



The Peralta Retiree

January - March 2015

Vol. 11 No. 2

<http://www.peraltaretirees.org>

From the President...

by Debby Weintraub, PRO President

Greetings PRO Members:

The PRO Board recently elected me President. As many of you know, Jerry Herman decided to step down as the organization's president after ten years of dedicated service. However, I will be counting on Jerry's mentorship to help me in my new role, which will be nothing new as Jerry has been my mentor since I first walked onto the Laney College Campus in the mid- 1970's.

I was an eager but completely untrained applicant for an English Department tutoring position in their innovative Right- to- Read Program designed to help returning Viet Nam Veterans and others in need of remedial reading instruction. Within the sparsely equipped classrooms of the B Quad at Laney College, I discovered my passion for teaching basic skills students. I took the advice of Jerry, Carmen Rezendes and Trudy Fator and pursued a master's degree, specializing in reading instruction.

After more than ten years of working part-time, I was finally permanently hired in 1999. Jerry again emerged as my mentor, this time as a member of my tenure review committee as well as my department chair. As always, Jerry gave generously of his time and talents.

I followed in Jerry's footsteps and became a co-chair of our department in 2002. Right around that time, I also was urged by Bruce Jacobs to serve as Laney PFT Campus Representative. In 2006, after serving both as a campus representative and vice president of PFT, I ran for the presidency of the union that represents all 1,000 plus faculty in the district. It was not only an honor to take the reins of the PFT from Michael Mills, but it filled me

(Continued on page 2)

PRO Lunch and Theater Party

Magic Theater Presents

A Lie Of The Mind

by Sam Shephard

**Saturday ■ February 21 ■ 2:30 PM
LANEY COLLEGE THEATER**

Lunch prior to the show at

Phnom Penh House

\$15

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with great pride since my father, Hy Weintraub, had been a vocal and active member of the California Federation of Teachers, serving as the Community College Council's President for several years. My dad had already passed away by the time my stint began, but my mother and siblings were delighted to see me carry on a bit of Dad's work.

I learned a lot in my five years in office: advocacy skills, the sometimes mysterious ways the district works, the issues that drew the four colleges together and also apart, the challenges to maintaining Peralta's benefits, the bigger statewide concerns that impacted our district and thus our wages and benefits, and the importance of every level of employee in the district working together. I met a lot of folks, not just teachers, but classifieds, confidentials, administrators, groundskeepers and warehouse workers. I think my connections and experiences as

the PFT President will help me as I take on the new responsibility of PRO President.

My priority for PRO is similar to that of all the people who sit on the Board: to be vigilant about our retiree benefits. To that end, I will continue to serve on the District Benefits Committee along with Alex Pappas and Tom Branca. I have been on the committee for eight years and have been a part of both discussions and negotiations regarding retiree health benefits. I have worked with Bruce Jacobs and Diana Lara to review the most recent Summary Plan Descriptions -- the documents that detail our medical benefits. When I was PFT President I worked with Bruce to start a PRO/PFT workshop on understanding Medicare. This annual workshop continues today, thanks to Bruce's continued willingness to share his knowledge with the Peralta community. I have also been in the most recent conversations PRO and PFT have had regarding Medicare D and together with Tom Branca and Bruce, I have been playing an active role in trying to help secure a new insurance broker for the district.

But beyond our benefits, I think PRO has much to offer each of us as well as the larger Peralta community. We have years of institutional knowledge, and have made many contributions to our departments, colleges and the district which can be put to use in conversations with the district and newer employees, perhaps through mentoring programs. PRO also provides an opportunity for people that have worked together to connect through social events and our monthly Board meetings. This last year we had a series of interviews with Board of Trustees members including the candidates running for the seat recently vacated by Abel Guillen. I hope other issues of larger concern to the retiree community such as Social Security will be addressed at Board meetings as well.

I look forward to working with and for all of you. PRO is important. We are retired, but we are still very connected to Peralta. It is vital that we remain a visible and vocal presence while staying connected to each other and the active employees.

I wish you all a very happy and healthy new year.

Peralta Retirees Organization

**1250-I Newell Ave., #162
Walnut Creek, CA 94596**

<http://www.peraltaretirees.org>

President - Debby Weintraub
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Volume 11 Number 2

PRO LUNCH AND THEATER PARTY

San Francisco's Magic Theater presents:



A Lie Of The Mind

by Sam Shephard

Saturday, February 21 ■ 2:30 PM
Laney College Theater
Free Performance

Told in three acts set in the gritty American West, the story alternates between two families after a severe incident of spousal abuse leaves all their lives altered until the final collision at an isolated cabin. The two families, one composed of Baylor, Meg, Beth, and Mike, the other composed of Lorraine, Sally, Frankie, and Jake are connected by the

marriage of Jake and Beth, whose beating and subsequent hospitalization at the hands of Jake initiates the beginning of the play. Exploring family dysfunction and the nature of love, the play follows both Jake as he searches for meaning after Beth, and her family as they struggle with Beth's brain damage.

Before the show:

**Join fellow PRO members for lunch at 12:30 PM at Oakland's nearby
 Cambodian restaurant**

Phnom Penh House

251 8th Street
 Oakland, CA 94607

\$15/person (tax and tip included)

lunch reservation and payment required by Friday, February 6

To reserve your place: Complete the form below and mail it with a check made out to "PRO" or go online to <http://peraltaretirees.org/Docs/lunmag2.htm> and pay by credit card using PayPal.

Please complete and mail to:

PRO
 1250-I Newell Ave., #162
 Walnut Creek, CA 94596

Enclose a check for \$15 for each person attending the luncheon. Theater tickets are free.

Name _____

Telephone _____

Email _____

- 1986 Drama Desk Award for Outstanding Play
- 1986 New York Drama Critics' Circle Award for Best Play
- 1986 Outer Critics Circle Award for Best Off-Broadway Play

My Trip to the Land of Jesse Helms

From time to time the Peralta Retiree publishes first person accounts written by retirees about experiences from their lives after they have retired. The following is an account of a trip out-of-state by a retiree who wanted to participate in the recent mid-term national elections. — Ed.

By Helene Maxwell

Note: The following piece is blatantly partisan. You are advised!

When I retired in June, many people asked me what I planned to do with “all that time” on my hands. I usually replied that I intended to do whatever I felt like on any given day.

But as the November elections approached, the campaign trail was calling me to get involved. I decided to participate in Get Out the Vote (GOTV) activities outside of California.

My first choice was Kentucky. It would be satisfying to work for any person running for the U.S. Senate against Mitch McConnell. You may recall in 2010 McConnell said that “the Republicans’ single highest priority should be to make President Obama a one-term president.” It would be fun to “retire” Mitch McConnell.

But as I looked at the polls showing McConnell’s opponent, Alison Grimes, lagging far behind, I decided to go elsewhere.

In North Carolina, incumbent U.S. Senator Kay Hagan was ahead of Thom Tillis, her opponent, by a few points. As North Carolina State Speaker, Tillis had slashed education funding, opposed the minimum wage, ended the state’s Earned Income Tax Credit, supported turning Medicare into a voucher program, and was a primary architect of voter suppression laws. It would be a worthy endeavor to deny a seat in the U.S. Senate to this “son” of Jesse Helms (the staunchly segregationist North Carolina Senator from 1973-2003).

I called my sister, Kate, in Philadelphia, and asked, “Want to spend some time in North Carolina?” She said, “Sure!” so off we went to connect with the

Hagan campaign for GOTV.

When the GOP took over the North Carolina legislature and executive branch in 2012, Speaker Tillis and his Republican colleagues passed laws that reduced early voting days, eliminated same-day registration, shut down polling places on college campuses and in neighborhoods with a large number of African-American voters, required that voters go only to their assigned precinct (i.e. no provisional ballots allowed), and constructed other barriers for people who were not likely to vote Republican.

In addition, from an article by Greg Palast I learned that North Carolina implemented a “Crosscheck” system to purge people from the voter rolls. The system identifies people who may have voted in more than one state, using only a cross-match of first and last names. If John Johnson voted in Georgia and in North Carolina, then he must be a “double voter!” This system fraudulently disenfranchises legitimate voters, particularly voters of color.

From Palast: “The program’s method of identifying and purging voters especially threatens the registrations of African-American, Asian-American and Latinos who are 67 percent more likely than white voters to share America’s most common names: Jackson, Washington, Lee, Rodriguez and so on.”

Unfortunately, Tillis won by 48,000 votes. In post-election analysis, Palast concluded that the Crosscheck purges could have accounted for Tillis’ victory. Crosscheck identified 589,393 North Carolinians as possible “double voters;” state officials subsequently reduced the number to 190,000. North Carolina won’t release the names on the list for independent inquiry because all these voters are “subjects of criminal investigation” and thus North Carolina contends the information is confidential.

The results of the election were deeply disappointing. But Kate and I met some incredible people in the nine days we spent in North Carolina.

(Continued on page 5)

(My Trip *Continued from page 4)*

We'll never forget:

- Sara and Hugh, retirees and activists who opened their home in Raleigh as a neighborhood Hagan campaign hub. Sara was an English teacher at St. Augustine's, an historically black college in Raleigh, and Hugh worked assisting countries to set up democratic elections. Sara and Hugh are also plaintiffs in a lawsuit challenging the new North Carolina voter regulations.
- Journalists from Myanmar (Burma) who arrived at campaign headquarters in a mini-bus to pick up tickets for a Bill Clinton rally happening the following day. They were travelling to North Carolina and Louisiana to learn about the election process. Myanmar is having parliamentary elections in 2015.
- Mr. Garrett and his son (wearing an A's cap) who came to get tickets. He shared with us his strategies to get his large extended family to vote.
- Ms. Jackson, an elderly woman using a walker, whom we met while knocking on doors in a blue collar neighborhood. Her final words to us: "We can't have Tillis."
- Michael, a veteran who was determined to canvass precincts although it was apparent walking was painful. He received help from Hagan with the VA because he needs a hip replacement.
- Ms. Slade, age 93. She said her leg "didn't work so well now." People from her church went to vote the previous week, but she couldn't go and she didn't want to impose. We arranged for a driver to get Ms. Slade to the polls.
- Frances, age 83, who told us she had to vote at three different machines before her vote for Hagan was accurately recorded.
- Three students from St. Augustine's University who were recruited while on a march to the polling place from the university. Although initially hesitant to canvass, they returned energized and walked a second precinct.

- Robert, a minister whom I accompanied to walk precincts on election day. Robert is legally blind. As he spoke to voters, they listened.
- The candidate, Kay Hagan. When Robert and I stopped for lunch at Bojangles, I went to use the restroom. As I exited, Kay Hagan was waiting alone in line. I was surprised to run into her serendipitously and blurted out, "Hi, I'm Helene and I'm from California and Robert and I are walking for you. Can I introduce you to him?" Even though it was election day, I was struck by how calm, centered, and responsive she seemed.



From l-r: Robert, a minister Helene met canvassing, former Senator Kay Hagen and Peralta retiree Helene Maxwell on the campaign trail in North Carolina.

As I left North Carolina, I felt bad for the people I met. They woke up on November 5 to learn that their fellow North Carolinians had selected Thom Tillis who had done all he could to block their vote.

What's next? I feel compelled to work on efforts opposing voter suppression. What is more fundamental in a democracy than the right to vote?



Health Benefits Update

Medicare D Reimbursement

The PFT and the District have been negotiating about the District reimbursing retirees who have to pay a Medicare D premium (known as Part D Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount or IRMAA) as a result of enrolling in Kaiser Senior Advantage. A tentative agreement between the PFT and the District will require the District to reimburse the IRMAA cost for retirees who retired **after** May 1, 2013. Because the PFT cannot negotiate for retirees (as they are not members of the bargaining unit) the agreement does not cover retirees who retired prior to the current contract between the union and the District.

PRO Vice-President Bruce Jacobs attended the negotiations as part of the PFT team in order to provide Medicare expertise. PRO will be taking the next step in obtaining Part D reimbursement for everyone having to pay the IRMAA, *i.e.*, people who retired **prior** to May 1, 2013, by formally requesting that the District extend the agreement to all retirees. If we are able to reach an agreement with the District we will send an email with the details as well as report on it in the next newsletter.

New Broker Delay

PSW Benefit Resources, the District's broker for employee benefits, went out of business on December 31, 2014. The District initiated a process for finding a replacement for PSW with the goal of having a new broker in place by January 1, 2015. The broker decision is important to retirees because understaffing in the District Benefits Office often means that we rely on staff at the broker's office to resolve problems with Blue Cross or Kaiser.

The replacement process involved a screening committee that included representatives from various District constituencies including PRO (represented by PRO Board member Tom Branca) that reviewed the applicants. At the end of the process the committee made a recommendation. However, some of the committee members (including Tom) were unhappy with the process and with the outcome. PRO, working with the PFT and Local 39, appealed to the Board of Trustees and the Chancellor. As a result they decided

Renewal Due for Retirees Whose Membership Expired at the End of 2014

Check the label on your Newsletter to determine when your membership expires. If the label says 2014 then you need to renew for 2015.

Dues are

1 Year	\$20	5 Years	\$80
3 Years	\$55	Lifetime	\$250

It's easier than ever to renew your membership in PRO. You can now pay your dues for 2015:

- **securely by credit card at the PRO web site.**
Just go to: www.peraltaretirees.org/index.htm
- **by mailing your check to PRO, 1250-I Newell Avenue, #168, Walnut Creek, CA 94596**

This is the final issue of the newsletter that will be mailed to non-current retirees.

to postpone a decision until January.

In the interim PRO is working with the employee organizations to ensure that the District is looking at all its options and that the process will lead to the best possible choice for the District, its employees and retirees.

IN MEMORIAM

The following Peralta retirees have passed away during the last months. PRO extends our deepest condolences to their families and loved ones.

**Bill Dowling
Ernie Spirakis**

If you have any information about the passing or the serious illness of a Peralta retiree, please contact Bruce Jacobs at: brucejacobs@gmail.com or by writing to PRO, 1250-I Newell Ave., #162, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

PRO Board Elects Debby Weintraub New President

The PRO Board held elections for PRO officers at the December meeting. The Board unanimously chose Debby Weintraub to serve as PRO's second president. Debby has been on the Board since shortly after she retired in 2012. Prior to retiring Debby was President of the PFT. She started in Peralta as a tutor in the Laney English Department in the 1970's and then, after earning her Master's degree, worked as a part-time instructor until she was hired full time in 1999.



Debby Weintraub

The Board also unanimously re-elected Bruce Jacobs as Vice-President, Ann Whitehead as Secretary and Anna Pavelka-Lodato as Treasurer.

The following incumbent Board members were elected to serve a two-year-term at the Annual Membership Meeting on November 6:

- Tom Branca
- Bruce Jacobs
- Linda Japzon
- Alex Pappas
- Anna Pavelka-Lodato
- Debby Weintraub

PCCD Celebrates 50th Anniversary

The Peralta District celebrated 50 years of serving the community in a series of events during 2014. On October 30 the District culminated the celebration at a dinner at Merritt College at which the District honored Congresswoman Barbara Lee by dedicating the new Barbara Lee Science and Allied Health Center. The new building, located on the Merritt campus, will house programs in health sciences as well as basic science.

In attendance were many members of PRO including

District Benefits Office News

PCCD Wants Your Email Address

The District Benefits Office is compiling a retiree email address list in order to facilitate communication between the District and retirees. If you have not already done so, please send an email to Retiree@peralta.edu which includes your name and email address.

Annual Medicare Enrollment Meeting

The District will be holding its annual Medicare Enrollment Campaign Meeting on Wednesday, February 5.

There will be workshops focusing on Medicare enrollment rules and procedures, dental insurance options in retirement, as well as a workshop dealing with retiree survivors' benefits. On-site assistance with Medicare or Senior Advantage Enrollment will be provided.

Activities will be held in the Board Room at the District Office, 333 East 8th Street in Oakland starting at 11 AM and running until 2 PM.



Congresswoman Barbara Lee with PCCD Chancellor José Ortiz

newly elected President Debby Weintraub and Michael Mills who serves on the Peralta Foundation Board of Directors.

Congresswoman Lee reminisced about her days as a student at Vista (now Berkeley City College) attending classes with Berkeley City Council member Maudelle Shirek. The Congresswoman also praised the District for its service to the community.

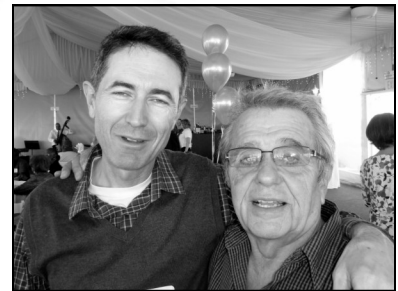
Scenes from PRO's 10th Anniversary Luncheon and Annual Meeting Honoring Retiring President Jerry Herman



Pat Jameson and Peralta Chancellor José Ortiz



Retiring PRO President Jerry Herman



PFT President Matt Goldstein and Michael Mills



Les Margolies and Helene Maxwell

PRO Members gathered on November 6 to celebrate the organization's 10th anniversary and to honor retiring President Jerry Herman. Over 80 members attended the party which featured a delicious catered lunch, mellow background music by the Glen Pearson Trio and an eloquent farewell speech by Jerry.



Les Margolies, Rita Haberlin and Ned Pearlstein



George Pacheco, PRO VP Bruce Jacobs and Bill Lepowsky



Neil Dunlop and Shirley Coaston



Bill Lepowsky and Catherine Crystal

Contribute To The PRO Scholarship Fund By Honoring Or Memorializing A Friend Or Loved One



Yes, I want to support the PRO Scholarship Fund with a contribution.
(Please print)

In honor of: On the occasion of: In memory of:

Please send acknowledgement card to:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____

Zip: _____

Contributor's Name: _____

Contributor's Address: _____

City: _____ **State:** _____

Zip: _____

Make check payable to: **The Peralta Foundation—PRO**

Send to: PRO, 1250-I Newell Ave., #162, Walnut Creek, CA 94596

Contributions are tax deductible to the extent allowed by federal and state law.

Contributions Received for the PRO Scholarship Fund

In Memory of:	Contributor	In Honor of:	Contributor
Robert Chin	Jim Mohr	Derek P. Piazza	Hector Edward Lopez
Joe Colistro	Tom & Barbara Southworth	O. J. Roundtree	Hector Edward Lopez
Charles Keilin	Laura Keilin	Wylie Walthall on his 80th birthday	Susan Chin
In Honor of:	Contributor	General Contributions	
Jerry Herman	Susan Chin	Aiko Asato	
Mary Patrone Metievich	Hector Edward Lopez	Odell Johnson	
Alex Pappas	Ron Felzer	Steve Schneider	
Chris Perata	Hector Edward Lopez		

Letter to the Editor

To The Editor:

Protect Our Prescriptions By Ordering When Needed

Caremark oh-so-kindly enrolls us in automatic refills for our prescriptions, but they tend to refill sooner than actually needed. Over time that can build up into quite a surplus — all of which Peralta has to pay for at Big Pharma prices if generics are not available.

I have refused to enroll in automatic refills and order when I'm a few weeks away from running out. It's no big deal, it's easy, and reducing that surplus — which only goes to waste when we expire — saves a few bucks and reduces the pressure on benefit costs.

I have not been able to get Caremark to do automatic renewal without automatic filling of the order, even if it's not needed. Case in point: I have a three-month supply of one item, but the prescription is expiring. Despite my wishes, Caremark is getting the au-

thorization from the doctor to send me another three months' worth, and will keep it coming unless I change the default auto refill.

The Peralta Benefits office didn't seem concerned about this when I asked awhile back, so it is clear that this is something we have to do ourselves.

*Albert Lannon
Laney College Labor Studies, Retired*

Welcome New Members

PRO welcomes the following retirees who have recently joined.

Horace Graham
Laura Keilin
Gary Robinson

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