



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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Sereena Hogan, President • Susie Burrola, 1st Vice President • Helen Brand, Secretary • Terri Fleming, Treasurer
Kathleen Bisbikis, 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative • www.bletauxiliary.net

Remembering Ruth

By Sereena Hogan, National President



“Grow, Inform, and Achieve,” was the motto of Past President Sister Ruth Pillman Windham. Sister Windham passed away on Sunday, March 26, 2017, at the age of 93. She served as Grand President of the Grand International Auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (GIA), now known as the BLET Auxiliary, from 1996 to 2001. Sister Windham was one of the innovators in the transformation of the

GIA, taking it into the New Millennium.

In the mid-1960s, Sister Windham was elected Guide of Local Auxiliary No. 37 in Little Rock, Arkansas, and she spent the next three decades holding various elected offices at the GIA's local and international levels. Her first position at the international level began in 1976 when she was elected to serve a five-year term as Grand Guide. At the Third Quinquennial Convention, in Cleveland, Ohio, in 1981, she was elected as Second Assistant Grand Vice President. At that convention, she introduced a resolution to establish the Scholarship Program, as well as a resolution establishing the Legislative Program. Along with her position as Second Assistant Grand Vice President, she served as the Auxiliary's first Legislative Representative. In 1986, Ruth was elected as First Assistant Grand Vice President, and in 1991 she was elected as Grand Vice President. At the 1996 Convention in Detroit, Michigan, Sister Windham was elected to serve as Grand International President.

In 1997, in partnership with the BLE, she was instrumental in the establishment the Auxiliary's Mobilization Program. She also helped to lobby Congress for passage of the Railroad Retirement and Survivors Improvement Act of 2001, the national law that provided for the 60/30 retirement for all railroad workers and enhanced benefits for surviving spouses.

During her term as Grand International President, she wrote a regular feature article for the BLE Journal entitled “GIA

Dialogue,” which helped increase exposure of the Auxiliary to the membership.

Ruth and her husband, Roland Wilson “Windy” Windham, were married in 1944 and their only daughter, Sharon Kay Windham Heflin, was born in late 1946. They were a dynamic and fun-loving couple and were regular attendees at the BLE regional meetings over the years, particularly the Southwestern Convention Meeting (SWCM) and the Southeastern Meeting Association (SMA). Windy served as General Chairman of the Missouri Pacific Western District General Committee of Adjustment for many years, and also held the office of Local Chairman of Division 182 in North Little Rock, Arkansas. He passed away in April 2009 at the age of 86. They were married for nearly 65 years.

Following her term as Grand International President, Ruth enjoyed spending time with her grandchildren and great grandchildren, and golfing. She remained a member of Generosity Auxiliary No. 37 in Little Rock, Arkansas, until her passing. We are forever grateful to Sister Windham for her many years of service and for taking our Auxiliary to new heights! We offer our sincere condolences to her family, her auxiliary sisters, and her many friends.



At the Seventh Quinquennial Convention held in Miami, Florida, in September 2001, Outgoing International President Sister Ruth Windham (right) congratulated newly elected President Sister Onita Wayland.



From the President - BY SEREENA HOGAN

Greetings to all our readers! Hope you are all enjoying these warm summer days!

This Spring, my husband Ken and I traveled to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, to attend the Brotherhood's Relief

& Compensation Fund (BRCF) annual dinner on April 21, and their business meeting & luncheon on April 22. I very much wanted to be there for this year's dinner as it was a celebration of the retirement of Mark Robb, who served as International President of BRCF for 11 years (see photo and caption on page 14). We cannot thank Mark enough for all he has done for the Auxiliary over the years to help us with our fundraising and to support our newsletter. I personally thank Mark and his wife Leslie for the many years of friendship and good times we have shared at so many meetings and conventions around the country. I truly hope our paths will cross again in the years ahead.

Immediately following the meeting in Harrisburg, we headed to Philadelphia to catch a flight out to Clearwater, Florida, to attend the NASLBC Meeting (see story opposite page). There we celebrated the retirement of another long-time great friend, Tim Smith, at a dinner held in his honor on April 24. In addition to the 18+ years Tim served as Chairman of the California State Legislative Board, he also served as Chairman of the NASLBC from 2007 to 2016. Tim was a true believer in the Auxiliary and helped to get NorCal Auxiliary 39 established in northern California in 2010. We wish Tim and his wife Sue many years of retirement bliss and hope we will see them again sometime in the not-too-distant future.

I was saddened to hear of the passing of Sister Ruth Windham. Ruth was International President when I joined the Auxiliary. Even before I became an official member, I had the opportunity to attend a meeting and class about mobilization in Little Rock, Arkansas, and worked with Ruth and several other Auxiliary officers to help implement the Auxiliary's Mobilization Program. Seems like a lifetime ago! Not long after I became a member, Ruth asked me if I would take over the duties of publishing the quarterly newsletter and I've been doing it ever since. It was also Ruth who encouraged me to run for a position as International 3rd Vice President at the Seventh Quinquennial Convention in Miami, Florida, in 2001. At that time, I never dreamed I would end up as National President, but sometimes we just don't know what the future has in store for us.

I was also sad to hear of the passing of Ed McCulloch, who served for 20 years as BLE Vice President and Legislative Rep in Washington, D.C. I always enjoyed seeing him and his wife Louise at the regional conventions and he never failed to tell me how much he enjoyed reading our newsletter, especially the legislative updates.

I hope you will enjoy reading the submissions from two of our scholarship recipients, Jennifer Anderson and Allyson Roof, beginning on Page 4. We thought it might be nice for our members to learn about some of the students who have benefitted from our Scholarship Program. We hope to have more stories from other recipients in future issues. Thank you Jennifer and Allyson for sharing!

We are always pleased when Member-at-Large Jessica Cole agrees to submit an article for our newsletter, as she has an enviable talent for writing in a way that is informative and holds the reader's interest. Her story on Page 5 is a great example of how we, as railroad spouses, can have an impact on safety issues and help to implement laws that protect our railroaders and our communities.

Please take time to read the article on Page 10. It is a follow-up story about a meeting of the Parsons, Kansas, unit of the National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees, Inc. (NARVRE), and refers to the attacks on Railroad Retirement that have occurred through the years. It also points out that the decrease in membership of NARVRE has weakened this organization and urges active railroad employees and their spouses to join. Ken and I have been members of NARVRE for more than 10 years. When I found out how hard this organization works to protect our retirement benefits and to keep AMTRAK funded, I wanted to support their work by becoming a member and receiving their newsletter. I hope you too will consider joining NARVRE.

Sharing about the history of the Auxiliary as our 130-year anniversary approaches on October 16, 2017, was the suggestion of our Editor, Susie Burrola. It has been an enlightening experience for me to research how our organization came into being and how it has progressed through the years. As you can see by the photos displayed on Page 13, much has changed. Safety issues and mutual support of each other and of the union we support have always been at the forefront of our mission; however, many of our members today are young spouses whose husbands (or wives) are still actively employed. We are no longer focused on ritual and ceremony, but have taken a more proactive role. It is important, however, that we honor our heritage and those ladies who had the courage and the foresight to blaze the path for us.

Hope to see many of you at the Eastern Regional Meeting in Myrtle Beach in August. In the meantime, stay cool and enjoy your summer!

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2017 NASLBC Meeting held in Clearwater, FL



The 31st Annual National Association of State Legislative Board Chairmen's (NASLBC) Meeting was held April 24-26 in the beach-front town of Clearwater Florida. National Auxiliary President Sereena Hogan and National 2nd Vice President/National Legislative Representative Kathleen Bisbikis were both in attendance.

On Monday, April 24, opening ceremonies commenced with the invocation and the seating of new members. Ryan Snow (California), Paul Pearson (Colorado), Kent Hansen (Iowa), Dave Dinges (Maryland), Dan Bardogan (Massachusetts), and Eric Gabaldon (New Mexico), all took their places at the table. New NASLBC Chairman Paul Piekarski opened the convention with a few brief housekeeping announcements and moved quickly to the first guest speaker, Vice President of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters John Murphy. Vice President Murphy touched on many issues affecting rail families since the election of President Trump, discussing the proposed cuts in railroad programs, including Amtrak, as well as the delays in the CalTrain in California. A statement that he made that has unfortunately been proven correct is: "People will vote against their economic interest."

President Dennis Pierce spoke next, touching on issues such as Right to Work and giving examples of how misunderstood it is, even among railroaders. He also talked about the good turnout at the town hall meetings he has been attending across the country, answering questions and addressing concerns of union members. Vice President Lee Pruitt gave a motivational talk to those in attendance about the pure and straightforward power of being positive. In the current state of affairs across the country, the negativity has become an epidemic, but VP Pruitt suggested it's time to show the positive accomplishments of the members and the unions on the state and national level and let the good spread rather than the negative.

U.S. Representative and former Florida Governor, as well as a Clearwater native, Charlie Crist, Jr., joined us for an uplifting talk about his freshman year at the White House. Vice President & National Legislative Representative John Tolman spoke passionately to us about topics such as PTC, two-person crews, and the state of affairs in Washington D.C. He reminded us all that "every rule comes from the blood of the others before us."

Monday's other guest speakers included Walt Barrow, Labor Member from the Railroad Retirement Board; Bob Lauby from the Federal Railroad Administration; Vince Verna, Director of Regulatory Affairs,

and Bob Hagan from the Washington D.C. office. Monday evening a dinner was held in honor of Chairman Emeritus Tim Smith. Many fond memories were shared, pictures taken, and a beautiful framed pencil sketch was given to Brother Smith as a thank you for his many years of service to the NASLBC.

Tuesday, April 24, started with Guest Speakers Jesse Taylor, International President of the Brotherhood's Relief & Compensation Fund; Mike Tanner from LE&CMPA; and Ed Haley from Cornerstone Insurance. FELA Attorneys Will Moody from Moody and Associates and Bob Marcus from the Kujawski & Marcus Law firm went through multiple injury scenarios with everyone in attendance and were met with numerous questions. BLET National President Sereena Hogan spoke next, paying tribute to former Auxiliary President Sister Ruth Pillman Windham and thanking those chairmen who subscribe to our newsletter for their support of the Auxiliary. Following Sister Sereena's speech, Brother Brian Kelley and Brother Paul Piekarski issued a challenge to all Chairman to subscribe to the Auxiliary newsletter.

Yours truly also spoke, reminding everyone that we all need to be a catalyst for change and thanking Brother Tim Smith for his support over the years and wishing him the best in his retirement years. Brother Tim Carver, with the help of Brother Tony Diamond, "passed the hat" to everyone in attendance on behalf of the Auxiliary and we are thankful to him for this very kind gesture.

The afternoon resumed with committee meeting reports and new business. Next year's NASLBC Meeting will be in New Orleans, hosted by Louisiana State Legislative Board Chairman Arlin Todd.



Sereena Hogan, Tim Smith, and Kathleen Bisbikis at the dinner honoring Chairman Emeritus Smith. We wish Tim and his wife Sue all the best in their retirement years!

Scholarship Recipients Share Stories of Success and Gratitude



Jennifer Anderson received BLET Auxiliary \$1000 Scholarships in 2015 and 2016. This year she is the recipient of a \$2500 Auxiliary Scholarship funded by LECMPA. Her father, Mark Anderson, is a member of BLET Div. 333, in St. Paul, Minnesota, and her mother, Nancy Anderson, is an Auxiliary member-at-large.

As a kid, I loved to have lemonade stands. It started as a table and chair at the end of the driveway with a pitcher of lemonade for 25 cents a cup. Each year I upgraded, expanded, and revamped the stand. Eventually it evolved into not just a lemonade stand, but a bake sale with goodies galore, five different flavors of lemonade, and a table decked out with colorful signs and even a large umbrella. The pocket change earned from the stand soon turned into paper bills. And that money then went into improving the stand and buying more supplies for the next sale.

Ever since I was little, my parents instilled in me the importance of hard work and saving for the future. They helped me appreciate putting effort in to get what I needed out. This work ethic taught me that dedication, a willingness to learn, and a little creativity can go a long way.

I am the oldest of six children in my family. I pay my own rent, tuition, food and car expenses, as well as any other costs associated with living on my own. I am a “poor college student,” as are many others, but I am also one who is willing to put forth the effort in to come out successful and to accomplish my goals.

This year I will be a senior at Brigham Young University in Provo, Utah. I will graduate in April with a degree in Communications with an emphasis in Advertising and a minor in Creative Writing. I am interning at Young and Rubicam Advertising in New York City this spring and summer and would love to return after graduating. I want to continue to develop my creative and management skills and put them to practice within the fast-paced and exciting field of Advertising.

I love the broadened scope and continued curiosity that accompanies education. My education will allow me to get into a field I love and enjoy, yes, but also to be an influence for good in the world as I work within an industry that so greatly impacts society.

Over the past couple years, I have been blessed to be chosen as a recipient of the \$1,000 BLET Auxiliary Scholarship and

this year I am the recipient of a \$2,500 LECMPA-sponsored scholarship.

These generous donations to my education have greatly eased the financial burden of being a college student with only the support of a part-time job. These funds, combined, have granted me many opportunities that I could not afford myself. I want to sincerely thank all those who have been so kind to donate to the BLET Auxiliary scholarship fund, and also LECMPA for the new scholarships they implemented this year. Your investment in my future means the world to me.



Allyson Roof received BLET Auxiliary \$1000 Scholarships in 2013, 2014, 2015, and 2016. Her father James Booth, is a retired member of BLET Div. 28, Tucson, Arizona, and her mother, Anne Booth, is a member of Guadalupe Auxiliary No. 28 in Tucson.

As an undergraduate, most of my friends counted down the days to our last class, last exam, and last day of being in school. I, however, felt disappointed that my opportunity to learn new things was coming to an end; it seemed abrupt. To remedy this, I returned as a non-degree seeking student for the following year. I thought if I took a few more classes I might be satisfied. The next year, I was accepted into a master's program in which I had my own research project and taught undergraduate courses. I quickly discovered that I enjoyed research and teaching just as much as I loved being a student, and I knew that my eagerness to continue with school was not short lived. I realized that teaching at the university level was what I wanted to do, but for that I would need a doctoral degree. In May 2017, I received my PhD in Integrated Physiology and Reproductive Science, and I am advancing towards a career in academia.

I feel fortunate to have had the opportunity to continue my education and earn a doctoral degree, but being a “professional student” comes with financial responsibilities. The scholarships that I have received from the BLET Auxiliary between 2010 and 2016 have been incredibly helpful in lessening my educational expenses. I am honored to have been selected as a scholarship recipient year after year, and I would like to personally thank the BLET Auxiliary for their generosity. The receipt of these awards has allowed me to remain focused on my education and my research, which has been pivotal to the successful completion of my degree.

— continued on page 15

How We Make a Difference

By Jessica Cole, Member-at-Large, Baraboo, Wisconsin

I'm a sentimental sort, and for that reason, I love the On This Day feature on Facebook that reminds me of what I was doing on this date any given number of years ago. Something about looking back at where I've been keeps me grounded in where I am now.

Quite recently, On This Day reminded me that only a few years ago, a bill I helped work on with my husband and many of his fellow BLET brothers got passed into law. It's still exciting to me to have been part of that even though some time has passed—I feel like we actually lived the old Schoolhouse Rock Cartoon about Capitol Hill in real life, and for sure we made a difference in our state.

This new law requires the railroads in Wisconsin to notify their employees when subcontractors come in to spray the tracks to kill the weeds that impede visibility. Employees must be told what product was used and when it was applied. Prior to this law, there were several instances where employees became sick enough from exposure to toxic herbicides that they needed emergency room treatment, and doctors were mystified as to how to treat them without knowing what chemicals they had been exposed to. Furthermore, the law stipulates that the railroad make herbicide labels available to employees annually and provide education about how to read the label ingredients and warnings.

It's a fact: If it kills weeds, it can kill or harm humans too. It is only common sense that employees should be warned when chemicals are applied so that they can exercise caution. If exposure occurs despite precaution, knowing the chemicals involved greatly simplifies doctors' chances of treating reactions effectively. However, in our state, common sense did not prevail without the law in place.

We were disappointed that our bill was not passable in its original form, because it required that communities be notified as well. This would seem to be another good common sense idea, because private citizens often walk on or near or across the tracks even though they shouldn't be doing that for many reasons. Nonetheless, if a track trespasser should show up in the ER with toxic exposure to herbicide, it would be a wonderful asset for doctors to know what had been sprayed.

Unfortunately, there are many strong business and agriculture lobbyists in our state, and they objected to the burden that further regulation would put on their business interests.

They convinced enough legislators that these stronger regulations were bad for business that the provision for community notification had to be taken out. Many months of behind-the-scenes work with legislators, BLET members, and outside advisors helped to shape this bill into something that would draw enough support to pass

into law. So, a compromise was reached to take the requirement for notifying communities out of this bill.

While we didn't get everything we would have liked, we got something worth doing, and it HAS made a difference in ways we didn't envision, as my husband Tony Dimond was to help put into motion. A couple of years after our bill became law, Tony ran into an herbicide company employee at work. Tony was previously acquainted with this man and knew that he had a toddler granddaughter living at home. Tony asked the man what he was spraying and requested to see the label. The man became defensive and said that he didn't have to show Tony that information.

Tony informed the man that there was a new law, and that he did indeed need to share that information, so the man complied. Tony has had extensive HazMat training and recognized some pretty toxic chemicals on the label. He asked the man if he was aware that the product was absorbed through the skin and that he should not touch his granddaughter for at least a week to avoid exposing the small child to the toxins.

The man was very surprised. He had no idea how dangerous the chemicals he was spraying were, and no idea that he could unwittingly injure his granddaughter. Sadly, my husband, whose job is to run trains, was better informed about herbicide safety than the man whose job it was to spray weeds! Clearly this man should have read the label more thoroughly and educated himself, but his employer also should have taken responsibility to teach him to use more care. The man, who had been abrasive towards Tony when first confronted, wound up being very grateful for the warning.

Because Tony was aware of the new law and warned the man, at least two people besides rail employees wound up safer that day: that man and his granddaughter.

As this story shows, laws have unintended consequences and that is part of why it is sometimes hard to rally enough support for a new bill to become a law. In this case, the unintended consequence was good, but sometimes the opposite happens, and lawmakers listen to a host of arguments and special interests in deciding whether to support a bill.

The process of bringing this bill into law involved months of talking with all sides, revising, rewriting, and, at times, worrying that the whole thing was dead in the water. It was very much a great learning experience and an eye opener about how politically charged even a common-sense kind of issue can be. Who would think there would be any argument about warning people to use extra caution where poisons are involved, and yet there was! The fact that it passed is testament to the value of working with the other side, listening, persevering for the cause, and compromising to make something happen that leaves the world still far from perfect, but safer than it would have been without it. Well worth doing!

LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

BY KATHLEEN BISBIKIS, NATIONAL LEGISLATIVE REPRESENTATIVE



"Real leadership comes from the quiet nudging of an inner voice. It comes from realizing that the time has come to move beyond waiting to doing."

— Winston Churchill

Amtrak Engineer to Face Criminal Charges

Brandon Bostian, the engineer of the Amtrak Train 188 that derailed in Philadelphia in May 2015, killing eight people and injuring 200-plus, is facing charges of involuntary manslaughter as well as reckless endangerment.

It was initially believed that no criminal charges would be brought against Bostian; however, in a change of events, Philadelphia Judge Marsha Neifield, at the urging of the victims' families, ordered the district attorney's office to file charges against the engineer. The DA's office had previously issued a statement saying that they would not be charging Bostian with criminal charges because they found no evidence of criminal intent. To avoid a conflict of interest, the district attorney's office referred the case to the state's attorney general, who then filed the criminal charges.

The National Transportation Safety Board determined that the derailment was caused by human error and that the engineer was distracted. No evidence of drug or alcohol use was found, nor was there any improper use of personal electronic devices by Bostian. The charges filed against Mr. Bostian were made just hours before the statute of limitations were set to expire.

Ohio Senate Busy With Three Railroad Safety Bills

Ohio is leading the way to make railroads a safer place for employees and the communities in which they operate. Three separate pieces of legislation, led by state senators Kenny Yuko and Michael Skindell, were heard on May 4, 2017, at the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus. Ohio SB 74 is the Two-Person Crew Bill requiring a minimum of two crew members on freight trains operating in the state of Ohio, this is led by Michele Lepore-Hagan, the wife of BLET's Political and Legislative Director Bob Hagan. Ohio SB 89 requires standardized lighting in all rail yards and would mandate a penalty to any railroad not in compliance. Lastly, Ohio SB 90 would require standardized walkways in rail yards, and railroads not in compliance would be fined for violations.

Members in the State of Ohio are urged to contact their state representatives to ask that they support these three critical pieces of legislation. You can locate your Senator using the following link: <http://ohiosenate.gov/members/senate-directory>.

Labor Unions Work Together to Halt CSX Proposal to Remove Signals

The BLET, in a group effort with the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers and the Brotherhood of Maintenance of Way Employees Division, as well as private citizens in the proposed area of Michigan, were successful in their fight to stop CSX Transportation in its push to discontinue the use of track signals along the portion of track between Grand Rapids, Lansing, and Detroit, Michigan, the three largest cities in the state. The Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), in a letter dated March 7, 2017, stated that removal of the signals "would not be in the public interest or consistent with railroad safety." Additionally, the FRA said that the labor unions noted that "Congress has mandated that the FRA utilize the highest degree of safety in the issuance of its safety rules. That standard cannot be met if this Block Signal Application is granted."

The FRA also noted that "the discontinuance of the signal system bypasses broken rail protection, switch point alignment detection, eliminates train separation protection and identifying train locations. These factors, coupled with the level of hazardous materials moving on this line and the trains that meet and pass as well, do not support the safety of discontinuing the TCS [Traffic Control System] and removing the signals from this area."

AHCA Will Hurt Working Families

(This article was originally published May 4, 2017, on the Teamsters.org/news website.)

(WASHINGTON) —The Teamsters Union opposes the American Health Care Act (AHCA) which was passed by the House of Representatives today. The legislation's wholesale changes to the current system leave working families footing the bill for corporate tax breaks while paving a path to the elimination of even basic health care for the millions of American families that need it the most, in the end taking away health care from 23 million people.

The AHCA attacks working families who receive high-quality health care plans from their employers through a 40 percent excise tax. This "Cadillac Tax" penalizes middle-class workers who have fought long and hard for the strong health care plans they receive.

"The American Health Care Act is a flawed piece of legislation that should never be made into law," said Teamsters General President Jim Hoffa. "It not only includes this destructive Cadillac Tax that targets working families, but it also allows insurance companies to discriminate against people with pre-existing conditions and charge older Americans up to five times higher premiums than younger plan holders."

"Instead of finding new ways to enrich health care providers, Congress should be working to

ensure that this country provides affordable health care coverage for every American regardless of their pre-existing conditions. The AHCA will lead to only one result - higher costs for lower quality care for fewer Americans."

BLET VP John Tolman Delivers Testimony in Washington D.C.

On April 26, 2017, BLET Vice President and National Legislative Representative John Tolman testified at a hearing before the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines, and Hazardous Materials regarding many important issues, including infrastructure, worker fatigue and rail safety regulations. Vice President Tolman said, "The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee has a long history of being bipartisan for the safety and good of the traveling public and our nation's economy. Let's get the transportation system moving into the 21st Century ... let's buy American products ... let's put tens of thousands of unemployed Americans back to work ... and let's build the transportation infrastructure that will equal what our forefathers created."

Vice President Tolman also addressed PTC and fatigue: "Technology can help with the problem, but technologies such as Positive Train Control (PTC) alone will not solve the problem," he said. "Further, PTC has not been designed to be an answer to overworked train crews who toil around the clock with unpredictable on-duty times. Crews on freight trains rarely go to work at the same time on any two days in a row. Despite not having any routine work/rest cycles in their daily lives, railroad workers also face a never-ending push by the nation's rail carriers to

work longer hours and be away from home for longer periods of time or face the risk of being dismissed."

Take a moment and go online to read the full testimony of Vice President John Tolman at www.ble-t.org/pr/pdf/Tolman_Infrastructure.PDF. It's an excellent example of our union at work trying to protect our families as well as fight to make their members' jobs safer and get more money put back into the country's infrastructure, which is a large part of what our country was built on.

Texas High-Speed Rail Fight Continues

The battle continues in the state of Texas over the plans for a high-speed rail operation that would provide residents a means of transportation between the cities of Dallas and Houston. The Texas bullet train would travel at speeds of up to 205 miles per hour and take only 90 minutes between cities. However, Central Texas, the company building the bullet line, has been met with even more legislation that would delay if not end their attempts at helping a very automobile congested area of Texas.

A total of five bills aiming to stop or hinder construction have been filed in the current session. Collectively, the bills would prevent lawmakers from allocating any state funds to the controversial project, require Texas Central Partners to build the line in a way that would allow multiple types of trains to run on it, and force the company to offer land acquired for the project back to the previous property owners if the project doesn't come to fruition. Senators opposed to the bullet

train, as well as a group of landowners who would be affected by the building of the train, claim that the proposed legislation is just an effort to protect taxpayers as well as landowners. "They offer sensible regulation," said Ben Leman, Chairman of Texans against High-Speed Rail. One of the biggest causes of concern for land owners is the Texas Central's use of eminent domain to acquire property needed for the project. "When anybody takes your land, that's a high order," said state Sen. Lois Kolkhorst, R-Brenham.

Neighboring Fort Worth has its own plans for high-speed rail. As lawmakers argue over the Houston to Dallas project, the Fort Worth City Council is on board to create their own high speed rail between Dallas and Fort Worth: a forty-mile rail line that would connect the two cities with a bullet train that would run at an estimated 70-125 miles per hour. They are currently awaiting an environmental impact study that is expected to be completed by 2018. There is no estimated cost at this time for the Fort Worth train, but it is clear that Texas wants and sees the need for an alternative form of transportation to get cars off congested highways.

Oregon HB 2131 Safety Bill

Oregon legislators are taking the matter of oil trains into their own hands with the introduction of HB 2131 "The Community Protection and Preparedness Act." This bipartisan bill would require contingency planning by railroads, impose fees to build up the state's oil spill emergency fund, and require railroads to show they can pay for a worst-case spill. HB 2131 would also

provide grants to communities along rail lines where oil trains run to help them prepare and protect themselves in the case of a derailment. Also, the bill proposes to fine railroads an annual fee of \$1500 for each outdated oil tank car still in use, and, in the case of a severe oil train derailment, the bill would provide money for emergency response and clean up.

The Pacific Northwest fears that with potential for new and enlarged terminals, the increase in oil handling capabilities by rail could increase in that region substantially. HB 2131 is the State of Oregon's answer to making sure they are ready for the potential growth, and that its communities along the track are trained and prepared to handle a situation should it arise. Oregon does not want to see another derailment like that of the Union Pacific train that derailed in 2016 in Mosier, Oregon, and polluted the Columbia River or, worse, the Quebec derailment in 2013 that left 47 people dead and property and homes destroyed.

Nevada Governor Vetoes Two-Person Crew Bill

Nevada State Senator Mark Manendo sponsored a railroad safety bill that would have mandated a minimum crew size for freight trains operating in the state. S.B. 427, the Two-Person Crew Bill, would have restored to Nevada law a provision for minimum freight train crew size, insuring that no freight trains in the state would be operated by a crew of less than two persons. Nevada law previously specified a minimum crew size for freight trains, but the crew size

— continued on Page 8

Legislative Update, continued . . .

requirement in that law was repealed in 1985.

Matt Parker, the BLET's Nevada State Legislative Board Chairman, said the bill came in response to interest expressed by freight railroad operators nationwide to reduce the current crew size for most cross-country freight trains from two persons to a single operator. Parker said such a move would represent a giant step backwards for the safety of train crews and the general public.

S.B. 427 passed through the State House and Senate on party-line votes, with Democrats supporting it. However, on June 8, 2017, Nevada Governor Brian Sandoval, a Republican, vetoed the bill, stating that the "... intent behind the bill is laudable..." but that "... S.B. 427 does not appear to be necessary." He noted that representatives from both the Union Pacific Railroad and the BNSF Railway opposed S.B. 427.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked Brother Parker for his hard work and diligence in shepherding the bill through the Nevada legislature.

H.R. 233 the Safe Freight Act 2017 - Have you Shown your Support?

On January 3, 2017, Congressman Don Young from Alaska re-introduced the Safe Freight Act of 2017 (H.R. 233). This legislation would mandate a two-person crew on all freight trains—a certified engineer and a certified conductor.

BLET members, both active and

"We must guard against being fooled by false slogans, such as 'right to work.' It is a law to rob us of our civil rights and our job rights. It's purpose is to destroy labor unions and the freedom of collective bargaining by which unions have improved wages and working conditions of everyone. Wherever these laws have been passed, wages are lower, job opportunities are fewer and there are no civil rights."

- Martin Luther King Jr.

retired, as well as auxiliary members, are urged to contact their House representatives and ask them to co-sponsor H.R. 233. Members can reach the U. S. Capitol switchboard at (202) 224-3121 and ask to be connected to the representative from your congressional district. You can also go online at <http://www.house.gov/htbin/findrep>, enter your zip code, and your representative's information will be provided.

The Safe Freight Act affects all of us in the railroad industry, whether we are the employee or the family member at home. It's a bill about safety, not just for the communities that these trains travel through, but also for the men and women who are in the cabs of the locomotives, and for the peace of mind for those of us at home worried about things that we cannot control while our loved ones are at work. One person on a train is not enough, and no amount of propaganda that the carriers or the government are willing to try to sell us will ever make up for the second person sitting in the cab should an emergency arise. We need co-sponsors for this bill. When the bill was introduced in 2016, 69 congressmen co-sponsored it; we need more in 2017. How do we get there? We all need to step up and stop expecting someone

else to do what we need to do ourselves. Pick up the phone, write a letter, go to your computer and electronically make your voice heard. However, you choose to do it, get it done. Let's show Congress that we know what the words solidarity and strength mean by deafening our representatives with our voices in support of this bill that is not just important, it's imperative!

In a newsflash on the BLET website, National President Dennis R. Pierce said: "In spite of what the railroads might say, technology has not advanced to the point that it can replace the eyes and ears of railroad professionals. Please do your part, as the job you save may be your own."

Arkansas Governor Signs BLET-Backed Bill to Protect Train Crews

Arkansas Governor Asa Hutchinson has signed into law a BLET-backed bill that imposes harsher penalties on criminals who target railroad workers. Act 955 is designed "to protect freight rail employees and public transit employees by enhancing the penalties of certain criminal offenses." Introduced as Arkansas House Bill 2116 on March 6, 2017, the measure passed the state House on March 27 by a 76-6 majority and passed the state Senate on March 29 by a

34-0 majority. Governor Hutchinson, a Republican, signed the bill on April 6, 2017.

Arkansas State Legislative Board Chairman Terry Todd said the legislation is designed to discourage terrorist acts against freight railroads and public transportation. It protects locomotive engineers, conductors, switchmen, brakemen, trainmen, and firemen, and also railroad managers. Criminals are subject to enhanced sentences under this law if the victim of an offense is a railroad or public transit employee. Harsher penalties would be enforced for the following misdemeanors and felonies:

- Class A Misdemeanor or an unclassified Misdemeanor with a possible sentence greater than 90 days imprisonment, an additional period of imprisonment of not more than one year;
- Class C felony, Class D felony, on an unclassified felony, an additional period of imprisonment of at least six months but no more than two years; and
- Class Y felony, Class A felony, or Class B felony, an additional period of imprisonment of at least two years but no more than 10 years.

According to Brother Todd, Arkansas State Senator Eddie Joe Williams, a retired member of BLET Division 585, helped guide the bill through the Senate.

BLET National President Dennis R. Pierce thanked Brother Todd and all BLET members in the state of Arkansas who worked for passage of the bill.

— continued on Page 11

Tidbits from National Secretary Helen Brand

In early June, I attended the BLET Western Regional Meeting in San Antonio, Texas, at the Hyatt Regency. It was very well attended and we all enjoyed a fun-filled and educational week in "The Alamo City." Many thanks to all who participated in our fundraising efforts there. A more detailed account of this convention will appear in the Autumn issue of this publication. The Eastern Meeting is being held in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, at the Hilton Myrtle Beach, August 14-18, 2017. More details about this convention can be found on Page 15. We hope you are able to attend.

MAL REMINDER

Thank you to the Members-at-Large who have sent in their dues. Second notices have been mailed. Please mail your 2017 dues to me so that I can get your 2017 membership card to you.

LOCAL AUXILIARY REMINDER

Year-end dues and reports are past due. Please contact me if you need more information or help filling out the report. Thank you to the Auxiliaries who have mailed their dues and information.

CARE AND ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

Established in 1921, the Care and Assistance Program (CAP) is our organization's way of saying thank you to long-time members. These members are usually elderly and their incomes are such that some of life's little pleasures are out of their reach. The CAP provides financial assistance to qualifying members and helps them to maintain a little bit more of the dignity they deserve. Our CAP recipients are grateful for the Auxiliary's help.

In some instances, we can also provide temporary assistance to eligible members who find themselves in a financial crisis due to illness or injury of the railroader in the family, or other such incidents that cause him or her to be unable to work for an extended period of time.

Please check to see if someone in your Auxiliary may be eligible and encourage them to apply. Members-at-Large are eligible also. Contact me for applications!

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS!

- Tim Craver, Aylett, VA - Member-at-Large
- Wai Logan, Guernsey, WY - Member-at-Large
- Linda King-Shaw, Sparks, NV - Member-at-Large
- Beth Miller, Baden, PA - Member-at-Large
- Mindy McCollough, Council Bluffs, IA - River City Auxiliary #12
- Skyla Zozosky, Vancouver, WA - Fort Vancouver Auxiliary #72

OUR THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS

Our sympathies go to the family of Ruth Pillman Windam who passed away on March 26, 2017, at the age of 93. She was a past President of the Auxiliary and a member of Generosity Auxiliary #37 in Little Rock, Arkansas. It was brought to our attention that auxiliary member Meagan Schroeder passed away December 31, 2016, at the age of 31. Meagan was a member of Auxiliary #8 in North Platte, Nebraska. Our thoughts and prayers go to her family and friends.

We also extend our sympathies to the family of BLET member Jeffrey A. Harsh, of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who was killed in a railroad accident on March 26, 2016. Brother Harsh was 43 years old.

Three of the BLET's past Vice Presidents also passed away recently. Ed McColloch of Little Rock, Arkansas, served as BLE Vice President & National Legislative Rep. in Washington, D.C., for 20 years. He passed away on December 29, 2016, at the age of 94. Edgar Ellis "Ed" Watson, of Cuba, Missouri, served as BLE International Vice President from 1979-1993. Ed passed away on May 31, 2017, at the age of 87. Jim Shell, of St. Joseph, Missouri, served as International Vice President of the BLE from 1987 to 1996. He passed away on June 1, 2017, at the age of 83. Our hearts go out to the families and friends of these three BLE brothers.

I hope that everyone has an enjoyable and fun-filled summer. Time passes quickly, so make sure you take the time to enjoy your family and friends this summer!



Helen Brand can be reached by phone at 913-256-2741, by mail at 38768 Crescent Hill Road, Osawatomie, Kansas, 66064, or by e-mail at hybrand51@gmail.com.

If I can answer any questions for you, give me a call or send me an e-mail and I will get back to you as soon as I can!!

— Helen

Railroad group official speaks about retirement threat

By Colleen Williamson | Posted Oct 15, 2013

Source: http://www.parsonssun.com/news/article_f3aeb336_361c-11e3-b0ed-001a4bcf6878.html?mode=jqm

This article was originally published in 2013 at Parsonssun.com, a web news site in Parsons, Kansas. Although the financial figures listed may be outdated, the message is still relevant today, especially with the continued passage of Right-to-Work laws that threaten to weaken the unions that work hard to fight off the continuing attempts by Congress to privatize our Railroad Retirement System.

The National Association of Retired and Veteran Railway Employees has long protected the railroad pension fund from proposed presidential and congressional amendments to the Railroad Retirement Act that would raid the fund to support budget proposals.

“NARVRE is the only federally chartered railroad retiree association having for its sole purpose the protection, promotion and preservation of our railroad retirement annuity,” NARVRE Area 6 Director Roger Barr said.

However, members of the NARVRE organization are aging, and with few young members joining, the future of the organization could be threatened.

For example, the Parsons NARVRE group, once 1,000 members strong when the Katy Railroad was in operation, has dwindled to 110 members, treasurer Lois Shrum said.

Former national NARVRE president for 16 years, August Westphal, spoke to NARVRE members Monday about the importance of raising awareness in young railroad workers about the potential future threat to their financial security.

The U.S. Railroad Retirement Board, an independent agency in the executive branch, was created in 1935 to administer retirement and survivor benefits to U.S. railroad workers and their families. These benefit payments are financed by payroll taxes paid by railroad employers and their employees, similar to what other U.S. workers pay into Social Security, except railroad workers pay more into their benefit fund.



**National Association of Retired and
Veteran Railway Employees, Inc.**

Railroad retirement taxes are figured on a two-tier basis. Tier I payroll taxes are figured at the same rate as Social Security taxes. In addition, Westphal said, tier II taxes are paid by employees and employers to finance railroad retirement benefit payments above Social Security levels.

“In the early 1980s, when Reagan was president, he was the first to want to put all railroad employees paying into tier I into Social Security. We fought against it, and it failed in Congress,” Westphal said. “Then the senior George Bush tried it and then Clinton tried it. They both failed.”

“It was not until 2001 that for the first time the law provided that we could invest our surplus money,” Westphal said.

Beginning in 2002, taxes paid completely by railroad workers into the fund above outgoing benefit payments or administrative expenses were invested by the National Railroad Retirement Investment Trust.

“That first year we increased our investments by \$7 billion,” Westphal said. “We were up as high as \$30 billion, but like everyone else, in 2008 our investments went down. We have \$25.7 billion now. Those investments have created a very sound, solid retirement system for railroad workers. We have paid in more to have those retirement benefits and we believe we should be able to keep them.”

The stability of the fund is its precise appeal to those in Congress looking for means to bolster the financially ailing Social Security system, he said.

Strong membership in NARVRE means a strong voice when railroad workers want to protect the benefits they have paid for.

"United Airlines just took their pensions from their pilots. Over 8,000 pension plans have just been abolished across the U.S. That's why we are concerned about AMTRAK. There are more than 20,000 people working in AMTRAK that pay into our railroad retirement fund. We want to be sure they keep their jobs. There are some congressmen who want to get rid of AMTRAK. They want to get rid of sleeping cars on coast-to-coast trains and they want to get rid of the dining car service. We need to support AMTRAK as long as we can," Westphal said. "That's why we have these clubs, to keep all that going for all railroad employees, no matter their craft, machinist, switchman, engineer, whatever position. They are all eligible to join because they are all under the same pension plan."

Younger people should not sit back and say "nothing will happen to me," he said.

Young railroad workers waiting until retirement to join NARVRE could find by that time NARVRE no longer exists, and neither do their pensions. NARVRE needs young workers to step up and be the watch dogs for the railroad retirement system, and make sure everyone is treated fairly, Westphal said. "We are the grass roots."

Although younger railroad employees may not have time to attend NARVRE meetings because they are working, membership entitles them to receive the monthly newsletter, keeping them apprised of what is going on.

The Parsons club meets once a month on the second Monday, except in the summer. All active railroad workers and retired railroad employees and their spouses are eligible to become a member.

"We would really like to have active railroad employees involved because we are working to protect their pensions, too," Shrum said. "There is a lot of information we provide that employees wouldn't know unless they received the newsletter or came to the meetings."

To learn more about NARVRE and how you can become a member and/or find out if there is a local NARVRE unit in your area, please visit their national website at www.narvre.info.

Legislative Update, continued from Page 8

Senate Approves Rosen as USDOT Deputy Secretary

The U.S. Senate confirmed Jeffrey Rosen as deputy secretary of the U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) on May 16. Rosen is the 18th deputy secretary in USDOT's 50-year history.

"I am delighted to welcome Deputy Secretary Jeff Rosen to the department. His extensive background in transportation, budget, regulatory reform and management will be invaluable as we implement the president's agenda," said USDOT Secretary Elaine Chao. Rosen is a Harvard law graduate and served as general counsel and senior policy advisor for the White House Office of Management and Budget from 2006 to 2009 and as general council at USDOT from 2003 to 2006.

Rosen's confirmation comes shortly before the Trump administration plans to release its much-anticipated infrastructure proposal, which Sec. Chao said would happen in a matter of weeks.

Rosen's Senate vote was not completely drama-free, as Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) announced her intention to withhold support from any and all USDOT nominees until funding is released for Caltrain's electrification project.

Kathleen Bisbikis can be reached by phone at 209-786-7367; by mail at 7367 Stabulis Rd., Valley Springs, California, 95252; or by e-mail at biz4413@gmail.com.

In Memoriam

BLET member Jeffrey A. Harsh, a member of BLET Division 882 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, was killed in a railroad accident on March 26, 2016. Brother Harsh was 43 years old.

Employed by the Canadian Pacific Railway, Brother Harsh normally worked as an engineer out of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, but had been cut back and was receiving familiarization training in a new area. He was killed early on March 26 in St. Paul, Minnesota. He joined the Brotherhood effective March 1, 1998, and is a former President of BLET Division 882 in Milwaukee.

He is survived by parents Sandra and Peter Harsh; sisters Laura and Liana; close friends Kevin A. Williams and Jake Weber; and countless other friends, relatives, and co-workers in his close-knit railroad family.

We extend our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Brother Jeffrey Harsh.

Looking Back at Our History as we Celebrate 130 Years

By Sereena Hogan, National President

This is a continuation of the history of our organization as we celebrate our 130-year anniversary, continued from the Spring 2017 issue. The Auxiliary came into existence on October 16, 1887, in Chicago, Illinois.

The Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Trainmen (BLET) was originally founded in Marshall, Michigan, on May 8, 1863, as the Brotherhood of the Footboard, and was the first permanent trade organization for railroad workers in the United States. A year later, it was renamed the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers (BLE), an international organization representing railroad engineers in the United States and Canada. In 2004, the BLE merged with the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) and became a division of the Rail Conference of the IBT. Since that time, it has been known as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen (BLET) and is a national organization representing engineers and trainmen in the United States only. According to IBT General President James P. Hoffa, the BLE was America's earliest labor union.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, the BLE International Conventions were held every other year. Later they were held every five years, as required by Title IV of the Labor-Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1959, and they were called International Quinquennial Conventions. Following the merger, when the BLET became a national organization, the conventions went to a four-year schedule. They are now called National Quadrennial Conventions.

At the conventions, delegates from all of the approximately 500 local BLET divisions in the United States nominate the National Division Advisory Board officers and vote on proposed changes to the Bylaws to decide what rules will govern the union and to set the course for the future.

Since its inception in 1887, the Auxiliary has held its conventions in tandem with the BLET Conventions. The laws and policies formed by action taken by the members and officers at these auxiliary conventions throughout the years point to the astute and farsighted faculties of these railroad spouses.

In her article entitled "Helpmate for 75 Years," that appeared in the souvenir program for the BLE Centennial/GIA Diamond Jubilee celebration held in Detroit, Michigan, in May 1963, Sister Marcella Hackett listed many of the decisions that emanated from the auxiliary meetings at some of the early conventions.

In 1890, a special committee's report on fraternal insurance was adopted and this new organization was called the "Ladies Benevolent Insurance Association." It later became known as the "Relief Association." It was agreed that all who were willing to embrace this plan and opportunity to help one another would be granted mutual aid and protection, and that none would be excluded on account of age or disability, for those would be the very ones to need help the most. In an article submitted by Mary Cassell that appeared in the February 1898 edition of the Locomotive Engineer's Monthly Journal, recounting the history of the Insurance Association, it was stated that: "Our insurance has the honor of being the first and, for some years, the only one that was organized and conducted by women and for women only."

The Relief Association disbanded in the late 1960s or early 1970s and the insurance policies that were still in effect at that time were underwritten by another insurance company.

At some point, a "sinking fund" was created for the purpose of building an orphan's fund and each division was required to make an annual donation to the fund. In 1896, the name "Orphans Home Fund" was changed to "Relief Fund" and, from that time on, the money was used for the relief of needy sisters and orphans. This was the beginning of what we now call our "Care and Assistance

Program." To this day, a small portion of each member's annual dues is deposited into this fund and many of our present-day local auxiliaries make voluntary donations into the fund.

Local auxiliaries were originally called "lodges." The word "lodge" was replaced by "division" at the convention in 1896. Also at this convention, the office of "Grand Organizer Inspector" became official and the duties of the office were established. This officer was tasked with traveling wherever necessary to organize new divisions. Today, this position is called "Outreach Coordinator," and the word "division" has been replaced by "local auxiliary." The duties are now performed by our 1st Vice President/Outreach Coordinator.

At the convention in 1898, new ritualistic forms were adopted and made a part of the ritual performed at the meetings and conventions. As mentioned in the history article that appeared in the Spring edition of this publication, the ritual included five forms: Opening, Initiation, Balloting, Installation, and Closing. At some point (I believe in the late 1900s), the performance of the ritual became optional rather than mandatory. Although I have never witnessed the ritual, from what I have surmised, it was similar to that performed by the women of the Order of the Eastern Star, an appendant body of the Masons, originally made up of women who were daughters, widows, wives, sisters, or mothers of a master Mason. This makes sense, as the early members of the BLE appeared to have had strong Masonic beliefs, as evidenced by the regalia they wore at their meetings and the ways in which they conducted the business of the Brotherhood.

Also at the 1898 convention, a pattern was laid for the "School of Instruction," to teach the ritual to the auxiliary officers, and the Crescent and Star were adopted as the design for the GIA emblem. Following the name change from the GIA to the BLET Auxiliary, the emblem was redesigned. The star was



Upper Left: Sister Letitia Murdock, Grand President, 1887 - 1919 (32 yrs); Lower Left: Sister Mary Cassell, Grand President, 1919-1933 (14 years); Above Middle: School of Instruction for Performance of Ritual; Right: Grand Council in 1898.



incorporated into the new design in honor of our heritage.

At the Convention in 1900, the Grand President's photo was inserted on the Women's Page of the Locomotive Engineers Journal as a permanent feature. In 1906, Grand Vice President Mary Cassell emphasized the importance the monthly women's pages in the Journal had played in the auxiliary's success, stating "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, the Auxiliary retains a presence in the Locomotive Engineers & Trainmen Journal, with articles submitted by auxiliary officers and members.

In 1908, the GIA membership roster totaled 15,387. At that time, more than \$18,000 of the Auxiliary's funds had been dispensed for charity and nearly \$4,000 given to

the Highland Park Home (for indigent railroad men). Delegates and visitors at that convention made a trip to Cleveland to attend the dedication ceremonies of the new BLE Building. Delegates were instructed to wear a white ribbon badge with name, city, and state stamped in black, as the growth of the order had made it increasingly difficult to know one another personally.

Look for more on the history of the Auxiliary in the next issue of this publication.

Photo of Auxiliary members taken in 1959. Notice the ladies all dressed in white. It was mandatory that they wore long white dresses to perform the ritual at their meetings and conventions. It was definitely another era!





Greetings from your Editor, Susie Burrola, 1st Vice President

Once a year the Auxiliary Executive Council meets to go over our finances, review scholarship applications and our CAP recipients' status updates, and brainstorm for new and improved ideas for the Auxiliary.

This year we teamed up with LEMCPA to facilitate two \$2500 scholarships to Auxiliary and LEMCPA members' children. These scholarships are fully funded by LEMCPA. To qualify, one of the applicant's parents must be a member in good standing of the BLET as well as LEMCPA for a minimum of one year, and the other parent must be a member of the BLET Auxiliary for at least one year. This is our first year working with LEMCPA President Susan Tukul to award these scholarships, and we are grateful that she decided to increase the number of scholarships awarded for this year only from two to four.

We also awarded ten \$1000 scholarships. A small portion of each member's annual dues goes into our scholarship fund and the rest comes from our fundraising efforts at the regional conventions, which mainly consist of raffles and sales of mulligans for the golf tournaments. With the decrease in the number of yearly regional conventions, we are constantly looking for new fundraising ideas for the two annual regional conventions as well as other sources of income for our scholarship fund.

In 2018, the National BLET will hold its Quadrennial Convention in Las Vegas, Nevada, at the Rio Hotel and Casino, from September 30- October 5. The National BLET Auxiliary also meet on those dates and at that location to elect new officers and make any necessary revisions to our National Constitution and Bylaws. If you belong to a local auxiliary with a minimum of eight members and your spouse is planning to attend the National Convention, please consider serving as a delegate for your auxiliary at our convention. Elections for Convention Delegates will be held at the end of this year or beginning of next year. As a delegate, you can represent your local auxiliary and bring forth their new ideas, concerns, and interests. If you are considering running for a position as a National BLET Auxiliary officer, please contact National President Sereena Hogan or any of the other national officers to let us know.

We are constantly working to spread the word about the Auxiliary, raise funds for our programs, and recruit new members. The Auxiliary was formed to support railroaders and their families. Please take time to visit our newly revised website at bletauxiliary.net. You can pay your dues using Paypal and get updated legislative information, as well as general information about the auxiliary and the programs we offer.

"The man who has millions will want everything he can lay his hands on and then raise his voice against the poor devil who wants ten cents more a day."

~ Samuel Gompers
Founder, American Federation of Labor

If you have any stories, photos, or information you would like to share for our newsletter, please e-mail them to me.

Susie Burrola can be reached by phone at 209-915-1512; by efax: at 1-855-806-7870; by mail at 1723 Rail Street, Manteca, CA 95337; or by e-mail at BletAuxiliaryvp@yahoo.com.



Congratulations to J. Mark Robb (left) on his retirement. Mark served as International President for the Brotherhood's Relief & Compensation Fund (BRCF) from April, 2006 - April, 2017. In May 1972, he began his railroad career with the Canadian National Railway and spent 27 years in the "running trades," working as a yard switchman, yard foreman, brakeman, conductor, and locomotive engineer. Mark and his wife Leslie plan to remain in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania, to be close to their daughters and grandchildren. You can bet they will continue their passion for travel to new and exciting places during their retirement years. Congratulations also to newly elected International President of BRCF, Jesse Taylor (right).

As a doctoral student, I spent the majority of my time in a research laboratory. Research is a medium through which learning is a continuous process, and I appreciate how much I am able to learn from a hands-on perspective. I also enjoy biomedical research because of the direct contribution that my work can have on the community. The discoveries that we make in research are translated to clinical trials and can ultimately become standard therapies for human disease. I am privileged to work in a field that has such a hugely positively impact on the community. It's rewarding to know that if I do my job well, the results of my work can improve the lives of others. This motivates me to work hard and to do my best each day in the lab. A portion of my dissertation research has been published in peer-reviewed scientific journals, and I regularly present my work at local, regional, and national scientific conferences. I also continue to seek out teaching and mentoring opportunities, including mentoring high school and undergraduate students to expose them to the field of academic science, and teaching lab skills courses to groups ranging from undergraduates to recent medical school graduates. Although my research and teaching commitments keep me busy, I make sure to also take some time to enjoy life outside of work. During the third year of my doctoral studies, I was lucky enough to marry my wonderful husband, Alex, and we just celebrated our second wedding anniversary. In our spare time, we like to hike and camp in the Rocky Mountains with our two dogs.

Now that I have earned my PhD, I plan to pursue a career in academia as a professor, which will allow me to teach in a traditional classroom setting while also mentoring trainees in a research lab. I have started a postdoctoral research fellowship at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus, where I will be studying the role of hormones in post-menopausal bone loss, and working to secure research funding to establish my own lab as an independent investigator. From my experiences thus far, I have realized that my passion lies with learning, whether it is in a classroom or a laboratory. I feel very fortunate to be able to follow my passion and, ultimately, to dedicate my career to advancing knowledge and understanding through research and teaching.

Going Green

If you would like to receive your newsletter as an e-mail attachment sent to you each quarter, please e-mail publisher Sereena Hogan at vp3sereena@aol.com to let us know. As always, our newsletter is available on our website at www.bletauxiliary.net even before the copies are mailed out.

Eastern Regional Meeting - Myrtle Beach August 14-18, 2017

Guests will stay at the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort, 10000 Beach Club Drive Myrtle Beach, South Carolina 29572, (843) 449-5000. Located right on the ocean, the Hilton Myrtle Beach Resort is moments from unique shops, delicious dining, and exciting entertainment. Room reservations must be made by July 14, 2017. If making reservations by phone, be sure to mention group code "BLE1."

The meeting will be filled with educational opportunities and entertaining leisure time activities. BLET convention registration, as well as hotel registration, can be made through the BLET's regional meeting website, www.bletregionals.org.

Registration and a welcome reception will be held on Monday. Opening ceremonies will take place on Tuesday morning, with a closed meeting for BLET members that afternoon. The BLET Auxiliary open meeting will also be held on Tuesday afternoon. A golf tournament will be held on Wednesday. Non-golfers will be on their own to explore the many entertainment options that the area has to offer.

Workshops will be held for Local Chairmen, Secretary-Treasurers, and Legislative Representatives throughout the day on Thursday, followed by a closing banquet that evening.

There is no cost for BLET members who wish to attend the meetings and workshops only; however, there will be fees for those members who choose to attend the meals. The cost of full registration (including all meetings, workshops, the banquet, and all BLET-sponsored meals) is \$200.00 per person. The cost is \$150.00 to register for all of the above **EXCEPT** the banquet. Additionally, reduced children's registration and a la carte meal registration options are also available. For more information, please visit the BLET website for news releases about the meetings, as well as the BLET Facebook page, and the regional meeting website, www.bletregionals.org for more information about the meetings and the registration process.

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

Sereena Hogan, Publisher
BLET Auxiliary News
520-297-0944
vp3sereena@aol.com

The next issue will be published in September 2017. Please have your submissions to Sereena on or before August 21, 2017.



BLET Auxiliary

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