



BLET Auxiliary News

Working to bring about safer working conditions for Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen, educate spouses, and enhance the lifestyles of railroad employees and their families.

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Auxiliary celebrates 125-year anniversary

The following article appeared in the 150th Anniversary Celebration official souvenir program, "Celebrating our Heritage," distributed to all attendees at the BLET 150th Anniversary Celebration in Detroit, Michigan, on May 8, 2013.

By Anita J. Caruso and Sereena Hogan

On October 16, 2012, the BLET Auxiliary, formerly known as the Grand International Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers, celebrated its 125-year anniversary. The Auxiliary came into existence in 1887, the year that the BLE Convention was being held in Chicago, Illinois. A number of the wives of the organizers of that convention had volunteered to assist their husbands in the planning and organizing of the event. It was during that same time period that the

idea came about to organize an auxiliary to the BLE.

On October 16, 1887, the first unit, Division One, was organized in Chicago, Illinois, with 10 charter members. Five days later, on October 21, the women met again and adopted a temporary constitution and bylaws, and elected their officers, headed by Grand President Letitia B. Murdock. Ms. Murdock, the widow of a North Western Railroad engineer, served as Grand President from 1887 to 1919.

Ms. Murdock and the other organizers recognized the need to formally organize at that time, as many of the wives of BLE members were already meeting in small groups scattered throughout the U.S. and Canada; however, there was no established organization to bring them all

together. Following the issuance of that first charter, others were distributed in quick succession, until at one time 600 lodges (later named divisions, and now called local auxiliaries) held charters. The original roster of 10 members grew to 26,000. At the second convention, held in Chicago in September 1889, the women adopted permanent bylaws and rituals that included five forms: Opening, Initiation, Balloting, Installation, and Closing.

At this second convention, the members strongly desired BLE recognition of their order and sent a letter to the BLE Grand Chief Engineer requesting a public announcement of their group as the Auxiliary to the BLE. At first, the officers and members of the BLE were opposed to the idea, but the strong will and determination of this group of energetic women won out and the Grand Chief gave his promise of earnest future support, admitting that the women might be the means of doing a great deal of good.

In 1896, the crescent and star were adopted as the auxiliary's emblem, and in 1908, the order adopted the name Grand International Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (GIA to BLE). That name prevailed until the convention of 2006 when the name was changed to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen Auxiliary (BLET Auxiliary), the name by which the organization is recognized today. We have kept faith with our philosophy and main beliefs in Fidelity, Love, Charity, Harmony, and Protection, the guiding principles this organization was founded on.

Promoting fraternal love and sociability within the families of BLE members was the main purpose of the GIA. Over the years, these women banded together for



Founding members and first officers of the Grand International Auxiliary (GIA), elected at convention in Chicago, pose for this photo in 1888. (Photo courtesy of John Bentley, BLET National, from BLET Archives)

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Auxiliary President's Message - BY ANITA J. CARUSO

These past few months have been like a whirlwind! The BLET Auxiliary national officers were invited to participate in the celebration of the 150th Anniversary of the BLET and we were honored to be a part of this historic event. Sisters

Sereena Hogan and Linda Maher were asked to serve on the BLET's Banquet and Entertainment Committee for this event, and I served on the Program and Fundraising Committee and the Senior Planning Committee. One of my committee assignments was to help make calls to 235 vendors to ask if they had received their materials about the event. Many thanks to Sisters Helen Brand and Gina Forman for helping me make those calls.

The Fundraising Committee asked if the Auxiliary would chair a raffle to benefit the 150th Anniversary Fund. Brother Ken Kertesz, Pennsylvania State Legislative Board Chairman, also a member of the Fundraising Committee, assisted me with the raffle. Thank you Brother Ken from the bottom of my heart for your guidance, encouragement, and friendship as we moved forward with this assignment!

The Auxiliary was also invited to submit an article for the commemorative 150th Anniversary Program. Many thanks to Sister Sereena Hogan for her help in writing this article, and to our "unofficial historian," Sister Becky Schneider for helping to research some of the facts for the article. BLET National Editor John Bentley added some great photos and we were proud to have our history be included in the program.

I was invited to make a presentation at the main event on May 8. I was concerned about speaking before a group much larger than I was used to and I am grateful to Brother Tom Pontolillo, Assistant to the BLET National President and Director of Research, for giving me some pointers and to Sister Sereena for helping edit my speech. Following my speech, I presented President Pierce with a gift from the Auxiliary — a hand-crafted gavel with a locomotive steam engine carved on one side and his name, the event, and date, and "BLET Auxiliary" carved on the other side. We are grateful to the BLET for including the Auxiliary in

this celebration and to all who worked hard to make it a success. We invited our Past President Becky Schneider to attend the event and we were fortunate to have her and her husband Larry join us in Detroit.

The National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen held their meeting in Detroit the same week as the 150th Anniversary and Sister Sereena and I were invited to attend. Sister Becky Schneider and her husband Larry were also in attendance at this meeting.

Because all of our Executive Council members were going to be in Detroit for the anniversary celebration, we scheduled our annual meeting during that week as well. We met for two full days, on May 7 and May 9, to take care of auxiliary business and award the scholarships for the 2013-2014 school years.

Upon our return from Detroit, Sister Helen Brand and I organized our newest auxiliary in Kansas City, Missouri, on May 20. Missouri State Legislative Board Chairman Brian Kelley attended the organizational meeting (see story on page 3). We are grateful to Megan Lundy for getting this group up and running and welcome the new members of Auxiliary 422.

Sister Sereena Hogan and I will attend the organizational meeting of yet another new auxiliary in Vancouver, Washington, on June 5. Look for an article in the next issue of this publication about this new group joining our ranks.

Sam and I are awaiting the arrival of our third grandson sometime in early July. I hope to make it to all four regional conventions this summer, but will have to "play it by ear" to see if Baby Baggiani cooperates with my travel schedule.

Wishing each and every one of you a wonderful summer. I hope I get to see many of you at the regional conventions.

Anita J. Caruso
National President - BLET Auxiliary
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Auxiliary 422 Organized in Kansas City



took their oath and pins to accept their new BLET Auxiliary roles while meeting over dinner at Backfire Barbecue at the Legends Shopping Center in Kansas City, Kansas. Also in attendance to offer his encouragement, and congratulations, was BLET Chairman and Missouri State Legislative Representative Brian Kelley.

Auxiliary 422 will meet on the fourth Friday of every month to offer support, friendship, and awareness of pressing issues that affect fellow railroad families.

Megan and the new Auxiliary 422 members wish to thank President Caruso, Helen Brand, and Brian Kelley for traveling to Kansas City to ensure the collective voices of the newfound sisterhood will make a difference in the Kansas City area.

By Katy Keller-Lautzenhiser

After realizing the need for a local structure to offer support for Kansas City-area railroad families, National President Anita Caruso and National Treasurer Helen Brand helped swear in and pin five railroad wives to officially establish Auxiliary 422 in Kansas City on May 20.

Megan Lundy, wife of BLET Division 502 member Randall Lundy, established and organized Auxiliary 422 through initially opening a social media account on Facebook as a means to easily contact and communicate with Kansas City-area railroad wives. Her persistence in unifying ladies who share the same lifestyle was met with a great response.



Five new members – Megan Lundy, Lori George, Cheryl Leach, Casie Lewis, and Katy Lautzenhiser –

Casie Lewis, Lori George, Brian Kelley, Anita Caruso, Megan Lundy, Helen Brand, Cheryl Leach, and Katy Lautzenhiser

~ Remembering Rebecca ~

***By Beth Baca, President, Auxiliary 134
Winslow, Arizona***

On January 20, 2013, Rebecca Barris, 43, was killed in a one-vehicle rollover. Becky was one the original members of our auxiliary when it formed in Winslow. She was a long-time teacher at the high school and, for many years, she had coached high school girls softball.

She is survived by her husband, Bill Barris, member and President of BLET Division 134, and her children, Briana, Bryce, and Brynlee. Her help and friendship has been and will continue to be greatly missed by all of us in Winslow.



TIDBITS FROM YOUR NATIONAL SECRETARY - BY LINDA D. MAHER

Since my husband Pat and I returned to Ohio from Hawaii in early May, we have been extremely busy. Within days of our return, we traveled to Detroit for BLET 150th Anniversary Celebration. Preparations started in March with my participation on the Banquet and Entertainment Committee on which I had the pleasure of serving, along with Sereena Hogan, BLET Special Representative Ken Kroeger and BLET Vice President Mike Twombly. Pat had been asked to serve on the Golf Committee for this event. I also assisted our President Anita with letters to our local auxiliary presidents and secretaries requesting donations for the raffle to raise funds for this great event.

The BLET Auxiliary Executive Council met in Detroit the same week as the Anniversary Celebration. Upon our return to Ohio, my work has only just begun. We have decided to sell our home in Willoughby Hills, so I have been very busy with sprucing up the house so that we may list by June 1st. We will try to sell by owner so this should be an experience! Along with keeping up auxiliary work, taking care of my mother, and now preparing for my stepdaughter's wedding in July, I still manage to find time to sleep!

Please keep those in Oklahoma in your prayers, keep safe on the rails, and keep smiling because it always makes people wonder what you have been up to, and it helps you live longer!

Scholarship Information

Our Executive Council meeting was held on May 7 and May 9, 2013, during which time we graded the scholarship applications. Congratulation letters have been sent to all recipients who have been awarded scholarships for the 2013-2014 school year. A news article will appear later in the year listing all of the winners for each region.

If you have children who are college bound, they may be eligible to apply for a scholarship with the BLET Auxiliary. To qualify, one parent must be a member of the BLET and one parent must be a member of the BLET Auxiliary for a minimum of two years. For more information, please check out our website at www.bletauxiliary.net and click on scholarship information.

Notice to Auxiliary Secretaries

Secretaries, please either call my home or e-mail me, or any national officer, when there is a death of one of your auxiliary members. Please do not wait until I receive your reports at the end of the year. In this way, we are able to send condolences out to the families.

Member-at-Large Update

Many of you still have not paid your dues for this year. A "Second Notice of Dues" is being sent out. If you owe dues for 2013, please remit to me as soon as possible so that you are not removed from our database. Payment should be received no later than June 30, 2013. If wish to discontinue your BLET Auxiliary membership, please notify me either by e-mail at biddykaili@aol.com or sissy62756@mac.com, or by phone at 440-278-4039. **Please note that this is a new phone number.**

Care and Assistance Program (CAP)

For those who may not be familiar with the CAP, it was established in 1921, and is our organization's way of saying thank you to long-time members. These members are widows and whose income is such that some of life's little pleasures are out of their reach. At the present time, we have two members who are beneficiaries of the CAP. The program provides a \$100 per month stipend to qualifying members to help them maintain a little bit more of the dignity they deserve. If you know of someone who would qualify, please have them contact any of the national officers so that we may send them an application for this program.

I would like to wish everyone a very happy and safe summer season!

Please note Linda's new phone number below:

Linda Maher can be reached September 30, 2012 - May 3, 2013, at 84-688 Ala Mahiku Street #161A, Waianae, HI 96792, 808-888-5783, or at 29215 West Miller Road, Willoughby Hills, Ohio, 44092, 440-278-4039, from May 4 - September 29, 2013. She can be reached by e-mail any time at biddykaili@aol.com.

BLET Auxiliary celebrates 125-year Anniversary, continued . . .



GIA Ritual: GIA members perform the parasol drill during the BLET's Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA) annual convention in 1982. (Photo courtesy of John Bentley, BLET National, from BLET Archives.)

their mutual protection and in the interest of their loved ones in the BLE. Charitable projects, such as the GIA Orphans Pension Fund and other funds to care for aged and indigent members were established.

In 1900, the photo of the GIA Grand President was inserted on the Women's Page of the Locomotive Engineers Journal as a permanent feature. This was an important step for the organization as evidenced by the words of then-Grand Vice President Mary Cassell in 1906: "I attribute our growth in no small measure to the influence sent out through the pages of the Journal.... As the Journal goes into the home of every BLE man, the attention of the wife is directed to the pages devoted to our interests and, in this way, she learns of the good times we have in a social way and it proves to her that we are bringing the families of BLE men into closer touch with each other." To this day, we are grateful for the opportunity extended to us by the BLET to allow our auxiliary officers and members to submit articles for publication in their monthly Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen News and the quarterly BLET Journal.

Throughout the years the Auxiliary National Conventions have been held in tandem with the conventions of the BLE, the timing of which has changed over the years. In 1912, the BLE decided to hold their conventions once every three years rather than once every other year, and the Auxiliary did the same. In 1971, the BLET held its first quinquennial convention (once every five years), and once again, the Auxiliary did the same. And in 2006, the BLET held its

first quadrennial convention, or every four years, as is the practice today.

At the 1981 Convention in Cleveland, Ohio, the GIA implemented two new programs — the Legislative Program and the Scholarship Program. In 1991, in an effort to modernize the organization and conduct meetings in more of a business type form, the delegates voted to make the ritual work optional rather than mandatory. At the 1996 Convention in Detroit, Michigan, Grand Officers became known as International Officers, and divisions became known as auxiliaries.

In 2006, the organization changed its status from an international organization to a national organization, in keeping with the changes that had occurred when the BLE merged with the Teamsters and became the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET). At that time, those former BLE members residing in Canada became members of the Teamsters Canada Rail Conference (TCRC) and the Canadian auxiliary members set out to establish an auxiliary in Canada to be known as the TCRC Auxiliary. The National Auxiliary in the U.S. assumed the name BLET Auxiliary, and adopted a new logo design bearing that name. A new classification of membership, the Associate Member, was also approved at that convention, which allows for anyone who has an interest in the work we do to join our organization. Although the members of today are encouraged to honor and respect the traditions of our founding sisters, we feel that it is important to keep updating the organization to stay

in tune with the needs and interests of the spouses and family members of today's BLET members. The BLET Auxiliary continues in the tradition of charitable projects through its Care and Assistance Program (formerly known as the Age Dependent Sisters and Relief Fund) and the Scholarship Fund.

Care and Assistance Program funds are used to provide a monthly stipend to widowed auxiliary members in good standing, and orphaned children of members, who are deemed to be in a state of financial hardship. The Scholarship Fund provides scholarships to the sons and daughters of auxiliary and BLET members (living or deceased) who have maintained membership for at least two years. A small portion of members' annual dues is dedicated to the Scholarship Fund, but most of the monies are generated from raffles and golf fundraisers at the regional conventions, and from donations by various auxiliaries, legal counsel, and other entities.

In recent years, the work of our Legislative Department, in concert with the BLET National Legislative Office, has increased considerably. Because railroads have historically resisted fulfilling their responsibilities to workers and the public, and due to the current anti-labor sentiment in Washington, it is of utmost importance that we pay close attention to any bills that affect the working conditions and quality of life of our BLET members and their families. We work side-by-side with our BLET brothers and sisters in state houses across the country and on Capitol Hill to promote legislation that benefits railroad families and to oppose legislation that is not in our best interest.

Realizing that the effectiveness of an organization depends on its ability to speak with one voice for a common cause, a Mobilization Program was established in 1997. Members are informed of current issues through legislative updates in our quarterly newsletter and on our website, and also are notified via e-mail and phone calls, encouraging them to contact their elected representatives when bills are presented that impact our future. Our mobilization network is also used to disseminate information to our members

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LEGISLATIVE UPDATE - BY SEREENA HOGAN, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REP

"Accept your past, enjoy your present, and work diligently towards the future."

— from *Everyday Lessons*, <http://everydaylifelessons.com>.

Senate Approves First Budget in Four Years

Just days before the April 1 deadline, the Senate finally approved its first budget in four years in the pre-dawn hours of Saturday morning, March 23, by a very small margin of 50-49. The \$3.7 trillion budget includes almost \$1 trillion in tax increases over the coming decade but shelters domestic programs targeted for cuts by House Republicans. All Republicans voted against it, as well as four Democrats who are facing tough re-elections. The budget would shrink annual federal shortfalls over the next decade to nearly \$400 billion, raise unspecified taxes by \$975 billion, and cull modest savings from domestic programs. This budget is in strong contrast to the one passed in the House and has little chance of becoming law in its current form.

Another Whistleblower Case

The U.S. Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has ordered the Union Pacific Railroad to immediately reinstate an employee who was terminated in violation of the Federal Railroad Safety Act for reporting a work-related injury. The company will pay more than \$350,000 in back wages with interest, compensatory and punitive damages. An OSHA investigation upheld the employee's allegation that the railroad terminated his employment in retaliation for reporting a work-related injury. The employee had more than 30 years of service and twice had received the railroad's World Class Employee Award. It was not until after the employee reported his work-related injury in December 2010 that the railroad charged him with misusing his company vehicle. OSHA's investigation found that this charge was used as a pretext to retaliate against the employee for reporting his injury, and that the employee's explanations as to his use of the company vehicle were reasonable and consistent with his job duties.

Union Pacific was ordered to remove disciplinary information from the employee's personnel record and to provide whistleblower rights information to its employees. Either party in the case can file an appeal with the department's Office of Administrative Law Judges.

Sequester Impacts Railroad Unemployment & Sickness Benefits

As a result of recently implemented budget cuts, beginning in March 2013, unemployment insurance benefits payable under the Railroad Unemployment Insurance Act (RUIA) have been reduced by 9.2%, thereby reducing the maximum daily benefit rate from \$66 to just under \$60. As a result, the total maximum amount payable in a 2-week period covering 10 days of unemployment will drop from \$660.00 to \$599.28.

Certain railroad sickness benefits are reduced for regular tier I railroad retirement taxes of 7.65 percent. Applying the additional 9.2 percent reduction to these benefits will result in a daily benefit rate of \$55.34, and a maximum two-week payment of \$553.44. The maximum daily benefit rate will increase to \$68.00 on July 1, 2013. For days of unemployment and sickness after that date, the reduction will result in a maximum daily benefit rate of \$61.74 and a maximum two-week payout of \$617.44. The maximum daily benefit rate for sickness benefits subject to tier I payroll taxes will be \$57.02, with a maximum two-week total of \$570.21.

The total sequestration is actually spread out over nine years. This initial reduction will remain in effect through September 30, 2013. The initial reduction amount is based upon projected claims and benefits and may be adjusted as needed. Congress will subsequently determine the amount of any reductions in future years. In addition, any appropriations subsequently enacted in fiscal year 2013 could also result in changes to the reduction amount.

The law exempts social security benefits, as well as railroad retirement, survivor, and disability benefits paid by the RRB, from sequestration. In fiscal year 2012, the RRB paid \$11.3 billion in retirement and survivor benefits to about 573,000 beneficiaries, and net unemployment-sickness benefits of \$89 million to about

26,000 claimants.

On March 8, 2013, the Railroad Retirement Board issued the following statement: "This sequestration is the result of the failure of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to propose, and Congress to enact, legislation reducing the deficit, as required by the BCA. Under the BCA, the cuts were triggered to take effect beginning January 1, 2013, if the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction did not agree to a \$1.2 trillion deficit-reduction package by November 23, 2011. The cuts were initially delayed but will now take effect March 1, 2013..."

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce sharply criticized the forced cut in benefits: "Congress had a year and a half to get its act together and pass a deficit-reduction package that balances revenue increases and spending cuts," Pierce said. "Shame on those who stood in the way of a resolution that would have prevented harm to the most vulnerable of Americans."

BLET members who have questions regarding the reduction or sequestration of RUIA benefits should contact the Railroad Retirement Board's Quality Reporting Service Center at (312) 751-4992.

BLET Urges Investment in Amtrak

On April 17, John Tolman, BLET National Vice President and Legislative Representative, testified before the Surface Transportation Subcommittee of the Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, presenting a strong case for the U.S. to make a major investment in Amtrak, particularly along the Northeast Corridor, for the expansion of service and high-speed rail. He urged the senators to support reauthorization of the Passenger Rail Investment and Improvement Act, which reauthorized funding for Amtrak for five years, and tasked it with working together with the U.S. Department of Transportation, the Federal Railroad Administration and the states to improve service, operations, and facilities. The bipartisan legislation was enacted in 2008 and is due to expire this year. To read Tolman's full, written testimony, go to http://www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Tolman_NEC_Testimony_4.17.13.pdf.

In 2014, Amtrak is requesting \$373 million for operating support, more than 20% less than Congress appropriated last year and

34% less than was appropriated in 2010. Please contact your elected officials and ask them to support Amtrak authorization.

Inward-Facing Cameras on Locomotives

In his comments to the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen in Detroit, Michigan, on May 6, President Pierce stated that Kansas City Southern Railway (KCS) has announced that it intends to install and begin to use inward-facing cameras in all of its locomotives. According to KCS, each locomotive will have two cameras—one behind the engineer that will be focused on the control panel, and one across the cab focusing on both crew members. KCS officials have stated that the railroad has “management prerogative” to take these actions and does not have to, nor do they intend to, bargain with the unions over the use of these cameras or the effects of this dramatic change on its operating craft employees.

BLET National President Dennis Pierce and SMART Transportation Division President Mike Futhey together told KCS that they and the other leadership of both unions vehemently disagree that the carrier has the right to install and use inward-facing cameras unilaterally without exhausting the bargaining processes of the Railway Labor Act. Both unions view this as a serious change in working conditions and have agreed to work closely to resist its implementation. A coordinated effort is being undertaken in response. Not only will both unions fervently oppose KCS’s lawsuit, they will be asking the court to enjoin the carrier from going ahead with its plan.

As stated in a press release issued by the BLET National on May 10: “As of now, and until the court has issued a ruling regarding the parties’ respective rights, the carrier has agreed not to turn on or use the cameras. Union members who work for KCS on a locomotive that has a camera installed should request assurances from the proper carrier officials that the camera is not turned on and not in use. Any instance where that assurance is not given should be immediately reported to your General Chairperson. Also, to avoid any possibility of discipline, no member should attempt to move, cover, or otherwise tamper with the cameras they encounter.”

The unions have stressed that crew members’ cooperation in this manner is vital,

and have assured their members that the two unions are diligently working to protect the crews and their interests in this matter.

Third Circuit Appeals Court Rules NLRB Recess Appointments Invalid

In a 2-1 decision rendered on May 16, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Third Circuit has joined the D.C. Circuit in ruling that President Barack Obama’s recess appointments to the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) were unconstitutional, concluding that some board actions taken in the wake of those appointments are therefore invalid. The court ruled that the presidential recess appointment power is limited to breaks between sessions of Congress, not breaks within sessions or other adjournments during which the Senate might meet in pro forma sessions.

The Third Circuit case centered on decisions the NLRB made on the authority of three members, including Craig Becker, who was appointed by the President on March 27, 2010, while the Senate was adjourned for two weeks. The case, *NLRB v. New Vista Nursing & Rehab* was brought before the court by a New Jersey nursing and rehabilitation center whose nurses were allowed to form a union by one such NLRB decision. The facility, New Vista, contended that the Board’s decision was invalid because the naming of Becker to the board was not a valid recess appointment; therefore, the Board did not have enough members active when the decision was issued. In order for a decision of the NLRB to be valid, it must have three members participate. The Court ruled that because Becker was not appointed during a break between sessions of Congress, he was not a valid member of the Board.

The Third Circuit reached its conclusion based on essentially the same reasoning as that relied upon by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals in its January 2013 *Noel Canning v. NLRB* ruling that Sharon Block, Richard Griffin and Terence Flynn’s January 2012 NLRB appointments were invalid. Some question still remains as to whether Congress was or was not in session at the time that the appointments were made in January 2012 (see legislative update of February 2013 on the BLET Auxiliary website at <http://www.bletauxiliary.net/Legislative%20Update%20Feb%2013.htm>).

The NLRB filed a petition on April 25 in the *Noel Canning* case, asking the U.S. Supreme Court to review the D.C. Circuit’s decision, and it is likely the NLRB will similarly petition the Supreme Court to review the Third Circuit’s *New Vista* decision. This latter decision will make it more difficult for the NLRB to ignore opposing views concerning the recess appointments clause’s meaning and may create more reason for the Supreme Court to grant judicial review in similar cases. Some have called for the NLRB to curtail all activity until the Supreme Court rules on this issue. The D.C. Circuit’s *Noel Canning* decision makes this particularly concerning since the D.C. Circuit has jurisdiction to accept all NLRB appeals. The NLRB, however, has not yet stated whether this most recent ruling will change its position.

On the same day the Third Circuit Court made its ruling (May 16), the Senate Subcommittee on Health, Employment, Labor, and Pensions conducted a hearing regarding the three National Labor Relations Board members up for reconsideration and two new Board nominees. The hearing, entitled: “The Future of the NLRB: What *Noel Canning v. NLRB* Means for Workers, Employers, and Unions” was conducted to examine the implications of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit’s decision in the *Noel Canning* case. Last month, President Obama announced his intent to re-name Mark Gaston Pearce (D) as NLRB Chairman, and to seat two Republican nominees, Harry I. Johnson, III and Philip A. Miscimarra, to the agency. In February, following the D.C. Court decision, the President re-nominated Democrats Sharon Block and Richard Griffin to the Board.

On Wednesday, May 22, the Senate subcommittee voted to send the nominations of Mark Gaston Pearce (D), Sharon Block (D), Richard Griffin (D), Harry I. Johnson, III (R) and Philip A. Miscimarra (R) to the full Senate for consideration. While the votes in favor of Johnson and Miscimarra were unanimous, the Committee voted 18-4 in favor of Pearce, and 13-9 in favor of Block and Griffin. Federal courts are divided as to the constitutionality of these appointments, a matter that is likely headed to the Supreme Court.

Sereena Hogan can be reached by phone at (520) 297-0944; by mail at 8720 N. Myrtle Dr., Tucson, Arizona 85704, or by e-mail at vp3sereena@aol.com.

BLET Auxiliary celebrates 125-year Anniversary, continued . . .



Grand International Auxiliary members and officers in 1959. (Photo courtesy of John Bentley, BLET National, from BLET Archives)



BLET Auxiliary Officers and delegates at the 2010 National Convention in Reno, Nevada, in 2010. (Photo courtesy of John Bentley, BLET National, from BLET Archives)

about other issues that affect BLET members and their families, such as updates about health insurance and retirement benefits, and get out the vote campaigns.

Through the years we have found various ways of communicating with our members, including those who merely wish to learn about our organization. We have a website that is continually updated with important information as it pertains to our railroad life, educational materials for those who are interested in learning about different aspects of the railroad and union business, monthly legislative updates, fundraisers that are taking place around the country, scholarship opportunities, regional convention information, and much more.

We publish a quarterly newsletter that contains pertinent information for our members. Our newsletter is an invaluable tool for our members as it is filled with reports about the activities of our local auxiliaries around the country, information from our national officers, a legislative update, regional meeting information,

articles from our retired sisters and brothers, and so much more.

Our major focus in these times is to provide education and support and to build camaraderie and solidarity amongst the families of BLET members across the nation. Oftentimes this simply involves organizing social activities to bring railroad families together in a relaxed setting where they can get to know one another. After all, who better understands the uniqueness of railroad life than other railroad spouses and family members? We also strive to provide opportunities for our members to learn about their rights, their benefits, and what to do, or not do, should a tragic situation involving the railroad arise. We encourage our members to reach out to one another to provide emotional support during stressful times, whether it involves the railroad or some other aspect of daily life.

Unfortunately, our membership numbers are no longer in the thousands. For the BLET Auxiliary to continue to provide support for our members and for all BLET members and their families, we must continue to increase our numbers. Our ability to effectively bring a strong voice against the inequities of the railroad industry can only succeed if we join together as one. We realize that times have changed and many spouses now work outside the home and are busy with the daily activities of family life, but we believe it is of utmost importance to be educated about the particulars and peculiarities of railroad life. Having a spouse with an erratic and unpredictable schedule who is frequently absent from the family brings added stress to the lives those who are left to manage the household in their absence. The closeness, camaraderie, and common bond that is shared when spouses come together as a unit can bring a sense of relief and enjoyment to those who belong to an auxiliary.

To find out more about the Auxiliary or to print out an application from our website, please go to www.bletauxiliary.net, or access the site by clicking on the link under "Departments" on the home page of the BLET website (www.ble-t.org). We invite you join us soon. We would like to be around to celebrate our 150th anniversary, so please consider being a part of this wonderful organization!

Many thanks to our "unofficial historian," Sister Becky Schneider, for helping us gather material for this article. We appreciate her taking the time to help us with this project.

Retirement Rocks!

By Vicki Leaders, Auxiliary 12
Omaha, Nebraska

Retirement does rock... we had no idea how much! It has been a very pleasant surprise for myself and my husband Dean. After 34 years of working nights, weekends, and holidays, we have easily adjusted to our new lifestyle. We live in Underwood, Iowa, and Dean was a member of BLET Division 183 and retired from Union Pacific Railroad on January 14, 2012. We have spent the last year and a half traveling and at our lake home in Minnesota.

While Dean was working as a locomotive engineer, we also farmed and raised registered Simmental cattle. I worked as a registered nurse and teacher. So we knew we had to do this "retirement thing" gradually. But it didn't take very long to realize that we liked our independence too much to be tied down. So this year, we tore up the pasture and hay ground and cash rented out the entire farm. As of March 6, the last cow was sold!

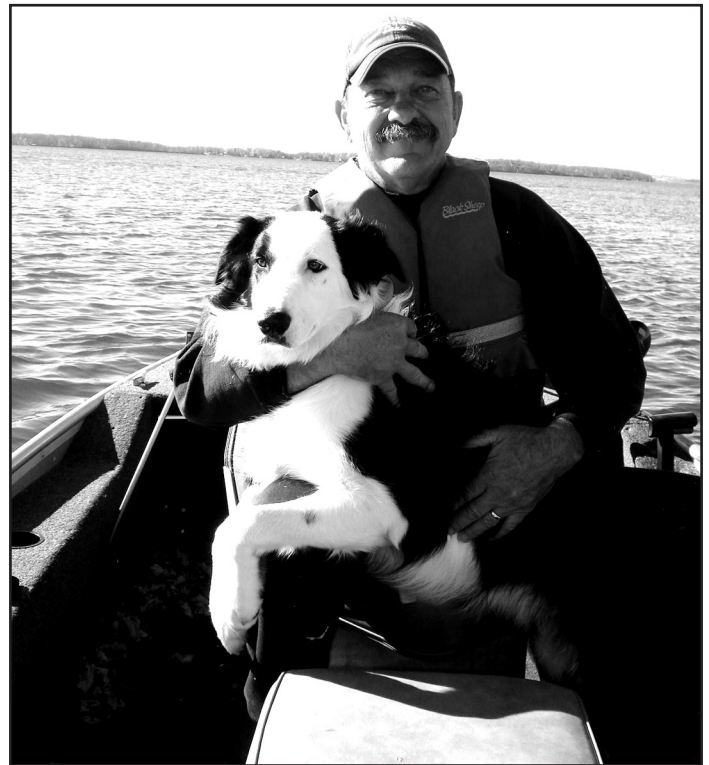
Our travels this last year have primarily been to the southeastern United States. We utilized two resources: Readers Digest's The Most Scenic Drives in America, 120 Spectacular Road Trips, and Patricia Schultz's 1000 Places to See Before You Die. It's wonderful to "get off the beaten path" and see more of the country that can be viewed from the Interstate. We got a National Parks senior pass and toured Civil War battlefields, national parks, and historic sites. We also utilized our Disney Annual Pass with four trips to Disney World. The International Blues Festival in Memphis and the EPCOT Flower and Garden Festival and Wine and Food Festival were also on our itinerary.

We are planning a fall trip in September to the northeast. There are only ten states we have not yet been to and they are all in that area, except for Alaska, and that's another trip. We plan to close our place in Minnesota a little early and want to take in autumn foliage, Niagara Falls, and some Maine lobster. Now that we don't have to feed cattle, we are planning on going south to Florida for a month or so in January, but we will be taking our travel buddy, Zac, the border collie. Zac is an excellent traveler and we have turned into the people with their pets that we used to make fun of at rest areas.

Because of the crazy cold and wet spring, we are a month behind in getting our Minnesota home open for the season. The ice went off the lake on Mother's Day, which was a record. It's hard to put in the dock and boat lift with two feet of ice covering the lake! We really enjoy friends, fishing, and boating in the pristine North Country.



**Dean and Vicki Leaders lift their glasses
in a toast to retirement!**



**Dean and his fishing buddy Zac
on Lake Clitherall, Minnesota**

We are blessed with five granddaughters, ages 5 to 15, and a grown son and daughter who all live close to us. Retirement allows us to go to their sports and activities. So many times in the past, Grampa had to miss their events because he was on a train. When you retire, you realize that what is important is your health and life's experiences. After 43 years of marriage, we don't need "things," we just want more time together. With a little bit of luck and God's blessings, we will enjoy our "rockin' retirement" for a long time!

**From 1st VP/National
Outreach Coordinator
Gina Forman**



Healthy Summer Choices

As the summer sun and heat bear down on us, it is important for all of us to be conscious of our diet and stay hydrated. This is especially true for our locomotive engineers and trainmen as they endure the heat from inside the locomotive cab during the summer months. I love this time of year because fruits and vegetables are in abundance, and farmers markets can make them extremely affordable as well. I look forward to going to the market and scouting out fresh produce to make salads that are cool and refreshing. During the summer, I like to use fresh spinach leaves instead of lettuce when making salads. The spinach leaves also seem more durable when packed in a lunch container.

Learning all the benefits of spinach will help you realize just how important it is to eat it regularly, as well as give you some motivation to eat some other healthy foods. Here are 10 awesome benefits that come with adding spinach to your diet:

1. Aids in protecting eyesight and prevents cataracts
2. Lowers Blood Pressure
3. High Amounts of Easily Digestible Protein
4. Very high in Calcium and Vitamin K, which is going to help prevent excess bone breakdown in the body
5. High in Potassium, Calcium, Manganese, Iron, and Zinc
6. Prevents and Reverses Aging
7. Boosts Immune System and Cures Ulcers
8. Contains high amounts of folate, Vitamin A, Vitamin C, Vitamin B
9. Lowers risk of Heart Attacks and Fights Cancer
10. Aids the Liver

I feel better that my family is getting lots of the vitamins and nutrients that we need. I will often add fresh strawberries, melon, almonds, or blueberries to the salads. Not only does the fruit add a burst of refreshing flavor, it adds to the nutritive value. Likewise, when it is

dinner time for the family, I will make a spinach salad loaded with fresh radishes, carrots, cabbage, celery, cranberries, strawberries, and almonds. I add a splash of red vinaigrette dressing and cheese crumbles to top it all off!

I also love this time of year because it allows me to use fresh vegetables such as green beans, peas, broccoli, okra, squash, and corn on the cob as side dishes. I have fond memories of my grandma cooking up the best tasting green beans with bacon and red potatoes. Another family favorite is fresh steamed broccoli served with a splash of lemon juice and fresh cheddar cheese. By steaming our vegetables, we preserve all the great nutrients and colors without losing any of the flavors!

I could go on and on about how important it is to take advantage of the fresh produce that is available in summer. I encourage you to make an effort to use them in your everyday meals and snacks. I believe that you too will find that fresh fruits and vegetables offer many benefits compared to frozen or canned varieties. Below is one of my favorite spinach recipes and I hope it becomes a family favorite of yours too!

Strawberry Spinach Salad

Serves 8

2 bunches of spinach, rinsed and torn into bite-size pieces
4 cups sliced, hulled strawberries
1 15-oz can mandarin oranges, drained
Sugared or sliced almonds, to taste
Raspberry vinaigrette dressing

In a large bowl, toss together the spinach and the strawberries, then add the oranges and almonds. Add the dressing right before serving or your salad will wilt. Enjoy!

Happy Summer Everyone!

Gina Forman can be reached at 765-432-1050, tweety95@yahoo.com, or 63 S. Hood Street, Peru, Indiana 46970.

Congratulations BLET!

During and following the 150th Anniversary Celebration, the BLET was honored to receive letters and proclamations of congratulations and recognition from numerous cities, states, members of Congress, and even Vice President Joe Biden, for 150 years representing and protecting rail workers. The following is a list of those who sent their congratulations. Many thanks to the BLET officers and members who worked hard to secure these proclamations.

White House

Vice President Joe Biden

U.S. Senate

Elizabeth Warren (D-MA)

Tom Harkin (D-IA)

Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

Debbie Stabenow (D-MI)

Joe Donnelly (D-IN)

John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV) & Senator Frank R.

Lautenberg (D-NJ) (joint letter)

U.S. House of Representatives

Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

Bill Shuster (R-PA),

Corrine Brown (D-FL)

Jeff Denham (R-FL)

Nick J. Rahall, II (D-WV)

Richard M. Nolan (D-MN)

Steny H. Hoyer (D-MD)

Richard M. Nolan (D-MN)

Timothy J. Walz (D-MN), read statement on House floor recognizing BLET's 150th anniversary

States

Governor of Illinois

Illinois Senate

Illinois House of Representatives

Missouri House of Representatives

California State Assembly

Governor of Massachusetts

Ohio House of Representatives

Cities

Detroit, Mich.

Marshall, Mich.

Greetings from the Editor, Sereena Hogan

As anticipated, the week of May 5 was a very busy one for those of us on the Executive Council. Fortunately, it all went well, and we got a lot done during our time in Detroit. President Caruso and I were honored to attend the National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen's meeting on May 5 and 6 and to be given the opportunity to address this group. We were unable to be there on May 7, however, as our Executive Council meeting started that day, and then continued on May 9, with the BLET 150th Anniversary Celebration sandwiched in on May 8. What a great day to part of the oldest labor union in North America!

It would have been nice to get some rest after that busy week, but upon my return I had to get ready for our Guadalupe Auxiliary No. 28 meeting on June 15. As the secretary-treasurer for my auxiliary, there is much to be done before the meeting begins. I also began a search for a new assisted living situation for my mother. After looking at a number of facilities here in town, she ended up just moving to a smaller apartment in the same facility in which she has lived for the last four years. I spent all this week pretty much single-handedly moving all of her belongings for her. Hope she'll be happy there for awhile!

Also, following our return from Detroit, my husband Ken made a decision that affects both of our lives in a very big way. He has decided to, as they say on the railroad, "pull the pin." We are excited to begin this new phase of our lives. I will, of course, continue my involvement with the auxiliary and we are both grateful for that as we have made so many wonderful friends around the country through our travels. Hope to see many of you at the regional conventions this summer and other travels in the coming year.

We welcome your submissions for our publication. Please send your stories, articles, photos, poems, etc., to:

Sereena Hogan, Editor & Publisher

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The next issue will be published in September. Please have your submissions to Sereena by August 31.

Mark Your Calendar Now for Upcoming Events!

86th Annual Southeastern Meeting Association - June 23 - 28, 2013 Richmond, Virginia

Arrangements Chairman Troy Bryant, Local Chairman of Division 532, welcomes all BLET members to historic Richmond/Short Pump, Va., for the 2013 SMA. For more information and to register, go to: <http://www.sma2013.net>.

73rd Annual International Western Convention - July 14 - July 18, 2013 San Francisco, California

Co-chairmen Luis Chavez Jr. and Oscar Burrola welcome all BLET members to the Hilton San Francisco Financial District Hotel for the 2013 IWC. For more information and to register, go to: <http://www.iwc2013.org>.

75th Annual Eastern Union Meeting Association - July 28 - August 1, 2013 Baltimore, Maryland

Arrangements Chairman Fred Cox, Local Chairman of BLET Division 52, welcomes all BLET members to Baltimore for the 2013 EUMA. For more information and to register, go to: <http://www.ble-t.org/info/meetings/euma>.

78th Annual Southwestern Convention Meeting - August 25 - 29, 2013 New Orleans, Louisiana

Arrangements Chairman Arlin Todd, Chairman of the Louisiana State Legislative Board, welcomes all BLET members to the Loews New Orleans Hotel for the 2013 SWCM. For more information and to register, go to: <http://bletswcm.org/19601.html>.

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