

BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICER

LOCAL 964

--STAFF--

STEPHAN G. FUGATE -- MIKE CAMPBELL

By and For the Professional Fire Officer

IN UNION

THERE IS STRENGTH

Volume IX, Issue 5

December 2005/January 2006

From the Desk of the President

By Stephan G. Fugate

964 PAC Fund

Among the more memorable mantras of former IAFF General President Alfred K. Whitehead was his home-spun description of the influence of money in politics. The Californian whose Union career was forged in local, state and ultimately national politics would proclaim with confidence that "money is the Mother's-milk of politics". As in so many other ways, Al was not only right in his observation, he was way ahead of the times and I think that even he might now be surprised by his insight.

So significant was Al's influence on the political activity of the IAFF that the Annual IAFF Legislative Conference has been designated as the Alfred K. Whitehead Legislative Conference. Now heading into it's twenty-fourth year, the IAFF Legislative Conference draws upwards of fifteen hundred IAFF leaders from throughout the U.S. to our Nation's Capital annually to listen, learn, and ultimately lobby members of Congress on behalf of our members' collective interests.

As public employees, a corollary to Al's "money is the Mother's-milk of politics" would be that elected officials are the key to our success, if not our very existence. The simple truth is that, as public employees, we are heavily dependent upon the actions or inaction of elected officials particularly at the local level and any influence we might muster

is critically important to us all. Getting to know and be known by elected officials is crucial to any Union's success in advancing the interests of it's members. For better or worse, having access and the opportunity to influence includes the process of those elected officials either becoming or remaining elected which costs money. Having and taking the time to be politically involved is but one of the essentials often dwarfed by the ability to financially support those who support our interests.

Your Union Local has maintained a registered Political Action Committee (PAC) Fund for more than a decade as a sole source of support for and of our political activities. Your Union Local acknowledges and respects the diversity of political opinion and allegiance of our members and WILL NOT use Union dues to support a party, candidate or issue that might be contrary to YOUR position. To avoid any such conflict, our PAC Fund was established as a sole source of financing our political activities and remains the only source of contributions. The expenditure of very single dollar of voluntary PAC Fund contributions is voted upon by the membership in attendance at our regular Union meetings and becomes part of the public record.

Requests for PAC Fund support are very carefully screened and considered within the limitations of our resources, and we are confident that our support goes exclusively to those who support us and our interests. There are many elected officials and hopeful candidates deserving of our support and the decisions made are often difficult not for lack of merit, but lack of funding. While we cannot and would not require participa-

tion in our PAC Fund, we strongly believe that political activity is absolutely critical to our success. Just as your Union dues support negotiations and other such endeavors for the common good, we submit that political activity is for the common good as well and would hope you'll agree by contributing your "fair share".

From the very start, member contributions to our PAC Fund were made directly, either by check or cash and required collection by hand, in person. The advent of the President's Club requiring a minimum of \$100 per year commitment compounded the logistical difficulty with having to contribute a considerable sum all at once. At long last, however, we can now offer our active members the ease and convenience of payroll deduction that also spreads the full commitment over the course of a year.

It is with all of this in mind that we recently distributed PAC Fund dues deduction cards to our active members soliciting your participation and now trust that we have addressed any questions there might have been. With the authorization cards in hand and possibly a clearer understanding of the motive and purpose of our PAC Fund, we are hopeful of your active participation not only in contributing but in helping decide who deserves YOUR support.

Finally, be advised that the minimum amount permitted for payroll deduction is \$1.00 per pay and membership in the President's Club which rewards participants with a 964 PAC Fund shirt annually requires a minimum bi-weekly contribution of \$4.00. Completed and signed deduction authorization

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President's Report

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cards can be returned via U.S. mail or given to any Executive Board member. The starting date for payroll deduction has yet to be determined, but will likely be sometime in early 2006 and commitments of \$4.00 or more per pay will warrant automatic participation in the President's Club.

DROP

Needless to say, there has been a great deal of interest in the ongoing review of our DROP benefit of late amongst our members with precious little of any official nature coming from the Locals. For better or worse, that void is both of necessity and deliberate as there has been nothing of consequence to disclose and our "the less said, the better" approach seems to have had its intended effect at least to date.

Try as we might to keep a lid on rumors, however, it's a given that such rumors, usually unfounded and/or inaccurate, will abound in any comparable work setting. Unable to stop such activity, our primary responsibility has been *not* to engage in its proliferation and to dispel specific concerns if and when they are raised. With perhaps one notable exception, we have been neither a source nor a conduit of misinformation and we remain unable to shed any substantive light on the issue. As I write on November 28, 2005, there is no agreement in terms of resolving the future of our DROP benefit, but discussions are ongoing and expected to escalate soon.

Though we cannot predict the outcome of those discussions or the fate of DROP as a benefit, we can explain how it is we've gotten to where we are. This might serve as either a reminder to those who already know the history and understand the issue or a means of educating those who do not. In any event, it is the best we can do at this point and hope that it might be helpful.

Established in 1962, the current Plan (Fire & Police Employees' Retirement System) has undergone many improvements and enhancements while maintaining financial stability and sol-

veny. The process for such advancement typically started with the Union Locals identifying a need or shortcoming and starting the politically-based legislative process of enacting the appropriate enabling legislation. Keep in mind that the entire structure of our Plan is codified in Article 22 of the Baltimore City Code and ANY change, however slight, MUST be in the form of City Council Legislation.

Prior to the era in which DROP was originally negotiated, the cost of any Plan improvement was identified and became very much a part any political debate over implementation. The improvement itself might well have been warranted or even necessary but the costs, both short and long term, had to be either neutral, within the City's ability to pay, or shared by the employees.

As an aside, note that in any contributory pension plan, the three sources of funding are the contributions made by employees, payments made by the employer (usually expressed as a percentage of payroll) and the return on investments made by and on behalf of the fund. While the contributory nature of such a plan might suggest joint ownership and decision-making, the fact is that the employer is the sole guarantor of benefits and thus typically maintains a controlling interest.

And, so it was that improvements and costs thereof were generally subject to the political wrangling of enacting legislation to implement the change but once granted, became a permanent part of the Plan. The underlying theory being that the current and future costs of the benefit had been determined and acceptable as an ongoing expense of the Plan.

During the mid 1990's, investment returns of the Plan were such that the City found itself in the position of opting to use "excess earnings" to, in effect, make its contribution (as a percentage of payroll) to the Plan and not have to tap a comparably anemic General Fund. So flush were returns that the City agreed to share use of the year's "excess earnings" with the three employee groups to the extent that those groups could use its' portion to "buy" benefits. For the very first time, the employee groups could effectively avoid the usual political de-

bate and "buy" the benefit(s) they sought.

Coincidentally, the concept of DROP came to fore, absent the usual political gamesmanship and while there was no consensus of the ultimate costs of such a unique benefit, there was a reluctance to deny the Unions' request. The attitude, founded in a desire for mutual autonomy, was that the City would do as it chose with its funds and the Unions would do likewise.

As a point of reference, the City used \$12 million that year to cover its contribution, and the Unions used \$6 million to ostensibly cover the future costs of DROP. That "1/3 - 2/3" split, which was reflective of the contribution split at the time, became the model for a more formal "excess earnings" sharing agreement subsequently which is the subject of yet another significant issue but for another day.

The ultimate structure of our DROP was so unique that there was no like benefit to either compare it with or evaluate for future costs. Concern of the unknown was so great that for the first time in the history of the Plan, a "review clause" was ultimately inserted in the legislation to allow for an actuarial review at the end of the first eight-year cycle of the benefit improvement. Though the benefit cycle was subsequently reduced to seven years, the review date was not changed and remained the end of fiscal year 2005.

Fast-forward to July of 2005 when we reached the point of a legislated valuation of the now known costs of DROP and we can say two things. First, the original \$6 million has not sufficiently covered the costs of DROP and though an additional commitment of excess earnings was made by the Unions to further enhance DROP, that too falls short of covering the costs. Second, experience has now given us the information lacking in 1996 to better evaluate the actual costs of DROP.

And so we are now at a point of having our (the Union) actuary assess the costs of the various component parts of DROP in our attempt to reach agreement with the City Administration to continue the benefit as close to its current form as possible while reducing the ultimate cost. That process may well prove to be more difficult than the development

of DROP from the start. The dynamics that motivated the advent of DROP no longer seem to exist and the prevailing attitude toward the value of DROP in general is mixed at best. There are those in positions of influence who view DROP as an unnecessary expense as well as others who disagree.

Finally, the precarious nature of so many public and private sector pension and post-retirement benefit plans might well erode the good will and support we deserve and might otherwise receive. As has been the case with the economic influences impacting DROP, the "social" atmosphere has experienced something of a "perfect storm" in recent times creating yet another hurdle for us to overcome. With all of that said, rest assured that we will do our very best to protect your interests and keep you informed as the issue develops in the very near future.

What Now?

That might be a logical question being asked by many of our members, both active and retired, following the latest round of Union Local elections. What with all of the acrimony and innuendo that characterized much of the written communication and virtually all of the verbal sniping, one might think that the Executive Board is in complete disarray and hostility. Indeed, the only people both inside and outside of our Department who might take comfort in such a situation are those who would see us defeated and our work as a Union thwarted.

Let me assure all of our members, both active and retired, and those who would celebrate our failure that the Executive Board that will resume duties in January is no less committed and no less functional than ever before. While there might have been a palpable difference of opinion relating to the aforementioned recent election, the election is OVER and we simply move ahead with the tasks at hand.

That's not to say that there isn't significant disappointment with the approach and tactics used by some to manipulate the facts, but that's history now and our work on your behalf is much more important than anyone's personal

feelings. Difficult as it might be to overlook the very pointed attacks and broad-brush accusations, overlook them we must and remain focused on YOUR interests and concerns.

The election results would suggest that a significant majority of our active members did not buy the charge of anyone knowingly yielding, indeed participating in the loss of promotional opportunity for personal gain. I will restate herewith my denunciation of not only the charge, but the mere suggestion that we would engage in such a scheme. We have been elected and sworn by oath to represent YOU and YOUR interests as best we can and I can assure you that we have not and never will forsake that oath.

So, "What Now?"? While I would never compare myself to him in any fashion, I will quote my personal hero of 9-11, Todd Beamer of United Airlines Flight 93; "Let's roll!"

It's the most wonderful time of the year!

Longtime readers of this newsletter will know that Christmas is my absolute favorite time of the year. And though the marriage of our eldest daughter, Shannon, in June of this year means that she won't be "home" Christmas morning for the first time in twenty-six years, it will be no less so. Our younger daughter, Erin, will be home (at least this year) and we will have Shannon in our hearts forever on Christmas morning even with her physical absence.

Surely, Christmas morning will change yet again for us sometime in the future, but our hearts will remain full of the joy of the day. We have been so blessed for so long that anything less would be unimaginable. Christmas, for us, is a magical milestone on life's path and, whatever your custom or belief, we pray that you too can somehow, in some way, know the joy.

**God Bless
and
Merry Christmas!**

From the Desk of the 1st Vice President

By Michael Waldner

Elections have passed and the results are in and tabulated. The totals and results will appear elsewhere in this publication. So let me simply say, "Congratulations to the winners and condolences to the losers". I look forward to the continued success of this Local through the efforts of all who have been duly elected and will serve side by side in conjunction with the wishes of the voting membership. Welcome aboard to the newly elected members! If you lost, please don't be discouraged. Try again and most of all stay active and vocal, after all it's still your Union and you make it work or you let it fail. Apathy is our worst enemy and it appears to be gaining a foothold judging by the attendance at the past few meetings. They are a bargain night out with your brothers when you consider free beer and snacks. Remember the 1st and 3rd Mondays of the month.

We are in the midst of a mail out for participation in the second round of the Heart and Lung scan study. Once again we will be sending questionnaires to the most senior members first (who did not get seen in round 1). We anticipate 40 – 45 slots for each Local for the 4 Saturdays in February. Please fill out the forms and get them back to me ASAP so the staff at Union Memorial can review and select the most appropriate members for the study. We will be mailing to the 100 most senior members and will select from the returned forms.

If you are not selected or are not old enough or don't have enough time in the department for me to get to you working through our seniority list for our program this time or if you have a family history which would cause you concern about waiting until we get to you, I mentioned in last month's article about a Community Outreach Program conducted by Union Memorial Hospital offering the heart scan on Saturdays other than February at **the discount rate of \$75**. The phone # is **1-877-744-3278**. If you men-

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1st Vice President*...continued from page 3*

tion that you are a Fire Fighter you might additionally be offered the lung scan. This will be for a \$75 fee also. Getting both for a combined \$150 is a great bargain. Please take advantage of this program. It is open to the public (spouses, parents, siblings are eligible in this program) but only on Saturdays and they are booked months ahead at this time, so call immediately.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to All!

Stay warm, dry, and most of all safe through the winter ahead.

From the Desk of the Secretary-Treasurer

Bob Jordan

First off, as you may have known, or may not have known, my wife, Char, had major surgery on October 3rd. She is now doing quite well, and I want to thank everyone for their prayers, visits and cards that helped us through this trying time. I know it meant a lot to Char, but it also meant a lot to me, and I want to thank everyone.

As you know by now, I usually don't write a newsletter article unless it has to do with the finances of this Local, but I have to write about the election that we just had.

I want to say congratulations to our elected members: Mike Campbell, Second Vice President, Tom Nosek, Recording Secretary, Anita Hatoff and George Jones to the positions of Trustee. I want to also say congratulations to the members that were elected or appointed to the Board of Directors.

I also want to thank Ski (Wayne Nowowiejski) for the many years that he served as a Board of Director and then as Trustee for the Local. Thank you.

This election was the first one in some time where we had two members on the Executive Board running against each other for the same position. I want everyone to know that I thought the way one candidate ran his campaign was a disgrace to our Local. To say that a mem-

ber of our Executive Board "costs us" a position in our Local, is a reflection of the entire Executive Board including the member who made the accusation. He also had help in making this claim with another Board member who supported him and in my mind, started this entire claim and was the instigator behind this entire line of the campaign. There is no way the other three members of the Executive Board would allow the Department to remove a position with out a fight, if this truly did happen.

As we know now, with the results of the vote, that the membership did not believe any of these false and misleading comments and letters that were said and printed.

I feel that the actions of these two members were uncalled for in the election and as far as I am concerned, I feel that the member still on the Executive Board wronged a fellow Brother with false accusations.

In closing, I want to wish everyone a blessed Holidays and a Happy New Year.

From the Desk of the 2nd Vice President

By Ben Alder

Let me start out by wishing everyone a Very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! Please remember to keep our servicemen and woman, and their families in your prayers.

I would like to say Thank You to past President John Seiss for allowing me to become involved in the local and for appointing me to various committees within the local, starting in 1991. It has truly been my privilege to serve the IAFF and the local for the past 14 years! I am looking forward to attending the regular union meetings.

Building: The penthouse on the roof has been completed and it was a job well done by the contractor..... Good luck to Mr. David Key of the Daily Grind. I hope your business prospers on the Square.

P S I: A date of January 6th has been set for arbitration.

Tired and Retired

by Bob Hatoff

On one of my more exciting days, I was sitting at home reading my calendar. (Don't ask what I do on my slow days.) I happened to notice another year is just about over. I'd like to list all my accomplishments for this year and if I can think of any I will. Ever being the optimist, I'm looking forward to next year, even though I'll be older than this year.

Speaking of next year, I've got a way for you to start it off on a good note! The Retirees will be sponsoring a Bull and Oyster Roast from 1:00 to 6:00 PM on Sunday, January 22, 2006. It will be held at Heritage Hall in the Parkville Shopping Center at Harford Rd. and Taylor Ave. The cost is \$30.00 per person or you can get a table of 10 for the bargain price of only \$300.00. If you're interested in tickets, please call Charlie (Scoop) Williams at 410-515-0243. A special highlight of the affair will be my signing of autographs, for my thousands of fans. It doesn't get any better than this!

One of the good things that happened recently, was I got a call from one of my old mentors from Fire Prevention. The caller was Al Suresch, who is about to hit the big 9-0. Now that makes me feel young even though my body doesn't agree. Al was wondering if any of his old buddies are still around. He is living down in Tampa, Florida. So if you'd like to say hi to Al, you can call him at 1-813-975-5730. I know he'd love to hear from you.

Well I guess I'd better wrap this up before it is next year. I hope 2006 will be a great year for you. I especially want to wish you and your families a blessed Christmas. Keep Christ in your lives and holidays.

As always you can reach me at 1805 Greencastle Dr, Baltimore, MD 21237 or 410-866-3235. Or even better you can see me in person at the bull roast!

From the Desk of the Recording Secretary

By Mike Campbell

I would like to stand on my Soap Box for a moment, (don't say it Ski, I am standing)! The bold type portion of this article was written on 10/19/05, long before the outcome of the election was known. **I write this with much disappointment as to how the 2nd V.P. election campaign transgressed into a libelous smear attack upon my character. I chose to run a positive, accomplishment driven campaign and again will take the High Road in this article, even considering the lies and innuendos attached to my name. What is disturbing though is that the old adage seems to be true, for some, that if you tell a lie long enough, it becomes fact in some people's minds. I feel ashamed for our membership that you had to endure this kind of behavior, but I am also 100% sure that with President Fugate's leadership we will get over this chapter in our Local. Your Executive Board will continue to work on your behalf. I am hoping that this will be a wake-up call to our members to get more involved and not depend on rumors or word of mouth to find out what may or may not be the facts. Attend a Union meeting to get the truth. These positions are not entitlements and we shouldn't be waiting for retirements if we feel we aren't getting our dues worth. Many of you know me as a straight shooter who will always give you an honest answer, even if it isn't the answer that you are looking for. In that there are always two sides to every story, if you feel that you want to talk about any issue of this past election feel free to call or e-mail me at the numbers below.**

The election results for 2nd V.P. are in, and I would like to thank the active & retired members who participated in the process and who have shown faith in me to continue to represent you. My faith has been renewed in our membership

and I see brighter things in our future as a Local. Thank you again for your support. I would also like to congratulate Steve Fugate, Tom Nosek and Anita Hatoff for their being elected as President, Recording Secretary and Trustee respectively. I also would like to welcome newly elected Trustee, George Jones to the mix. Please keep in your thoughts those members who have lost loved ones during this Christmas Season. **MERRY CHRISTMAS AND LONG LIVE OUR UNION!**

If PHASE 1 of the snow emergency is effect, then that evening's meeting is cancelled!

Health

Open Enrollment has come and gone. Hope everyone looked over all of the material and the rates to make the most beneficial choice for your needs. Beginning in January 2006 we will be paying 20% of the premium for CareFirst and 10% for the HMO's. The co-pays and prescriptions remain the same.

Safety and Health

Bill Kern and I attended the John P. Redmond, Occupational Health and Hazards of the Fire Service Symposium in October. This conference focuses on all aspects of health and safety as it pertains to firefighters and medical personnel. There were workshops on wellness/fitness initiatives, physiological responses of firefighters, apparatus safety and protective clothing technology to name a few. One of the most important things that I took from it was preventive maintenance for us. We do preventive maintenance on the apparatus, but we neglect the number 1 factor in our job, ourselves. I think us as a Local, and the Fire Dept. need to instill in the recruits the benefits of taking care of yourself and to always wear the protective clothing and equipment that we are supplied with. This has to begin at the Fire Academy. The Safety & Health Committee met on 10/20/05. Some of the most pressing issues are as follows. I have been assured that the Dept. is addressing the safety issues with regards to Engine 29's quarters. Bob Sledgeski and I have been in touch with

Chief Heinbuch and he has stated that the work on the roof will begin this month and the electrical problems will be rectified soon after. The Dept. is still attempting to put out an MOP for RIT operations. Chief Heinbuch notified both Unions that the Dept. is prepared to take punitive measures against those that do not maintain their SCBA's and also those that are involved in an accident and the cause is found to be that the member was not wearing their seat belt. Keep all of your protective equipment clean and if there is an issue with your SCBA on the fire ground notify the Safety Officer who will make sure that the equipment is inspected at Air Mask Repair. If your face piece is free flowing, check the bypass knob first. Always wear your seat belt! Any questions don't hesitate to call me.

President's Club

President Fugate will be mailing a letter to all of the active members explaining the payroll deduction for our PAC Fund. There will be a card that needs to be mailed back to the Local with your contribution choice. The Local has tried for over 10 years to get this payroll slot. The PAC Fund is our most important tool to have the local politicians listen to our concerns. If you contribute \$4.00 or more a pay you are automatically included in the Presidents Club.

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

Cell – 443-629-0216 -
Work – 410-396-5773 or
E-mail: capttain16@hotmail.com

Words to twirl by...

Truckin, got my chips cashed in
Keep truckin like the doodah
man
Together more or less in line
Just keep truckin on!

--Grateful Dead

2nd Vice-President Election Report

Ballots Mailed Out

Active	325	
Retired	<u>422</u>	
Total		747

Ballots returned	512	
Minus invalid ballots	<u>4*</u>	
Total countable ballots		508

*1 postmarked after 10-20 deadline
 *3 retiree ballots not marked

Active	233	
Retiree	<u>275</u>	
Total		508

		<u>Ballots</u>	<u>Votes</u>
Ben Alder	Active	49	49
	Retired	<u>134</u>	<u>33</u>
	Total	283	82

Mike Campbell	Active	184	184
	Retired	<u>141</u>	<u>35</u>
	Total	325	219

Final

Ben Alder	82
Mike Campell	219

Mike Campbell elected 2nd Vice President

Respectfully submitted,

William F.Kern, Election Committee Chairman
 Thomas Nosek & Anita Hatoff Ballot Committee

Entertainment Committee

By Tom Nosek

- Installation of officers, January 16, 2006, Food will be served
- Watch for flyers for the dance, annual raffle and social night.

Local 964's Retirees Dinner Dance

Thursday, April 27, 2006 7:00 to 11:00

Columbus Gardens

Open Bar, Music, Ice Cream

For tickets call Tom Nosek 410-638-2231- Price \$30.00

Box 414

By Walt Lemmon

Box 414 considered it an honor and privilege to have been a part of the funeral for Lt Brian Connor Engine 20 who was killed while performing his duty and serving his country in Iraq.He will be remember as a Hero. Our services were used at a Central Maryland Urban Search and Rescue mobilization training drill at the Fire Academy. The Coffee Wagon was asked to serve 575 people at the Operation Down Under Drill held at the Hopkins Subway Station. We hadhelp from Mutual Aid Baltimore County Central Alarmers and Anne Arundel County Alarmers for this 14 hour event The above events are all part of the new tactics involving the Fire Department in the world in which we live.It is necessary that Box 414 be prepared for any possible disaster that may occur.Wagon was called out for 4 "special calls", working fire and 5 2nd alarm fires.The days of cold weather are coming and Box 414 will be there with hot drinks and hot food.

THE BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICERS

Local No. 964

Meetings -- 1st & 3rd Monday
 1030 S. Linwood Avenue
 Baltimore, MD. 21224
 PHONE: 410-276-6964

Non-Profit
 U.S. POSTAGE
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 Permit No. 4815
 Baltimore, MD

Change of Address -- Cut out and return to the Secretary, Local #964

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ ZIP _____

PHONE No. _____