sisters, Vivian and Shirley, who joined her

on campus. Her niece, Terri Marsala, also followed in her footsteps, and now Jennie's great niece, Jo Marie Jennings, works there too.

Jessie Garcia Helped Students in Learning Assistance Center

By John Wood

We've been informed that our beloved colleague Jessie Garcia passed away. She died of congestive heart failure on Feb. 12.

Jessie had a gift for working with disabled students. She started out as an hourly employee with DSP&S, and she worked for several years before being hired as a full-time staff member of the Learning Assistance Center.

She was a fixture in the LAC 1988 to 2000. Jessie was known for her warm heart and the compassionate attention she gave to all students. Upon leaving work every afternoon at 4 p.m., she had a habit of sighing, "Time for all good people to go home." Now, indeed, it has become her time to go home to her place in heaven.

Consider Honoring a Friend or Colleague with A Scholarship

When members of the college staff pass away, friends and relatives often wonder how best to honor those individuals.

Many times, special scholarships are established in the name of the deceased. The college foundation can help set up a scholarship in the name of someone you want to remember.

If you don't want an award named after the person, you can also donate money to an existing scholarship in that individual's name.

If the deceased retired from PCC, you could also contribute to the Retirees Association scholarship in that person's name.

If you have any questions or you want to name a scholarship or donate money in someone's name, contact the PCC Foundation at (626) 585-7065.