

# The Informer

Illinois Education Association-Retired • www.ieanea.org • Winter 2010

## National parks of the west – A trip for beautiful, spectacular scenery

By Dave Bishop



*Twin Arches provides a challenging climb for visitors at Arches National Park.*



*Our tour guide is dwarfed by the this giant Sequoia tree.*

***“How many pictures did you take?”***

***“2500.”***

***“Why?”***

“Because it was the most beautiful and photographic experience that I have ever had in my lifetime! It made me realize that the United States has the best scenic sights in the world and I have been around the world in the past few years. The national parks of the west rank number one on my list.”

We flew from Chicago to Salt Lake City where we joined 34 other people for a two-week journey.

Our guide talked to us as we pulled up in front of a huge auditorium in Temple Square. We attended the taping of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir’s Sunday concert. This was a thrill of a lifetime for me. We had a full hour concert that was videotaped. It was free and a great way to begin our national park tour.

That afternoon, we went to the Kennecott Bingham Canyon Copper Mine. This mammoth operation is one of a few sights that can be seen from outer space.

Virginia City, a famous gold and silver mining town from the late 1800s, was our next destination. The atmosphere has been maintained and one can visit the town as it appeared more than 100 years ago. Mark Twain was once a resident of this mining town.

Lake Tahoe was the next attraction. We took a four-hour boat trip around this majestic lake located not far from Reno, Nev. The beautiful blue waters make this one of the most visited mountain lakes in the world.

The first national park in the heart of the Sierra Nevada mountain range was filled with magnificent scenery of waterfalls, forests, giant domes, pinnacles and spectacular peaks. One could easily understand why this park was so special for Ansel Adams. After our day touring Yosemite, I made the statement that the United States had the most wonderful of all the mountainous areas we have seen all around the world.

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**These "hoodoos" are one of the main attractions at Bryce Canyon.**

What is the tallest tree you have ever seen? Kings Canyon/Sequoia, the second oldest national park after Yellowstone, boasts several hundred redwood trees that existed during dinosaur times. Many are more than 300 feet tall. It is hard to believe that a tree can be that big.

We traveled the next day through the desert and arrived for our two-day stay in Las Vegas. Walking the strip to enjoy the sights, sounds and fabulous casinos was most enjoyable. No, we didn't lose our shirts at the tables. We did go see the musical "Jersey Boys" and relived the great songs from Frankie Valle and Four Seasons. If you have not seen this show, it is a must see for those who lived through the 50s and 60s.

Off to Zion National Park which was carved out 250 million years ago. Just when I declared Yosemite my favorite, Zion blew me away with its extraordinary and unique landscapes. Pillars, huge domes, and rock needles became cathedrals, statues, huge cave-like indentions, and monuments all in a vast display of reds, tans, yellows, oranges and all changing hues as the sun moved across the scenery.

Just when you think you have seen the most spectacular sights, Bryce Canyon comes into view. Some say it is the most beautiful of the national parks. I would not dispute that. It reminds you of a mini-Grand Canyon.

There are geological formations called hoodoos that are tall thin spires of rock that protrude from the bottom of an arid basin. While it is not a large park, it has some very

unique geological formations. Some look like spires of cathedrals. The colors are red, orange and beige with combinations of all hues.

Next up, Moab, Utah where we view the most unusual national park—Arches. This park boasts 2000 sandstone arches. Some of them are: The Three Sisters, Balanced Rock, Double Arch, Landscape, and Delicate. Uniquely special, each arch has its own attraction. Many can be scaled and photo opportunities abound. Not far from Arches is Canyonlands, a new park that needs a four-wheel drive vehicle for access. It, too, has spectacular scenery similar to the Grand Canyon.

Needless to say, this two-week tour provided the best opportunity for photography I've ever had. I rarely put down my camera for a rest.

At the turn of every curve there were numerous shots that just begged to be taken.

If you are looking for a tour with spectacular scenery, this is the one. There is some walking required, but you can choose not to do the walks.

Contact your local travel agent for details on how to book this kind of trip.

## **PRE-RETIRED LIFETIME MEMBERS:**

If you are a pre-retired lifetime member and you are planning on retiring this year, congratulations. However, the IEA-Retired Program needs your assistance to avoid a time delay in switching your membership from Pre-Retired Lifetime (IEA Active membership) to Retired Lifetime.

The IEA cannot switch your membership from active to retired status without "official" verification that you are no longer an active employee. Usually, we have to wait until the IEA membership department receives notification from your Local Association that you are no longer a member. This can take until October or later of the next school year.

This transfer of membership from active to retired can be further complicated if the Local Association neglects to inform the IEA Membership Department that the reason this person is no longer a member is because of retirement. The IEA cannot assume that because they are no longer a member that they retired.

If you are a pre-retired lifetime member and you are planning on retiring this year, please notify:

**Stacy.Burroughs@ieanea.org**

**OR**

**Amanda.Plunkett@ieanea.org**

One of us will help to expedite the transfer of membership.

# Cherry Mine Disaster PART II *By Jim Duffy*

*Nov. 13, 2009, marked the 100th Anniversary of the largest mine fire and third worst mining disaster in American history in terms of lives lost.*

If not for the two 80-foot-tall slag piles, no one would imagine that the peaceful farmlands near Cherry are situated over what had been the largest coal mine in Illinois.

Nor would they imagine that this was the site of one of the worst mining disasters in American history. Yet on Nov. 13, 1909, a fire in the mine led to the deaths of 259 miners and townspeople trying to rescue the miners.

Cherry, which is located in northeastern Bureau County, was founded in 1904 by the St. Paul Coal Co. when it started to mine one of the richest veins of bituminous coal in Illinois.

The town was named after James Cherry, a former mayor of nearby Seatonville, and regional superintendent of mines for the St. Paul Mining Co. The town quickly swelled in size to a population of 2500 as men moved there with their families to work in the mines.

Most were young and many were immigrants of Italian or Slavic heritage although there were also Russian, Lithuanian, Scottish, German, Swedish, French, Austrian, Welch, Irish, Polish, and English miners. Often people could not understand each other and communicated through nods and gestures.

Like most coal deposits in Illinois, the one at Cherry consisted of three veins of coal. The first vein was so irregular it was considered useless for commercial purposes, but the second vein which was nearly 320 feet below the surface was six feet thick.

The third vein, located 486 feet below the surface, was 3 ½-foot thick and contained enough high grade coal to keep the mine running at capacity for at least 50 years. The original intent was to mine the third vein first, but when the second vein proved bountiful and easy to mine, mine officials reversed their decision and started mining the second level



**Cherry Mine mouth of the shaft**

first. By 1909, both the second and third levels were being mined.

The mine had two vertical shafts. The main shaft was 12-by-16 feet and the second shaft was 8-by-12 feet. The main shaft had room for two lift cages to raise and lower miners and coal from the second level. The second shaft was for ventilation and also contained stairs which ran from the third level to the surface.

It was supposed to also serve as an escape shaft. The main access to the third level, however, was from a cage that ran from the second level to the third level. There was no cage which ran from the surface all the way to the third level.

A huge fan was installed to pump air from the surface into the mine. It could also be reversed to draw air out of the mine.

The coal was hauled in cars that were pulled by mules. The mules were housed in a stable on the second level of the mine. Hay had to be hauled into the mine to feed the mules.

Due to its construction, the mine in Cherry was considered one of the most modern and safest mines to date. It was reinforced throughout with wood beams and used electricity instead of oil or kerosene lamps for lighting.

The mine started producing coal on Dec. 11, 1905, and



**A tragic death toll on display**

by November 1909 was producing 400,000 tons of coal a year. Miners were paid by their production, receiving about \$1.10 per ton. On a good day, two miners would produce about five tons of coal.

At the time of the disaster, the electric lights were not working due to a short circuit. New wiring had been on order for several weeks but had not been received so that the lighting system could be repaired. As a result, as 489 miners entered the mine on the morning of Nov. 13, the mine was lit by kerosene lanterns.

Sometime between noon and 1 p.m. on Nov. 13, a coal car loaded with six bales of hay was lowered into the mine to feed the mules on the third level. But instead of immediately being lowered from the second to third level of the mine, it was left parked by the air shaft near some kerosene lanterns.

At 1:25 p.m. a couple of miners noticed that the hay was on fire. They tried to extinguish the fire. When they failed to put out the fire, they tried to move the car nearer to the sump room where water could be used to douse the fire. Initially, there was little alarm as mine fires were not uncommon.

However, the flames grew in intensity and the car became stuck as the miners tried to move the burning hay. Unfortunately, the car was stuck near the air shaft so that

the downdraft from the ventilation fan intensified the flames. It was also stuck near a door leading into the tunnels of the second level and each time miners opened this door, the draft help to intensify the flames.

The fire created a great deal of smoke and heat from the blaze made it difficult for the miners to deal with the fire. The ventilation fan was reversed to stop the flow of air to the fire and draw out the smoke. But the result of this action was to draw the flames up the shaft. Soon the blaze ignited the support beams and stairs in the air shaft.

Amazingly, while all of this was going on many miners, oblivious to the fire, continued to dig coal and it was transported to the surface via the main mine shaft. The

last load of coal was brought to the surface nearly two hours after the fire started.

Some miners who became aware of the fire managed to escape, but others were encouraged by their foreman to stay at their stations and continue to dig coal. No call to abandon the mine was even issued for 45 minutes after the fire started. Some of those who did escape returned to the mine in order to save others. Many were looking for other family members.

As the townspeople became aware of the fire, they rushed to the mine. Some assisted miners in rescue efforts. One group of about a dozen miners and local merchants made six trips into the mine to rescue those below. On the seventh trip, the entire group was unknowingly lowered into the intense heat of the fire which had spread and they were burned to death before they could be brought back to the surface.

About 4 p.m. a decision was made to seal the shafts to cut off the flow of air to the fire in hope that this would help extinguish it.

By day break the next day, word of the fire had spread nationwide and even worldwide. Firefighters and others began to pour into Cherry to assist with the rescue efforts. Some came from nearby communities while others began to arrive from other parts of the country. Many more simply

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came to Cherry to gawk. The *Chicago Tribune* estimated at one point that as many as 20,000 people were there. The governor of Illinois called out the National Guard to help keep order.

Over the next few days, rescuers descended into the mine in an effort to locate those still trapped below. They encountered great difficulties from the heat of the fire which still burned, from the smoke, and from collapsed tunnels which they had to clear. During this time they found only bodies.

Finally one week after the fire had started, they located a group of 20 miners who had managed to seal themselves into an area of the mine and prevent the spread of black damp which is a collection of gases that often forms in mines. It is made up largely of nitrogen, carbon dioxide, argon, and water vapor. These miners had survived for seven days without food and with only a very little water which they managed to collect by digging holes. The last four days they spent in total darkness as what few lights they had gave out by the third day and there was not sufficient oxygen for their matches to burn.

For several more days after these men were found, rescuers continued into the mine in hope of finding additional survivors, but found only bodies. On Nov. 23, the mine was again sealed in an effort to cut off the fire. It would take nearly six months from the beginning of the disaster until the fire was finally extinguished and the last bodies were taken from the mine.

Sadly, as evidenced by letters written to families and journals scratched out on scraps of paper that were found with the bodies, many of the miners who perished survived for several days before succumbing to asphyxiation due to the spread of black damp. Some had even constructed a crude fan from mine timbers in order to fight off the black damp.

Following the disaster, hundreds of lawsuits were filed. There was a fear that the St. Paul Coal Company would go into bankruptcy because of the number of lawsuits. Eventually, each victim's family received approximately \$3260 from the coal company and various relief funds.

As a result of the Cherry mine disaster, President William Howard Taft pushed Congress to create a Federal Bureau of Mines. In Illinois further restrictions on child labor were passed (some of the victims had been under the age of 16).

In March 1910, the state legislature enacted Senate Bill 42 which created the Illinois Mine Rescue Commission. It required that mine rescue stations be created to assist in rescue efforts in future disasters and to train miners in mine rescue procedures.

The legislature also passed a workers' compensation act for miners injured or killed due to negligence of their employers. Although this law applied only to miners, it was the precursor of a comprehensive workers' compensation law that today benefits all workers who are injured or the families of workers killed on the job.

The Cherry mine disaster left 259 dead. Some believe that three others who were never accounted for are still entombed under a cave in somewhere in the mine. These miners left 160 widows and 470 children including 33 who were born after the disaster.

The Cherry mine reopened at the end of 1910 and continued production under the St. Paul Mine Co. until it was closed in 1927 due to a strike and a falling demand for coal. It reopened as the Cherry Mine Co. in 1930, but closed completely in 1935. The Chicago Bridge and Iron Co. bought the metal ruins for scrap.

Today, Cherry is a town of 500. Throughout the town many of the original homes of the miners still exist. Some have been sided and enlarged, while others appear much as they did in photos from the early 1900s. Little remains of the mine disaster. The two slag piles, once slate gray, are now overgrown with trees and other vegetation.

The ruins of the mine buildings were taken down in 2002 when the Illinois Department of Natural Resources decided that old mines such as Cherry posed a future risk. The heads of the mine shafts which had long been sealed were buried under a mound of dirt.

In the local cemetery are the graves of a number of the miners who perished as well as a monument to the miners who lost their lives. In a city park next to the mine site a plaque explains the story of the mine disaster. Also the town library contains exhibits on the mine disaster and each year on the Sunday closest to the Nov. 13 anniversary date, a memorial service is held.

For further information about the Cherry Mine Disaster see the following:

#### **Books**

Tintori, Karen, *Trapped: The 1909 Cherry Mine Disaster*, New York: Atria Books, 2002.

W E B S I T E S

<http://guitarjourney.tripod.com/cherrycoalminedisaster/>

[www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/cherrymi.htm](http://www.kentlaw.edu/ilhs/cherrymi.htm)

[www.msha.gov//century/mag/magcivr.asp](http://www.msha.gov//century/mag/magcivr.asp)

## You are invited to dine at the governor's mansion *By C.E. Welch*



***This spiral staircase leads to the upper two floors of the mansion.***

The 2009 fall conference began this year with a dinner and tour of Illinois Governor's Mansion.

This home is one of three continuously occupied homes in the nation. It was renovated in the 1970s. It was first occupied in 1855. The house also has an office for the governor on the first floor. Memorabilia displays and meeting rooms are also on this floor.

A winding staircase leads to the main floor where official receptions are held. Beautiful furniture is featured here. A dining room seating 30 guests is also in this area.

A winding staircase leads to the main floor where receptions are held. It has parlor rooms with famous portraits including those of Abe and Mary Todd Lincoln. Beautiful furniture is featured in these rooms.

The state dining room has 200-year-old Waterford chandeliers and a dining table that seats 30. Beyond this dining room is a wood-paneled library and a large room where we dined.

The spiral staircase leads to the next floor where there are sitting rooms and bedrooms. One has the furniture where Abe Lincoln slept. Another contains hand carved furniture by an Illinois farmer. It was displayed at the 1900 Chicago World's Fair where Queen Victoria offered \$1 million but it was refused. There is a modern section that was added to the house for the present governor's use. These rooms were not a part of the tour.

After the tour we went to the governor's mansion dining hall and had a four-course meal. The event was so impressive that we are planning to repeat this at the 2010 Fall Conference.

There is an option to attend, and the reservation will be on the fall conference registration form. The cost of the meal will have to be paid in advance. So come to the fall conference and tour the mansion with dinner afterwards. It is well worth the money and the trip.

## New chapter organized

*By Dottie Beeler*

The Southeastern Chapter IEA-Retired was officially organized on Nov. 20, 2008, in the Mt. Vernon office after meeting with IEA UniServ Directors Susan Carr and Shawn Cooper along with IEA-Retired President Jack Tucker and IEA Retirees and Educational Support Professional Director Stacy Burroughs.

The group developed and subsequently adopted its constitution and bylaws and elected the following individuals to serve as its officers:

President	Denise Williams	Centralia
Vice-President	Vance Beene	Mt. Vernon
Secretary	Doris Clark	Centralia
Treasurer	RosEllen Greten	Okawville

At present time, there are approximately 35 IEA-R members from Regions 3, 4, 5 and 48 who have expressed the desire to become a part of the Southeastern Chapter, and the chapter hopes to expand this number as it continues with its meetings and activities.

The group meets the second Tuesday in the months of September, November, January, March and May, with meetings held in the IEA Mt. Vernon Office at 11 a.m.

The chapter is planning an "End of Summer" dinner meeting to be held at the GenKota Winery in Mt. Vernon on Tues., Sept. 8, beginning with a wine tasting event at 5 p.m.

The special guest speaker will be IEA Secretary/Treasurer Cinda Klickna, along with others. It is the chapter's hope that not only retired members attend, but the group also is inviting those pre-retired members in the above-mentioned regions who are nearing retirement to come.

The group is hoping to do great things in the Southeastern Chapter and is asking for continued support from its entire IEA-Retired family. For more information, please contact Denise Williams, president, at 618-533-1091 or the Mt. Vernon office at 618-244-0015 or 800-431-3758.

## Fifteen elected to represent IEA-Retired at March RA

Fifteen people were elected to represent the IEA-Retired at the Illinois Education Association RA at the Hyatt O'Hare in March. Those elected were: Barb Gilhaus, Gene Craig, Ed Rosenthal, Janet Kilgus, David Bishop, Mae Smith, Marge Houghland, Chuck Weishaupt, Linda Stolt, Jim Duffy, Chuck Starke, Linda Walcher, Dottie Beeler, Jane Nolan, and Rita Stone. Alternate delegates are: Brian Mooberry, Jeanne Brunworth, Sara Kaufman, Mary Ann Platt, and Ray Bill. Jack Tucker, retired chair, and JoAnn Kenner, vice-chair, are automatically a part of the IEA-R delegation.

**Disclaimer:** The following minutes have not been presented to the executive committee of the Retired Council. They are not official and have not been approved by the IEA-Retired Council.

## IEA-Retired Council • Oct. 21-22, 2009 • Springfield

The meeting was called to order by Chair Jack Tucker at 12:08 p.m.

**In attendance:** Jack Tucker, chair; JoAnn Kenner, vice-chair; Barb Gilhaus, secretary/treasurer; Janet Kilgus, Dottie Beeler, Linda Stolt, Linda Walcher, Dave Bishop, C.E. Welch and Gene Craig, NEA-R secretary.

**Staff in attendance:** Stacy Burroughs, Janet Sablotny, Meredith Byers, Sue Uzzo, Steve Hoff, Will Lovett, Audrey Soglin, Bob Blade and Cinda Klickna stopped by to say Hi.

**Guests:** Rich Frankenfeld, Sara Kaufman, Lana Haines.

There was a **motion** by Linda Walcher, **seconded** by Dave Bishop that the minutes from the Sept. 10-11, 2009 council meeting be approved. **Motion carried.**

**Partial life membership:** Nothing to report.

**Past election results:** Jack distributed a report showing IEA and NEA RA elections for the years 2006-2009. There was a discussion about the "bed-sheet" ballot that we use to elect delegates for the RAs. We need more information to make an informed decision as to how to proceed with this.

**Student/Retired conference:** A suggestion had been made to "combine" the student and retired conferences. Meredith Byers explained that although the students saw many advantages to that suggestion, they wanted to continue to drive their own conference. The students did want to have more mentor/mentee involvement. Nov. 19-20, 2010 is the Fall Student Conference date for next year. We need to do more research into the issue before any decisions can be made so the council advised Meredith that we would not be ready to join together by 2010.

**GPO/WEP:** NEA wants to know how retired teachers are affected by GPO and WEP so Jack will be sending out an email with a link to a survey. Please send this out to all of your retired members as they need at least 1000 responses. Chapter presidents will also be asked to share this with their members.

**Staff report:** Stacy is having many of our brochures updated and reprinted. To date, no one has been hired to fill Janet Sablotny's position and Stacy feels that it may be sometime in December before the position is filled. Evelyn Smith, Judy Leonard and Janet Bandy have been doing a wonderful job filling in as needed.

**Newsletter articles:** Dave Bishop had asked for information concerning how many people had used the web-

site when we put the newsletter on the site. The online newsletter was viewed a total of 290 times. He also asked how many people asked for a hard copy and 15 people asked for a hard copy.

The fall newsletter is at the press right now.

### Assignments for winter newsletter:

Jack: From the chair

Barb: Up to the minutes

Dave will contact council members individually with assignments as needed for the next newsletter.

We will discuss more about online issues and/or number of issues at a later date.

Linda Stolt **moved** and Dave Bishop **seconded** that we investigate the possibility of a minority representative at the IEA RA. **Motion carried.**

**Living Library:** Janet Kilgus distributed a written report and highlighted areas in her oral report.

**Budget Report:** JoAnn Kenner reported that she, Barb Gilhaus, and Jack Tucker met with Diane Massey to get a detailed explanation of the general ledger. She also discussed the TRS fall meetings and the stipend that we are offering. Barb indicated that she would be sending out the spreadsheet with the year-to-date spending and balance in each SID category in the near future.

**NEA Council Report:** Gene and Mae distributed a written report. Gene gave an oral report.

Recess at 5:03 p.m.

Resume at 9:00 a.m.

**TRS:** Rich Frankenfeld announced that one of the TRS board members had resigned and that Marcia Boone had been appointed. She is an IFT member and had previously served on the TRS board.

Rich also distributed a handout entitled social security/Medicare update.

**Scholarship: Motion** by Barb Gilhaus, **seconded** by Janet Kilgus that we do one MLH scholarship for the 2010 year. **Motion carried.**

**Policy:** C.E. Welch had done some research on vouchers and how they are paid. A discussion followed about how IEA-Retired should deal with late vouchers. **Motion** by Janet Kilgus, **seconded** by Dave Bishop that any expenses not submitted within ninety days from the date the expenses were incurred will not be reimbursed unless exception is granted by the IEA President. All reimbursable expenses will be submitted on a voucher form. All items except mileage amounting to more than \$10 require receipt for IRS auditing (BOD 7.6) (This policy shall be attached to vouchers mailed to IEA-Retired members for retired activities except for RAs). **Motion Carried.**

**Mentoring:** Linda Walcher gave an oral report and distributed a written report of her work with the mentor

*Up to the minutes* continued from page 7

program. There is now a section on facebook for those interested fans of the mentor program.

**Legislative Program:** Will Lovett gave an update of the retirement issues facing IEA. He discussed the two-tier pension benefits, funding and trip and CIP. Taxation of retirement income also came up during the Pension Modernization Task Force meetings. He has written a recommendation for IEA concerning the task force which can be found on the IEA website.

**TRS Fall Meetings:** Is it worth the effort to attend the meetings? Do we need to alter our materials? Barb mentioned that her chapter, along with Chapter 8, holds a pre-retirement seminar with TRS and IMRF representatives present. By hosting the seminar they get a chance to talk more about IEA-Retired and get more membership than by going to the TRS meetings and handing out material. We will discuss this more at our February meeting and possibly at the president's meeting at the April conference.

**President's Meeting:** JoAnn asked for suggestions for ideas for topics to be discussed at the president's meeting at the spring conference. Suggested items were: recruitment, missions statement, and chapter websites.

**Awards:** Dave Bishop announced that there were extra nomination forms in Stacy's office. Winners will be selected at the February meeting.

**Conference:** Lana Haines, chair of the conference committee, distributed copies of her report and gave an oral report. She answered questions about the spring conference. **Motion** by Barb Gilhaus, **seconded** by Janet Kilgus that we accept the committees report. **Motion carried.**

**Zone Meetings:** Janet Kilgus reported that someone from retired had attended all but Mike Lambs' zone meeting. Janet will find a council member living near the meeting location to go to his next meeting. At this point, the minority leadership group has not had time on their agenda to allow for a program on the Living Library.

Dave Bishop **moved** and Janet Kilgus **seconded** that we adjourn.

**Adjourn: 12:10 PM**  
 Respectfully Submitted  
 Barb Gilhaus  
 Secretary/Treasurer

<b>R E M E M B E R</b>
<p>The Informer is available for online viewing at <a href="http://www.ieanea.org">www.ieanea.org</a> and includes a bonus article by Janet Kilgus on How Unit 5 retired teachers are continuing a relationship with their district through substitute teaching.</p>

<b>The INFORMER STAFF</b>
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## Back to the Table By Janet Kilgus

The retirees trickled in one or two at a time, chatting quietly, greeting colleagues they had not seen for a while, and taking seats on one side of the table.

Soon, two administrators entered through a door on the right carrying note pads and pencils and took their seats opposite the line up of 10 retired teachers.

At the end of the room, a table was stocked with chocolate pie and cans of ice-cold soda.

The assistant superintendent greeted everyone and laughingly stated that it felt quite lonely on his side of the table and requested that the arrangement be redistributed to help create a more informal atmosphere and to foster open dialogue.

Does this bring back reminders of the past? Do you have those memories of being at the bargaining table? Most likely those meetings were not held in such a setting of camaraderie and cooperation. But this was the experience of 10 retirees of Normal Unit 5 who continue their relationship with the district through substitute teaching.

Now, the Normal district already does a pretty good job of respecting its retirees, their expertise and the service they provided through the years. The district pays its retirees \$20 a day more to sub in the district than they pay other subs.

The district also allows retirees to continue on its health insurance plan, at retirees' own expense, as long as they like.

The district even continues to give its retirees free activity passes to all district student events at the two high schools. Perhaps this level of respect and appreciation is what made it easy for some former Unit 5 Education Association leaders to request a conversation about substitute issues and concerns.

Informally representing all subs in the fairly large district of nearly 13,000 students, the retirees were pleased at the willingness of the administration to sit and talk in a non-adversarial setting.

The first issue was the need for subs to be better kept in the communication loop. Change of start times and other work day details, for example, were learned by subs only through reading the local paper or talking to active teachers.

No one had even thought about the fact that the subs had not been getting this key information directly. Another concern was the use of social security numbers on the automated sub-calling system and when subs sign in at the building level. This has already been fixed.

Another big issue was smart board training. All classrooms in the district now have smart boards that regular teachers use daily. Subs would be glad to continue the pattern if given the training.

It was agreed that sessions would be offered to subs on a first-come-first-served basis on institute days, with pay, to prepare them to use the new technology.

Everyone present expressed their compliments on the quality of lesson plans and materials that they were being provided, but the request for correct and current seating charts was a major concern. The list of discussion items also included computer logins for subs, keys, sub pay, and an updated handbook for all subs on the SubFinder automated system, among other items.

The two administrators took notes, helped brainstorm solution possibilities, and welcomed retirees' input and concerns.

The conversation was open and lively with two-way dialogue and questions. All left with a feeling of satisfaction, accomplishment, and respect. It's an idea worth considering.