

# BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICER

LOCAL 964

—STAFF—

STEPHAN G. FUGATE -- TOM NOSEK

*By and For the Professional Fire Officer*

IN UNION

THERE IS STRENGTH

Volume X, Issue 2

April/May 2006

## From the Desk of the President

*By Stephan G. Fugate*

Well, the newsletter deadline has come at a very difficult time for me, but there are a few items that I have a genuine obligation to address for both our active and retired members, and that I will try to do as best I can, albeit uncharacteristically briefly. Both of the “major” issues affecting the two groups are related to the extent that they concern our retirement system, and though one has to do with what was a benefit improvement, while the other is more base in that it has to do with what’s likely the major source of retirement income.

**Retirees first.** As a result of a recently published study by a local “think tank”, The Calvert Institute, many questions have been raised causing genuine concern, and I want to try and put things into proper perspective and (hopefully) put your mind at ease. It has been suggested that our retirement system is somehow “headed for disaster” and that, at some point, the City’s financial obligation will exceed its ability or willingness to contribute the requisite sums to maintain solvency.

As an eight year member of YOUR Board of Trustees, I can assure you that there are several parties of interest constantly scrutinizing such matters as part of their jobs and that whatever funding “issues” there are or might be, are being or have been addressed. Furthermore, our fund was actuarially funded at 95.9 percent at the end of the last fiscal year,

on June 30, 2006 placing it among the healthiest among comparable Public Plans. The bottom line is that while it can surely be argued that there is always a potential for funding problems with any retirement system, it is NOT something that happens overnight or in a vacuum. Short-term trends are somewhat inconsequential and, as I write, the long term trends are not worthy of your concern though I guarantee you that you’ll hear and/or read about it in no uncertain terms.

Having said that, however, and having confidence in what I said, there are two basic methods of valuing a retirement fund: actuarial, which looks at the long-term and uses “smoothing” to reduce the short-term effect of significant ups and downs in the value of assets; and market value which uses the actual value of assets at a given point in time and applies that amount to total fund liabilities. It is the latter system of valuation where our system’s funding level drops from 95.9% to about 76% which means that if the system “cashed-out” today and divided assets based upon the total life-time benefit due each of the more than 10,000 members and beneficiaries, that payout would equal 76 cents on the dollar. First and foremost, that’s NOT the way pension funds operate, as it is anticipated that benefit payments are made over decades, not in a day. Second, the only immediate impact of market value is (in my view) in attempting to forecast future contribution levels and even in that instance, it’s no more or less significant than the actuarial value.

The bottom line is that, barring some major unforeseen global economic melt-down, and so long as the system

remains upon new employees, there is very little for anyone to be concerned about. As a more recent report in the fledging new local publication, the Examiner points out, there have been issues with poor investment return in the past, but I would submit that those issues have been addressed, and our system is now in the top three-percent of public funds as it relates to performance. As I always emphasize, the best way to view and consider all of the news and opinions about our retirement system is to be actively involved and informed. Do not hesitate to ask questions, but listen to and weigh the answers as well before coming to a conclusion.

### **Now, to the active members.**

First, it could be said that this second group is further defined by those in the current DROP and those who are not or will not be eligible for the original version of DROP, but subject to the revised version dubbed DROP2. There has been a great deal of discussion about the provisions of the revised plan, so I will not delve into that again but will advise that the legislation for the revised plan was introduced to the City Council on Tuesday night and assigned to the Taxation and Finance Committee as anticipated. The legislation was introduced as CC 06-370 by the Council President on behalf of the Administration and has yet to be scheduled for a hearing. Once known, by the way, the hearing date and time will be posted on our website so please check it often if you’re interested in following the process. Also, I will be providing regular updates on my page of our website as soon as possible and I hope to be able to answer any questions

*...continued on page 2*

## President's Report

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either e-mailed or phoned to me as quickly as possible.

**Finally**, this is a rather short (by my standards) newsletter article, and I apologize if I've overlooked something important to you but there's a logical explanation and I'll offer it but only as a point of information and nothing else. On Friday, March 31, we suffered a rather significant fire in our home and have been displaced to an extendend-stay motel for now with the anticipation of moving to a nearby condo soon. The good news is that no one was injured and even our two Yorkshires survived, thanks to our Brothers and Sisters of the Baltimore County Fire Department, who did an exceptional job and are to be thanked and commended. The bad news is that our basement was destroyed and there is smoke damage throughout, making it uninhabitable for several months. Again, I relate this only as information and not to solicit sympathy, and all that I ask is that you allow me the consideration I will surely need, particularly early on in dealing with our loss. We have FIVE Executive Board members of our Local and the other four are ready, willing and certainly able to assist you with almost any issue. That's not to say I will be completely unavailable, and I fully understand that I have a job to do for you, but I hope and pray that you'll permit me to focus on our home and family with the faith that we'll be back on our feet as soon as possible.

Thanks and God Bless.

### From the Desk of the 1st Vice President

By Michael Waldner

First on the agenda this month, let me congratulate our membership on their tremendous response to the sale offering of the Firefighter blankets to benefit the State Association of Professional Fire Unions. Much feedback has been generated from proud owners on the warmth and softness of these stadium style blankets presently displayed in bunkrooms throughout many of our firehouses and bedrooms or family rooms in our homes. The blankets sell for \$35 each, with \$10 going to the State Association PAC fund. Local 964 has sold more blankets than any other Local statewide. We have one of the last two in stock on display at Union meetings. Contact any Executive Board member if you are interested in making a purchase. We will restock if and when necessary. Thanks for your support in surpassing our goal and leading the sales race.

The Social night, as always, was a great affair and enjoyed by too few members. Those that made it such a success deserve our thanks and will be identified elsewhere in the Newsletter I'm sure. Tom Nosek spearheads this Entertainment Committee. Many retirees from recent years, as well as some of our more senior retirees, made the night a truly memorable event. Watch this newsletter for the next event and make sure you mark the date and join your brothers, active and retired, for the next social gathering.

During the many conversations, I was presented with an additional health related service by retired Chief Ronald Brown and asked to relay to our members. It is especially attractive to our older retirees and their spouses, siblings, and friends. The program is called "Dare to Care". This program is offering scans for carotid artery disease, abdominal aortic aneurysms, renal artery stenosis, and extreme artery disease. These tests are being **offered free of charge** at the Sajak Pavilion in Parole. This center is funded by a foundation started by game show host Pat Sajak. For an appointment call 1-**410-573-9483**. The address

is Sajak Pavilion, Suite 520, at 2002 Medical Parkway, Annapolis, MD 21401. Directions – Take Route 97 to exit 23 Route 50 East (Parole), turn right on West St. to Jennifer Rd. to the Sajak Pavilion on the left. It is a 6-story medical building. Thanks to Chief Brown for sharing this info.

The second round of heart/lung scans for our active members has concluded, and you should have gotten all your results if you participated. Other than one snow day disruption all appointments were kept and everyone was accommodated. As in the past, this program was a huge success, whether your results were good or bad. If you were cleared of any worries or alerted to a potential problem, you benefited from the results.

This is a great program, please take full advantage of it, or if you are leery of doing it through the Local use the Community Outreach Programs.

As always, I will mention again about the Community Outreach Program conducted by Union Memorial Hospital offering the heart/lung scans on Saturdays to the general public at **the discount rate of \$75 each**. The phone # is **1-877-744-3278**. *Getting both for a combined \$150 is a great bargain.* Our retirees can take advantage of this program until we complete the active members. It is open to the general public (spouses, parents, siblings are eligible in this program), but it is also only on Saturdays and they are booked into September at this time, so call immediately.

If Union Memorial is not convenient or you need an earlier appointment you are in luck. Franklin Square Hospital (sister to Union Memorial in the same Health group) has a scan machine is now doing heart scans only (no lung scans available yet) at its own Community Outreach Program. Check with them on pricing, but it should be similar. **The number for Franklin Square is 443-777-7900.**

Softball league fees are paid and the shirts have been picked up and are ready to be distributed to team members. Season opener will be May 1<sup>st</sup> in beautiful downtown Perry Hall. Anyone interested in playing on Monday nights, please call me at 410-908-2179. I still run a slow pitch softball team sponsored

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UNION MEETINGS**

by Firehouse Tavern and can always use players. This is an open age limit league for 18 and up, although I do use it as a practice outlet for the "over forty" team members but everyone is welcome. If you can't play in the spring but are interested in joining us for the IAFF/MDA "over forty" tournament in September call and I will reserve a spot on that team for you. If you turn 40 in this (or reached 40 any previous) year you are qualified for the tournament. This is an event I have participated in for almost 35 years and still enjoy it today as much as the first one. Ask anyone who has played and they will agree. Obviously, I am in need of 40 and barely over to refill the slots older guys like myself have vacated over the past few years. I am looking for some new blood (and legs) to keep this thing going for the future. Call me at (C) 410-908-2179 or (H) 410-879-4545.

***Stay safe and try to attend a meeting before the summer break!***

### **From the Desk of the 2nd Vice President**

*By Mike Campbell*

I had the pleasure of attending along with Brothers Fugate, Nosek & Kern a hearing in Annapolis of the Hometown Heroes Act (HB1424) in February. The bill would provide retirement income relief to firefighters, EMS personnel and law enforcement officials. The Fire, EMS & Police aspects of the bill have been coupled into HB35, which seeks retirement income relief for military veterans. The bill is presently moving through the legislative process. You can track the bill's progress by going to <http://mlis.state.md.us/>. I would like to thank President LeRoy Wilkison and the Professional Fire Fighters of Maryland, L-A19 for their diligent work on this important piece of legislation on behalf of our retirees.

Your Executive Board also attended the IAFF Legislative Conference in March in Washington, D.C. Whatever your personal feelings with regards to the IAFF and their political endorsements aside it is my opinion that General President Harold Schaitberger and his staff have done a tremendous job with regards to

firefighters health & safety, pension, overtime and numerous other issues that effect the Professional Fire Fighter. This conference provides the opportunity for local affiliates to speak with their elected officials about issues that impact their membership.

Closer to home, I have been working with the Fire Department's personnel office on many issues regarding promotions, promotional exams and classifications. All ranks have been promoted, and by the time you receive this Newsletter, the Captain's position issue should be resolved. Call me if you are not familiar with this issue. The issue of harassment and behavior unbecoming needs to be addressed. The Fire Department is becoming more diversified and irregardless of your personal feelings on this, what was once acceptable behavior may not be now. My advice as an Officer is if someone brings to you a situation where they feel they have been offended or harassed, you better have that behavior stopped immediately and address the situation. There are policies in place with regards to this issue and my preference would be that these types of issues be handled in the fire house, but members who feel that they have been harassed have the right to go outside the Fire Department and have it resolved. I have heard from some Officers that "I was in my office" and I can tell you that that response will not fly. Be more diligent in your supervision of your members and the fire house and by all means take the necessary steps to protect yourself before the stuff hits the fan! This is by no means me agreeing with the Administration and their practices just an acknowledgement of how the times have changed. I placed this in the last Newsletter, but I feel it needs repeating. If you make any changes such as address, phone number, dependant or beneficiary, we must know about it. Neither the City nor the FD notifies us of your changes. This will allow us to better serve you!

**LONG LIVE OUR UNION!**

### **Health Care**

So far things have been quiet with regards to Health Care. If you have any issues, please don't hesitate to call.

### **Safety and Health**

Presently E-29 has been relocated to E-46 while the lead removal process gets underway. They do have a new speaker system on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. A new drop ceiling along with new flooring and a paint job will begin after the lead paint removal. E-36 is next for lead paint removal and will have a new kitchen installed along with a drop ceiling. E-8's roof is complete and SQ-54's roof should be done when you receive this. Engines 47, 21, 57 & Engine 58 are soon to follow. Captains are still being asked to document all complaints of any overhead door issues and e-mail them to Jim Bellamy. This company is not providing good service and the FD needs to know about it. I would like to thank Jim Bellamy for his efforts. The next Safety & Health meeting is 4/20/06. Feel free to send me any concerns.

### **President's Club**

I ordered the President's Club shirts for 2006 and will do another order in July for those members who sign-up after April 1<sup>st</sup>. Currently we have 62 members who are contributing to our PAC Fund. Of those, we have 59 President's Club members. 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 President's Club. Thanks to those who have contributed and to those who haven't, contact me if you need a card.

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

E-mail: [captain16@hotmail.com](mailto:captain16@hotmail.com)

### **Words to twirl by...**

*Long distance runner what you holdin out for?*

*Caught in slow motion in your dash to the door*

*The flame from your stage has now spread to the floor*

*You gave all you got, why you wanta give more?*

*The more that you give, why, the more it will take*

*to the thin line beyond which you really cannot fake*

*--Grateful Dead*

### From the Desk of the Secretary-Treasurer

By Bob Jordanr

### The John L. Seiss Benefit Golf Tournament

Local 964's John L. Seiss Benefit Golf Tournament, to benefit our VEBA Fund, will be held on May 12, 2006 at the Woodlands Golf Course in Woodlawn. The cost is still only \$100 per person, which includes continental breakfast, food and beverages on the course plus a gourmet dinner buffet after the golf. Prizes include a chance to win a week-stay trip in St Croix, US Virgin Islands and a hole-in-one prize including a new car from Sheehy Nissan of Glen Burnie.

We will also have great door prizes to be given away including hotel stays and dinner certificates at some of Baltimore's great locations.

This tournament is limited to 120 people, so that we can keep up the pace of play, so get your foursome together for a great day of golf.

Announcements and flyers will be in the firehouses before you receive this in the mail. If you have any questions, please call me at 410-908-2434.

### Motorcycle Tags

We are still trying to obtain FO tags for motorcycles. We need to have at least 25 members to originate the tags. **REMEMBER:** This is open to active and retired.

Below is list of the members I have on file as wanting tags:

John Baker  
Joe Clawson  
Bob Finnick  
Dave Franz  
Anita Hatoff  
Matthew Hayden  
Doug Hipp  
Bill Hughes  
Ed McCarthy

Robert Nine  
Ray Ryan  
Mike Savino  
Dan Thompson  
Art Turner  
Karl Zimmerman

As you can see, we have 15 names so far. If you want to be included on this list (or wish to be taken off), please e-mail me at [bfo964@aol.com](mailto:bfo964@aol.com) or call at 410-908-2434.

### Retirees PAC Fund Donations

As I wrote in the last issue of the newsletter, the Active members have a dues deduction slot on payroll now, but they can not accommodate retirees. I wanted to get a letter out asking for donation by this time, but I had shoulder surgery, and have just been catching up with all my other duties as your Treasurer, including the golf tournament. I will try to get that letter sometime this month.

In the mean time, anyone can donate to our Political Action Fund, and if you donate \$100, you will get our great Presidents Club embroidered shirt with our PAC Fund logo.

### From the Desk of the Recording Secretary

By Tom Nosek

The Retiree dinner/dance is April 27, 2006, we still have tickets available, for tickets call me at home 410 638 2231 or cell 410 499 5441. When corresponding with retirees, they are giving me a glimpse of retirement years. Dave Joeckel is living on a 42 acre farm in Alabama and golf's twice a week with Bobby Lappe. George Bull is enjoying retirement and traveling. Brother and Sister's please make the effort to send in the VEBA raffle tickets, the Ocean City get away will be drawn the night of the dinner/dance!

The Executive Board attended IAFF Legislative Conference on March 20, 2006 in Washington D.C. The conference emphasized FF's pension protection, retiree health care, presumptive cancer legislation, Federal FF's issues and the lack of funding for the SAFER act. We heard from both parties Republican and Democrat concerning terrorism, natural emergencies ( Katrina ), FEMA and their perspective on the upcoming 36 Governor races. I am always amazed at hearing from other FF's at how their jurisdictions support or don't support their respective Fire Departments.

I hope everyone enjoys their family during the upcoming Easter season.

-Tom

### UPCOMING EVENTS -- MARK YOUR CALENDARS

By Tom Nosek, Chairman Entertainment Committee

- The Retiree dinner/dance is April 27, 2006 (see Tom's article for details.

- "Local 964 night at the ballpark", Friday, July 7, 2006 @7:05 pm Aberdeen Ironbirds vs Hudson Valley Renegades. Tickets are \$9 each gets you a seat and a baseball cap. The game will be played at Ripken stadium in Aberdeen Md.

- Annual picnic will be Friday, July 21, 2006 12-6 pm at Valleybrook County club, 810 Valleybrook Dr., Kingsville, Md. Come enjoy the 3 pools, covered pavilion, food, drink, ice cream, games and a special surprise this year.

## Box 414

*by Walt Lemmon*

We had the honor of being a part of the dedication ceremony of the Roman A. Kaminski Station (Engine 5, Truck 3 and Medic 10). Roman is a very dedicated member of Box 414 and a true friend of the Fire Department.

I ended my last article stating that January was slow. Well Mr Groundhog did see his shadow and February and part of March has made up for our services. There were 2 Special Calls, 7 Working Fires, 4 Fatalities, (5) 2nd Alarms and (1) 3rd Alarm.

Our last check with Krammes Kustom Body in PA has the 2nd wagon being customized. We can't say right now when it will be on the street.

The annual collection of donations among the members to Box 414 will be collected soon. Don't forget we were there for you!

The Box 414 Annual Banquet will be on Tuesday, May 16th at Klosterman's (Columbus Gardens). Tickets are \$30.00 and can be ordered from Joe Freund at 443-848-2886.

**We need YOUR support.**



Pictured above (l. to r.): Tom Nosek, Recording Secretary; Harold Schaitburger, IAFF General President; Mike Campbell, 2nd Vice President.

# Tired and Retired

by Bob Hatoff

Spring is here! This is a very special time of year when the earth renews itself. That dry brown grass is suddenly green and growing. Flowers are poking up through the ground. Those dry, bare trees are covered with new buds. Baseball fans all over the country are hoping this new season will be the one where their team becomes a contender.

Now here's my spin on the situation. I would rather that dry brown grass would remain brown and then it wouldn't have to be cut and edged. Those flowers popping up will need to be watered and weeded. Those buds on the trees will become thousands of leaves that will have to be raked and bagged for hours in the fall. With free agent signings over the winter of has beens and never weres the Orioles are unable to hit, pitch or field. This means we'll have to listen to these mediocre millionaires crying all year about contract extensions and wishes to be traded. Meanwhile the hated Yankees will kick their butts and come in first again. Then the playoff season will be filled with the obnoxious New York fans and their equally obnoxious owner. Excuse me, but I can't wait for winter to come!

Now I know you're thinking I've really become jaded and you're probably right. However, I was President of the Hamilton Little League in 1975. I wrote the Orioles to request Brooks Robinson to attend our opening day ceremonies. A few days before the event, I was working night work at Oldtown. I got a phone call from Brooks and he apologized for not calling me sooner, because he'd been out of town. He assured me he would be there and was good to his word. After that he hung around signing autographs for all the kids. Now don't forget Brooks is a Hall of Famer and one of the all time greats of the game. I'd be surprised if you could get a ball player now, without paying him. Also don't forget they charge your kids about \$25.00 for each autograph now.

Well friends that's it for now. I know I'm depressing you, because I'm depressing myself. You'll hear from me again in June. Unless things get worse!

As always you can reach me at 1805 Greencastle Dr, Baltimore, MD 21237 or 410-866-3235.

**THE BALTIMORE FIRE OFFICERS**

**Local No. 964**

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Baltimore, MD. 21224  
PHONE: 410-276-6964

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