President’s Message
by Dave Muir

My column in the last edition of the newsletter stated it was my last message. Well, here I am again. RELAC’s election of officers for 2021 was delayed until the January 2021 Board of Directors meeting. I’m still the president until that happens. This turn of events reminds me of the “Attorney’s Golden Flip Flop Award” I received from the members of LACERA’s Executive Office when I retired as LACERA’s chief counsel in July 2009. The award was given in recognition of the one time I reversed my legal opinion and stated, in a public meeting with many attending: “That’s what they call the attorney flip flop!” I treasure that award more than the scroll I received from the California State Assembly honoring me for my 15 years of service at LACERA.

As I write this message on Thanksgiving weekend, I’m thankful for having the opportunity to serve as RELAC’s president for the past seven years. And I’m grateful for the wonderful friendships and support I’ve received from the members of the Board of Directors. I will continue on as past president, which will make me a member of RELAC’s Executive Committee.

I’m thankful for the generosity of so many of you who have supported RELAC’s fundraising efforts during 2020. We raised $12,015 for the March of Dimes “March for Babies” campaign and $13,700 for the L.A. Regional Food Bank “Emergency COVID Response Fund.” I’m so proud of the way RELAC has upped its game as a socially aware and supportive member of the Los Angeles County community.

We are all suffering from COVID fatigue. But we must continue to follow the advice of the L.A. County Public Health Department. With vaccines close on the horizon, we will, hopefully, get back to normal in the not-too-distant future. In the meantime, please stay safe.

Victoria Pipkin-Lane Named RELAC Director
by Judy Hammond, Newsletter Editor

Victoria Pipkin-Lane, press aide to two supervisors, the district attorney, the Chief Administrative Office, and the Children and Family Services Department, is the newest member of the RELAC Board of Directors.

Pipkin-Lane, who was executive director of the Quality and Productivity Commission under the Board of Supervisors when she retired March 31, 2018, fills a vacancy created by the resignation of Greg Walia. Appointed Nov. 10, 2020 by unanimous vote of the RELAC Board of Directors, her term will expire Dec. 31, 2023.

“Victoria adds important competencies to the Board of Directors,” said RELAC President Dave Muir. “Her many years in top County management positions and her extensive contacts in the County will enhance RELAC’s operations.”

Pipkin-Lane’s 29-year County career began in April 1989 as assistant press deputy for then-Supervisor Kenneth Hahn. She later worked as assistant press deputy for Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke, public information officer for DCFS, and director of communications for District Attorney Gil Garcetti. When Garcetti retired, she became assistant public affairs director in the Chief Administrative Office, then director of the County Workplace Programs and Charitable Giving Office before transferring to the Quality and Productivity Commission position.

Pipkin-Lane said she feels it’s an honor to serve on the RELAC Board of Directors.

“My desire to serve on the RELAC Board stems from a deeply held commitment to public service, which I hope to continue by helping RELAC in its mission to help retirees, publicize activities and programs of interest to retirees, as well as be vigilant in protecting our pensions. With more than 29 years of County service, I believe I can contribute to RELAC’s mission.”

For the past two years, Pipkin-Lane has served as a volunteer member of RELAC’s Newsletter Committee. “Communication with retirees is vital to RELAC accomplishing its goals and fulfilling its commitment to retirees. The newsletter is an important communication tool, and it is my desire to help enhance its content and utilize emerging technologies to increase its effectiveness and mission.”


She lives in Inglewood with her husband, Herb, and enjoys spending time with grandchildren Janessa and Landon.
There is no way to say this other than to say it: 2020 has been one of those years that we would all probably prefer to just forget. Unfortunately, that is easier said than done and for many of us there will be much to remember, and probably most of it is not positive. As I sit and write this article it’s Thanksgiving Eve, and from my perspective, my wife, Cindy, and I have a great deal to be thankful for.

First, we have our health, which, fortunately for both of us, has been very good. Second, we have LACERA and the life safeguards that my pension provides for both of us as well as some terrific health insurance that so many Americans only hope to have. And lastly, we live in the greatest country on Earth, and that is no understatement.

Many of you who are retired know full well what the quality of our retiree health care benefits are, but we also know that there are challenges ahead for health care in general in this country and LACERA’s plans are not immune from those challenges. One of the big ones is the current lifetime cap on our Anthem Blue Cross plans that can pose a huge threat to those of you who have long-term illnesses that require very costly and lengthy treatments. The $1 million lifetime cap is something that LACERA has focused on for a number of years. We have been working with the plan sponsor, L.A. County, to try to address this issue, but so far we have had little luck. I suspect that our campaign at LACERA, and at RELAC as well, will continue for as long as it takes for us to get something done with respect to increasing the cap. A couple of things to remember about the cap are that it is PER PERSON, not for the entire family, and that when possible LACERA will move you into a plan that doesn’t have a lifetime cap, such as one of the Kaiser plans. Unfortunately, the real problem here is that not everyone lives in a Kaiser service area and not everyone is enrolled in Medicare, which also gives LACERA some flexibility in dealing with the cap. The good news is that we don’t have a large number of retirees who are nearing the cap, but we have 16 who have already exceeded the cap and others who are inching their way towards the cap. Rest assured that I will keep everyone at RELAC apprised of this issue.

Have a great holiday, be safe, and give thanks.
RELAC’s Tax Status and Political Activities Information Provided
by Dave Muir, President

RELAC is a “social welfare organization” exempt from income taxation under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(4).

Contributions to 501(c)(3) charitable organizations can be deducted on an individual’s tax return. And political activities of charitable organizations are restricted in several ways.

On the other hand, contributions to 501(c)(4) social welfare organizations, like RELAC, cannot be deducted on an individual's tax return.

IRS technical instructions for tax-exempt organizations provided an answer to the following question:

QUESTION: May Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(4), (c)(5), or (c)(6) organizations engage in political campaign activities?

ANSWER: IRC 501(c)(4), (c)(5), and (c)(6) organizations may engage in political campaigns on behalf of or in opposition to candidates for public office provided that such intervention does not constitute the organization’s primary activity.

Happy Birthday,
RELAC Centenarians

Happy birthday to our members who will be 100 or older in January and February.

January
Shirley L. Gruskin, 101, Public Social Services
Jan. 11, 1920
Gilda Saporito, 102, Health
Jan. 12, 1919
Ruby S. Nomura, 100, Internal Services
Jan. 20, 1921
Leona Biro, 101, Health Services
Jan. 27, 1920
Marguerite M. De Silva, 101, Assessor-Real Property
Jan. 27, 1920

February
Catherine S. Uyeda, 104, Probation
Feb. 2, 1917
Irving Sherman, 102, Flood Control District
Feb. 5, 1919

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS
October – November 2020

Assessor – Noe Dichoso
Auditor-Controller – Patricia Culkin, Sandra Cruz
Child Support Services – Stephanie Gray
Children & Family Services – Clarissa Mena, Preston Oppenheimer, Byford
Joel Singleton
Coroner – Anthony Hernandez
District Attorney – Marc Debbautd, Roberta Schwartz
Fire – Andrew Doyle, Steven Lindsey
Harbor/UCLA Medical Center – Gamalier Lesure, Reza Mohajer-Shojaee
Health Services – William Chang, Jeanette Johnson
Internal Services – Irma Espinoza, Donnie Wright
LAC+USC Medical Center – Michael Clair, Kathy Lohr
Mental Health – Lap Chu
Museum of Natural History – Lois Lipscomb
Olive View/UCLA Medical Center – Ramzy Bechai
Probation – Richard Robledo, David Schur, Olga Weise
Public Social Services – Amye Allen, Juliette Avalos, Mario Cacho, Mark-Curtis Dunn, Mandoush Gharibi, Mildred Mc Keever, James Moreno, Martha Jean Robertson, Cathy Tran
Public Works – Stephen Lee, Carlos Valenzuela
Rancho Los Amigos Rehab Center – Juan Maisch
Sheriff – Arthur Miranda, Marcena Mitchell
Treasurer/Tax Collector – Monica Cervantes
Department Not Designated – Shirley Moore Cotton, Deirdre Kuper

Thanks for New Member Referrals
We would like to thank the two members who recruited colleagues to join RELAC during November 2020. Due to our aging membership, we must remain vigilant in signing up new members in order to remain a strong organization to protect your hard-earned pension and health benefits. We are the only organization that exclusively serves the interests of Los Angeles County retirees, so help us help you. For membership applications and brochures, call the RELAC office at (800) 537-3522, e-mail admin@relac.org or go online at www.relac.org. Be sure to tell the new member to put your name on the application as making the referral.

Our thanks to these RELAC members (shown in bold) for referring new members (shown in italics):
Kathleen Blanchette, Sandra Cruz, Auditor-Controller
Judy Hammond, Kathy Lohr, LAC+USC Medical Center

REMINDER:
RELAC’s 2021 February Annual Recognition Luncheon has been cancelled due to COVID-19 restrictions.

REMINDER:
RELAC NEWSLETTER • JAN/FEB 2021
Thank you, Firefighters

Retired Employees of Los Angeles County
A non-profit organization ~ Serving over 17,000 members

November 10, 2020

Fire Chief Daryl Osby
L.A. County Fire Department
1320 N. Eastern Ave.
Los Angeles, CA 90063-3244

Dear Chief Osby:

On behalf of the RELAC Board of Directors and membership, we wish to express our sincere appreciation for the impressive and dangerous service our brave firefighters provide to protect lives, homes, pets, and the environment.

As you are aware, many of our RELAC members are residents of Palmdale and the San Gabriel areas, particularly in the Bobcat fire areas. We are especially thankful for the noble firefighting efforts your team continues to make, as this world also endures the challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

As we prepare to meet the challenges of days to come, especially the holidays, RELAC’s Community Support Committee and RELAC members are proud to continue to support the County Fire Department’s holiday “Spark of Love” toy drive. Providing toys to families in need, especially residents currently unemployed or relocated due to temporary loss or damage to their homes, is a cause we are proud to support.

We send our best wishes and continued support. Our treasured and highly respected firefighters are in our thoughts and prayers.

Respectfully,

David Muir
President

DM/EG:ss

LACERA continued from p 2
from Social Security or Medicare, please submit your 2021 Medicare Part B premium verification to LACERA for review and processing, pending approval by the County Board of Supervisors. Below are ways to send in your verifications to LACERA:

Fax: (877) 399-3621, Attn: LACERA, Part B Verification.

Register or sign in to your secure My LACERA at members.lacera.com to upload your verification.

Mail: LACERA, ATTN: Part B Verification, P.O. Box 7060, Pasadena, CA 91109-7060.

Please do not send in copies of your 1099s as they do not contain the Part B amount needed for verification. For questions regarding acquiring proof of your Medicare Part B premium verifications, please contact:

Social Security Administration (SSA): 800-772-1213 or www.ssa.gov
Sign in to your secure mySocial Security account (or create an account)

Medicare (if billed) (800) 633-4227 or www.medicare.gov
Log in to your secure MyMedicare account (or create an account)

For other questions, contact LACERA at (800) 786-6464 (Monday-Friday, 7 am-5:30 p.m. Pacific Standard Time), press 1, or log in/register to your secure MyLACERA at lacera.com.

I’d like to close this month’s newsletter with important information about a new security feature we are implementing for members making changes to their LACERA account information. When you make a change to your LACERA information, we send out verifications via mail and e-mail. We will now also be sending out verifications via text messaging for the following account maintenance actions: changes to address, beneficiary, direct deposit, email, or phone numbers, as well as new My LACERA portal registrations, and password resets, among others actions. The new feature will be operational in mid-December.

How does it work? When you take one of these actions and we have a valid mobile number for you, we will send you a SMS text message. The message will come from the ‘Short Code’ of 72049 and will let you know that a change has been made and invite you to contact LACERA right away if you did not authorize the change. While we have security protocols that prevent unauthorized changes – it is possible that they can occur. Ensuring you can let us know if a change is unauthorized as soon as possible helps us protect your information and benefits. As with any text messaging, you can opt out of future notifications.

With that, I’ll sign off for this month and we’ll see you again next time. In the meantime, please stay safe, take care of yourselves and your families, and enjoy your retirement as much as possible – you earned it!
Social distancing keeps you safe.

The RELAC Board of Directors thanks you for wearing facial coverings, socially distancing, sanitizing your hands and staying safe at home, when possible. Together we can help reduce the health risk related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

During the holidays and 2021 events, we should explore safe and low-risk activities that provide opportunities to remain safely connected to family and friends. Take a moment to text, call, e-mail and mail cards to family and friends.

In addition, a number of County departments are providing safe, ‘virtual” services and links to “safer at home” opportunities to learn, read, watch and participate in various activities.

County Museum of Art
Visit the County Museum of Art website, LACMA@Home for updates on art exhibits, online courses, online documentaries and short films. Cooking with LACMA also brings together chefs and culinary historians to demonstrate recipes inspired by artworks at the museum.

While indoor galleries remain closed, the Museum of Art currently features public art and take-out dining. Health and safety protocols are implemented.

County Libraries
The County Library cordially invites RELAC members to participate in a recently launched volunteer program “Virtual Reading Buddies.” This inter-generational program needs senior volunteers to participate in one-on-one sessions and work with students in grades K-8 to help them improve their reading skills, confidence and reading enjoyment.

This program takes place virtually and currently meets Tuesdays from 3:30 to 3:50 p.m. Volunteers who enjoy working with children, have access to a camera-enabled laptop, smart phone or computer, and are able to commit to a minimum of six weeks are needed. For additional information, contact Vicki Raymundi at VRaymundi@library.lacounty.gov.

FREE wireless printing service at Sidewalk Service libraries is currently available to RELAC members with Library cards. You can send a print job from your laptop, tablet or mobile device to one of the library’s Sidewalk Service libraries. Print up to 10 FREE copies per day and arrange for contactless pick-up. Copies must be picked up within three days. Visit website lacountylibrary.org and “Wireless Printing Service” for details.

County Parks and Recreation
The Parks and Recreation Department’s “Parks from Home” program provides online recreational video programming and virtual tours of parks, gardens, golf courses, trails and much more.

FREE after-school programs offered at participating County parks are designed for school-aged children (and grandchildren) in first through sixth grade. The program operates Tuesday through Friday from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. Contact your local park for additional information.

We care about your health and wellness. Stay Safe, Healthy and Connected.
With the election of Holly Mitchell to replace termed-out Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas, the Board of Supervisors became an all-female body. From left to right, the members are Hilda Solis, Mitchell, Sheila Kuehl, Janice Hahn and Kathryn Barger.

Retired Marshal’s Group Releases 2021 Luncheon Schedule
Retired L.A. County marshals, who have been meeting for lunch since 1958, have released their 2021 luncheon schedule. Due to the COVID-19 shutdown, luncheon meetings are currently suspended and will resume whenever Los Angeles County gives the okay for outdoor dining and/or the quarantine is lifted. All luncheons are scheduled for 12 noon.
Jan. 6  Jack’s Restaurant, 13221 Whittier Blvd., Whittier
Feb. 3  Lazy Dog Restaurant, 8800 Apollo Way, Downey
March 3  Damon’s Steak House, 317 N. Brand Ave., Glendale
April 7  Villa Tepeyac, 2200 E. Garvey Blvd., West Covina
May 5  Katella Bakery, 4470 Katella Ave., Los Alamitos
June 2  Wood Ranch BBQ, 400 S. Baldwin Ave., Arcadia
July 7  San Antonio Winery, 737 Lamar Ave., Los Angeles
Aug. 4  Black Angus, 560 W. Huntington Dr., Monrovia
Sept. 1  Katella Bakery, 4470 Katella Ave., Los Alamitos
Oct. 6  Rodrigo’s Mexican Grill, 11805 Artesia Blvd., Artesia
Nov. 3  Yang Chow Restaurant, 3377 Colorado Blvd., Pasadena
Dec. 1  Villa Tepeyac, 2200 E. Garvey Blvd., West Covina

RELAC Members Get See’s Candies Discount
How sweet it is. RELAC has renewed its program with See’s Candies to provide discounts to RELAC members. Effective through October 2021, you may purchase See’s Candies at a reduced price at any See’s quantity discount shop.
Call (800) 877-7337, tell the See’s representative you are a RELAC member, and ask for the location of the See’s quantity discount store closest to your home. You can also find a list on RELAC’s website at relac.org under the Member Discount tab, or you may call the RELAC office at (626) 308-0532 for assistance.
You must show your RELAC membership card at the time of purchase.

Opportunities to Give: Animals in Need
RELAC encourages members to give back to causes that matter to them. One possibility is the Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation.
Many animals come to the Los Angeles County animal care centers with extraordinary medical needs. The Los Angeles County Animal Care Foundation has established several programs to help the animals who need it most.
The foundation combats animal cruelty by paying for officer training, equipment, and supplies to enforce animal cruelty laws, rescue abused and neglected animals, and support the prosecution of animal abusers.
To donate, visit: https://lacountyanimals.org/give/.

RELAC NEWSLETTER
Vol 56 - Jan/Feb 2021
Number 1
Retired Employees of Los Angeles County
1000 S. Fremont Ave.
Unit 15, Alhambra, CA
91803-8802
(626) 308-0532
(800) 537-3522
Fax (626) 308-2901
E-mail: admin@relac.org
website: www.relac.org

Board of Directors
President
Dave L. Muir
Vice President
Brian Berger
Secretary
Alice Prouty
Treasurer
Dyanne Nelson

Members
Donald Fandry
Evelyn Gutierrez
Judy Hammond
J. P. Harris
Linda C. Hopkins
Joseph Kelly
Epifanio Peinado
Victoria Pipkin-Lane
Les Robbins
Diane Sandoval

Editor: Judy Hammond
Copyright © 2021 by RELAC. This information presented in your RELAC Newsletter is believed to be from reliable sources. However, no responsibility is assumed by RELAC or the writers for inaccuracies in the articles as published.

Office Hours
9 a.m. - 4 p.m.
Monday - Thursday
Closed Friday,
Saturday, Sunday &
Public Holidays
Letters To The Editor
Write On!

To the RELAC Outreach Committee: I want to thank you for all the birthday cards that my mom received from you all. She was very proud working with you all. But my mom passed away August 23, 2020. She went very peacefully. My mom, may she rest in peace. Thank God for a wonderful mother that she was.

Albert Valadez (son of member Laurencia V. Valadez),
South Gate, California
(Ed. Note: RELAC’s Outreach Committee sends cards to our members who are 90 years and older in their birthday month.)

To Alice Prouty, Outreach Committee, thank you so much for the beautiful birthday card, much love.
Ida Wong, Grove, Oklahoma

To RELAC, thanks for developing the fundraising program. Enclosed are two checks for L.A. Regional Food Bank.
Patricia Caldwell Smith, Sylmar, California

I’m enjoying retirement, despite COVID-19, and staying safe. I’m happy that RELAC members are helping L.A. Food Bank. I worked with them when I was in DPSS and they do great work for the residents of L.A. County. Thank you and God bless L.A. County!

Sheryl L. Spiller, Los Angeles, California

To RELAC, Help, Hope, Heal, what a great idea for RELAC to support L.A. Food Bank! Keep up the good work.
Lawanda Allee, Pasadena, California

Thank you for sending the newsletter. The article on Fotine (Druilias O’Connor) looks great! I will forward it to our nursing staff that got together at the Olive Garden with her, as well as to CARES. I know they will all appreciate it.

Kathy Lohr, Sherman Oaks, California

Another great newsletter. Keep up the great work. Stay safe and may God bless you and your loved ones.

Carl Blum, Temple City, California

Thanks for the copy of the newsletter, and thanks for all you do with RELAC!
Marion Figueroa, Pasadena, California

It looks like Fesia Davenport’s name got listed under the wrong picture (in the November-December edition of newsletter). Love all the news.

Philip L. Browning, Rancho Palos Verdes, California

Thank you for another action-packed edition. The RELAC newsletter keeps getting better and better with your editorship!

Barry Hunt, Inglewood, California

Thank you for e-mailing these monthly newsletters to me. However, it has become harder for me to read each. Therefore, I am asking that they be mailed to me, if at all possible. The printed form would be of great benefit to me, if this can be arranged. Thank you so much!

Virginia J. Weaver, Susanville, California
(Ed. Note: Members have the choice of receiving the newsletter either by e-mail or mail, and may change that preference at any time.)

Thank you and all the staff who makes good things happen for all our members. This is the first time for being picked for a prize in all the years of being in RELAC. Thank you.

Charles Yakushiji, Los Angeles, California
(Ed. Note: Yakushiji received a See’s Candies gift certificate in RELAC’s virtual picnic drawing.)

Thank you for including my name in the RELAC picnic drawing. We will enjoy the See’s Candy. Sorry that I was not able to respond sooner. My wife and I are dealing with the loss of our son from a heart attack. God be with you.

John and Margaret Davis, Banning, California

March 1 is Deadline to Apply for RELAC’s Scholarships

The RELAC Board of Directors is proud to sponsor the third year of the RELAC Scholarship Awards Program, providing up to five $1,000 scholarships to members and their families.

The Scholarship Awards Program is an exclusive benefit program providing financial assistance to RELAC members, their children, stepchildren, grandchildren or step-grandchildren. Applicants may include outstanding high school seniors planning to attend college or an eligible educational institute.

The 2021 application form submittal dates are Jan. 1 through March 1. Application forms are available by contacting the RELAC office or visiting the RELAC website at relac.org. The 2020 five scholarship awardees are also showcased on the RELAC website. Take a moment and read about these great scholarship awardees, the universities they are attending and their career goals.

During these challenging times and physical distancing, we are proud to support and invest in students focused on their continued educational goals and future careers.

Golf Tournaments Cancelled Until Further Notice

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all RELAC golf tournaments will be cancelled until the Los Angeles County golf courses reopen for tournaments. Players who had registered and paid to participate in the La Mirada tournament last March will be credited for entry into the next tournament.
JOYCE HARRIS
I began my career with Los Angeles County as a student worker in the Sheriff’s Department in 1967. My first full-time position was in the County Clerk’s Office in 1969, followed by brief positions in the Internal Services Department and the Department of Public Works.

My last job with the County before my retirement in 2008 was as the public information officer for the Chief Executive Office, Office of Emergency Management (OEM). When I began work in OEM in 1988, my first assignment was to develop a program that would make it easier for people to prepare for disasters. The result was the development of the award-winning Emergency Survival Program (ESP). Information from that campaign is still in use today. I also assisted with county-wide disaster exercises, workshops, media relations, emergency public information matters, and other duties. I loved my job and really enjoyed working with the media, as well as helping people prepare for earthquakes, fires, floods, and other disasters.

Shortly after retiring, my husband, Leon, and I moved to Aberdeen, Scotland for approximately five years. Leon attended the University of Aberdeen, where he received his PhD as a doctor of philosophy divinity.

We thoroughly enjoyed our time living in Scotland. The country was beautiful and the people were amazing. While my husband pursued his second career goals at the university, I volunteered as a part-time office administrator at the Kings Community Church in Aberdeen. During our time in the United Kingdom, we were fortunate to travel to France, England, Germany, Amsterdam, Netherlands, and many cities in Scotland, including Edinburgh, Glasgow, St. Andrews, Dundee, Inverness, Perth, Livingston, Fort William and more. We also developed life-long friendships and were blessed with a Scottish goddaughter.

When we moved back to Los Angeles in 2013, I resumed my position as a member of the board of directors of the Nonprofit Communications and Media Network. This agency recently dissolved in late 2019. My husband was hired as a professor at Biola University in La Mirada, where he teaches theology to undergraduates. Several friends from Scotland have visited following our return home and we have returned to Scotland to visit on numerous occasions.

I am an associate of the Earthquake Country Alliance and attend emergency preparedness training workshops and seminars. I also continue to teach emergency preparedness as an emergency management consultant. I love to write poetry and am working on a book of poetry, along with another book.

My husband and I are active in our church. We love to travel and hope to continue to visit many states and countries. Needless to say, my retirement has been full of adventure, excitement, and many blessings.

CYNTHIA BANKS
Gratefulness characterizes my perspective of the world. As a result of opportunities L.A. County offered me, in retirement, my life is full of fun and purpose.

Beginning my career with the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) as a student worker in 1972, and then as an eligibility worker, I grew an appreciation for the impact L.A. County can have on the community, and also my fellow co-workers. I made many friends throughout the 46 years of working and can honestly say that was the best part of being an L.A. County employee.

From DPSS, I moved to the Superior Court for 23 years, first as a judicial assistant and leaving in 2003 as director of human resources. In my planning for the future, at that time, I thought I would work for Superior Court until my retirement, but that was not meant to be. The position of chief deputy of Community & Senior Services (CSS) became available and I was hired. Little did I know the changes that would occur so quickly! Within five months I was designated as acting department head and subsequently department head. I enjoyed the role immensely and am very proud of the team that worked alongside me as we grew the department and embraced quality performance. During my tenure I proudly served as president of Management Council for a number of years.

When I contemplated retiring from Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services (WDACS) -- the new name for CSS -- my plan was to live in Europe for several months and then move to North Carolina to begin consulting as an executive coach. I retired in January 2019. However, yet again, a change in plans occurred.

Although my husband, James, and I did begin our Europe stay in a week after retirement, we were only able to spend about two months there as I needed to return for rotator cuff surgery. (What a bummer!) While in recovery, I received an invitation to become the acting CEO for American Society on Aging (ASA), a national non-profit based in San Francisco. I took on the role and signed a contract that would get me back on track to do executive coaching in March of 2020. Also during my recuperation, I was asked to serve as a board member for the Archstone Foundation, a philanthropic non-profit which funds programs that promote well-being for older adults. I also created a limited liability company and have done executive recruitment and strategic planning for non-profits. Prior to March, I could be found in San Francisco about a week every month and Long Beach every quarter. Fast forward to November 2020. I am now working for ASA as chief of staff and chair the Finance and Investment Committee for the Archstone Foundation. All work is virtual now.

We did move to North Carolina in July 2019 and love it here. We are closer to our two grandchildren, who we get to see as often as we like as my daughter and son-in-law moved from Florida to North Carolina as well. Our son (who received his PhD in neuroscience in February) resides in Washington, D.C. and is only an hour flight away. Our plans to take two cruises and visit Tahiti this year were cancelled due to the pandemic. We do take short trips to places like Washington, D.C., Savannah and Memphis, and are enjoying all the differences North Carolina offers, such as viewing the fall colors. My new neighborhood also has a homeowners association and I am a member of its finance committee. We’ve also taken advantage of the many cultural events that are offered locally.

I know that I am where I belong! Grateful for each day! I thank God for the people I’ve met and opportunities and even the hard lessons I’ve learned while working for L.A. County.

Keeping Up With Retirees
We asked five RELAC members to let us know what they have been doing since retirement. Their articles follow.
ANTHONY T. HERNANDEZ
Born in East L.A. in 1950, my journey with the Los Angeles County Medical Examiner-Coroner (ME-C) started in 1972 shortly after returning from a combat tour of duty in Vietnam. Through the Comprehensive Employment Training Act (CETA), I got my foot in the door as an intermediate typist clerk in a four-man administrative operation under Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner Dr. Thomas T. No-guchi. Considering my life’s humble beginnings, $525 a month never looked so good to me! Thanks to four classes of typing in high school, I was able to master typing timecards on an ancient manual typewriter. Computerization wouldn’t become a reality until years later.Typing skills became very handy when a young new resident from New York first came into my office requesting a timecard: Dr. Lakshman Sathyavagiswaran. Little did I know the lifelong friendship and collaboration that would develop between us.

It didn’t take me long to recognize how critical the mission of the Coroner was to the community. Whether a movie star, government official, or regular citizen, knowing the reason why a person died had everlasting emotional and legal consequences, especially if they died suddenly or under suspicious circumstances. Quite often these investigations would be played out in the media under intense scrutiny. The public clamored for death determinations that were above reproach and professional in nature. These motivating forces helped me in forming the idea that the Coroner’s Office could be the best beyond reproach, and there were many other dedicated employees that shared this same vision.

Early on, there were seemingly insurmountable challenges, ranging from budget deficits to accreditation issues, which also had an impact on employee morale. Raising the Coroner’s level of service to where the public could have confidence in its final product would be the ultimate goal. In the meantime, I continued to maneuver through a series of administrative positions as they became available, building on experience and acquired knowledge.

I had an accumulation of thoughts and ideas as to how the office could excel, but I never actually thought that I would somehow be directly involved in implementing such changes. Catching another break, I landed a series of personnel positions, which were extremely rewarding because it allowed me to have a more serious role in producing positive outcomes for the Coroner. Other higher level administrative positions exposed me to the overall management and budgetary functions of the department, particularly understanding the budget preparation and the request-submission process. I was eventually given the opportunity to take charge of the Coroner’s Administrative Services Bureau.

In the early 1990s the Board of Supervisors elected to bifurcate the ME-C, renaming it the Department of Coroner. This ordinance split the department so that the top physician would continue to maintain the position title of chief medical examiner-coroner and retain control of all medical doctors and set the standards for the department. The remaining operational and administrative functions were placed under control of a non-medical director; thereby creating two department heads, each reporting to the Board of Supervisors. Ilona Lewis was appointed director. When she retired in 1993 I was given one of the most significant opportunities of my life: to be considered, and subsequently appointed, as interim director. In 1994 the permanent position was offered to me by the Board of Supervisors, which I gratefully accepted. I am forever indebted to all those who helped me in this endeavor.

What happened for the next 18 years was less about me and more about all of the individuals who sacrificed to create the best coroner’s office in the planet. Thanks to Dr. Lakshman (who was appointed chief medical examiner-coroner), the Coroner’s management team, my secretary (Esther Benquechea), dedicated Coroner employees, Board of Supervisors, CEO/CAO, County Counsel, Quality & Productivity Commission, L.A.C. Funeral Directors Association, etc., for they continued on p.12

KATHY HANKS
I joined the Audit Division of Auditor-Controller in February 1981 after completing a bachelor’s degree in business administration, with a major in accounting, from the University of Southern California. I performed operational, financial, and fraud audits; and contracting out feasibility studies for laundry and dietary services at the County hospitals. Pat McMahon gave me opportunities to work on special projects which enhanced my career growth.

I joined the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) in 1984 in a new centralized contracting division headed by Lynn Bayer. Working with departments to contract out County services in order to save money because Proposition 13 property tax cuts hit local governments hard, we provided guidance and approved solicitation documents, contracts, and Board letters. Little did I know that this experience would set my County career in contracting on its course.

The CAO disbanded the division in 1985 and I joined Treasurer and Tax Collector (TTC) to create a new contracting division to handle banking, finance, and collections contracts, as well as contracts to support the Public Administrator operations. I also developed contracting templates and standardized processes that I carried into my next position. When Mark Saladino became the TTC, he expanded my job to include legislative analysis and I drafted two state bills that were approved.

Joan Ouderkerk, my mentor at TTC, recruited me to head a new division in the Internal Services Department (ISD) in 2000 to handle ISD contracts and provide contracting support and consultation to the other County departments. In concert with County Counsel and the Department of Human Resources, my staff and I developed contract training classes through the County’s Learning Academy and California State University Northridge. These courses included a two-day introduction to contracting class, a 100-hour semester course, and subsequently a 24-hour contracting class. We also developed the County Contract Services Manual, County contracting website, and standard templates for all documents used in the contracting process. I also earned my lifetime certified purchasing manager designation from the Institute of Supply Management.

In 2008, Fred Leaf recruited me to the Department of Health Services (DHS) to revamp an ailing contracts and grants division. I implemented practices to standardize and streamline DHS services contracting and worked to establish DHS as a premier contracting organization. I am especially satisfied with the fast track contracting we pioneered to support the County’s homeless, diversion/re-entry and Whole Person Care programs. Thinking out of the box is my specialty, and sometimes you need to realize there is no box. At each point in my career, I was fortunate to have supportive bosses who let me be creative while accomplishing departmental goals. I retired in March 2019 from DHS.

I love to travel and, luckily, was able to do a significant amount of traveling in year one of retirement. Destinations included Kauai, San Francisco, Peru, KJAZZ Duero river cruise, Spain’s Basque country, Blue Note Caribbean jazz cruise, Puerto Rico, Denver, Santa Fe and four days of a 16-day Panama Canal cruise that stopped when COVID-19 shut down all cruises.

I remodeled my Los Angeles townhouse between travels. My time now is spent dreaming of travel, enjoying time with my adult children John and Christina, Zooming with friends, practicing yoga, walking, driveway dining with neighbors, volunteering at the Good Shepherd Shelter for women and children impacted by domestic violence, and treasurer duties for my homeowners association.

I worked with so many amazing people during my County career and keep in touch with quite a few. Looking forward to the after times so we can all get together again.
Keeping Up With Retirees

Three-Generation County Family

NICK CHICO

I began my employment with the County as a lifeguard at the Belvedere Park public swimming pool. It was the summer of 1972 before my freshman year at Cal State University Long Beach. I didn't realize at the time, I'd be retiring from the County some 40 years later.

I started a family with my wife, Tina, and first born, daughter Herlinda, in the summer of 1973. I was 19 and felt compelled to secure a job that would provide medical benefits and a career to take care of my young family. I asked my dad, Nick, who worked at the County Flood Control District, if there were any job openings, and I was soon hired for my second position with the County as a temporary recurrent laborer. I made permanent after nine months.

I learned to drive heavy construction trucks in the river beds we were maintaining. I took a test for medium truck driver and in 1977 was offered a position with the Department of Parks and Recreation delivering lawn maintenance equipment and supplies to various parks in the South Region. In 1978 I was offered a heavy truck driver position with the Purchasing and Stores Department, and drove a big box truck all over the county delivering food and supplies to other County department facilities.

In 1983 I was promoted to transportation supervisor, responsible for oversight of a fleet of delivery trucks, truck drivers, several warehouse workers and clerical staff. One of my accomplishments was establishing a third shift to accommodate the changing logistical requirements brought on by the Board-mandated Peak Traffic Program, which required all department delivery trucks to be idle during peak traffic hours.

In 1992 I was promoted to Internal Services Department (ISD) safety officer. My mission was to establish a comprehensive safety program to raise employee safety awareness, reduce work-related injuries and work time lost due to injuries. The program achieved positive results and the department received a Productivity and Quality award for the significant reduction in lost time due to accidents.

In 1994 I returned to the Materials Management Division to manage operations. I was given the unenviable task of phasing out the warehouse operation to make way for countywide just-in-time deliveries by contract vendors. After liquidating millions of dollars worth of product and relocating warehouse employees, the doors of the warehouse were locked for the last time in 1996. I was promoted to ISD procurement manager, where I established a credit card program for use by building craft personnel in the field. This eliminated the need to issue small-dollar post-authorized purchase orders.

In 2002 I managed ISD Mail Services, which included oversight of the County printing services contract with Pitney Bowes, then in 2003 I was promoted to section manager over Parking Services and moved into the Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration. I worked closely with the Chief Executive Office, Board of Supervisors staff, courts and Music Center Company, and managed the County Civic Center Parking Plan.

Thank God for Plan A. I decided to retire a year early in 2012 when my wife developed breast cancer and needed me to be her caregiver. She is an inspirational survivor involved in The Relay for Life and has remained cancer-free for nine years.

We have both enjoyed retirement and traveling. A lot of trips to Las Vegas and beachfront resorts as well as weekend trips to Oakland to attend Raider home games. We are looking forward to attending games in the new Las Vegas Allegiant Stadium with our season tickets when it is safe.

I reconnected with grade school friends and we play cards every Friday, except, of course, during the COVID-19 new normal.

It was surreal the first time my dad and I played golf together as County retirees. Two generations with 76 years of service between us. (Sadly, he died the year after my retirement.) And now I’m proud to add a third generation of County service with my daughter, Herlinda, who is a field deputy for Supervisor Janice Hahn.

Retirement has been great, but no more sleeping in. I get to attend virtual kindergarten every morning with my 5-year-old grandson, Asher (one of my son Andre’s five children). I remember naps, cracker and recess. Now it’s math, writing and reading via iPad.

A special thanks to my mentor, Carolyn Morgan, who recognized my abilities and set the standard that guided me to a successful and fulfilling County career.

RELAC Member Gloria Gray

Richard D. Gray has been reelected chair of the Board of Directors of the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California (MWD), beginning a new two-year term Jan. 1, 2021. The County Department of Health Services retiree, who was a health care administrator, is the first African American to lead the board and only the second woman to do so in the district’s 92-year history.

Gray has represented West Basin Municipal Water District on Metropolitan’s board since 2009 and was first elected by her colleagues as chairwoman in October 2018.

MWD is a state-established cooperative that, along with its 26 cities and retail suppliers, provides water for 19 million people in six counties. The district imports water from the Colorado River and Northern California to supplement local supplies, and helps its members to develop increased water conservation, recycling, storage and other resource-management programs. It is the largest supplier of treated water in the United States.

Gray will head MWD’s 38-member board as it selects a replacement for longtime general manager Jeffrey Kightlinger, who is retiring, and faces critical decisions on the agency’s rate structure, long-term water strategy, and investment priorities, including whether to advance a major regional recycled water program and to continue supporting a conveyance tunnel in the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta to improve supply reliability.

As chair, Gray represents district policies and programs at national, state and local levels and presides over monthly meetings of the board and its executive committee. She also appoints all members of the district’s nine standing committees, as well as the leaders of any special committees or task forces.

Gray has been a RELAC member since June 2002.
The County website created for restaurants hurt by the pandemic to apply for $30,000 grants crashed within the hour after going live due to thousands of people trying to use the site. The County allocated $5.6 million for the “Keep L.A. County Dining” grants.

The Department of Health Services is offering free at-home testing through Jan. 15 for those who have had close contact with someone who has or is suspected of having COVID-19 within the past two weeks, have symptoms of COVID-19, or are senior or disabled and feel they were exposed to COVID-19 but are unable to go to a testing center. Information is available at https://covid19.lacounty.gov/testing/.

For the first time the boundaries of the supervisioral districts will be drawn by residents instead of the supervisors themselves, as a result of new state legislation. The first eight members of the L.A. County Citizens Redistricting Commission were selected via a random drawing that was live-streamed on Facebook for the public to witness in real-time. They were to select six more members by the end of December and will spend the next year designing the districts.

The Board of Supervisors approved $14 million to settle a civil rights class action lawsuit alleging over-detentions due to the Sheriff Department’s former policy and practice of detaining inmates beyond the expiration of their sentences because of immigration detainers. Among other settlements: $1.5 million to a man who alleged he was unlawfully convicted by the District Attorney’s Office and spent 32 years in prison, and $450,000 to a woman allegedly assaulted by her deputy district attorney at a Lancaster courthouse five years ago.

The Redondo Beach Outdoor Homeless Court is the first of its kind in the County. Public defenders and city attorneys meet monthly in the police department parking lot to help homeless individuals resolve nonviolent and misdemeanor charges and connect them with treatment and services they need. Afterwards everyone has lunch at a nearby church.

Supervisors asked a transition team be established and $75 million earmarked in the upcoming budget to transfer youth out of the Probation Department into a new Department of Youth Development by 2025 to provide a rehabilitative “care first” model of juvenile justice because the current punitive system isn’t working.

It became national news when protesters demonstrated outside Supervisor Sheila Kuehl’s home after she dined out at a Santa Monica restaurant hours after voting to uphold a County ban on outdoor dining, which was to go into effect the following day. Protesters also demonstrated outside the home of Public Health Director Barbara Ferrer. Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Janice Hahn tried unsuccessfully to convince supervisors to overturn the outdoor dining ban imposed by the Department of Public Health. Several L.A. County cities were so angry they said they might form their own health departments.

County Fire Capt. Tony Imbrenda filed a retaliation suit against the County, saying he was demoted for refusing to turn over his personal cellphone in regards to an investigation into graphic photos taken at the helicopter crash that took the lives of Kobe Bryant and eight others. Imbrenda, who was the public information officer at the crash scene, said he felt the order was a violation of his rights.

The November election, unlike the primary, went smoothly, with 80 percent of the 4.2 million voters submitting their ballots by mail. The County plans to continue mailing ballots to all voters in future elections, while giving them the option of voting in person.

The City of La Verne is in negotiations to have the County take over its fire department. If the decision is made to contract for services, the transition is expected by end of 2021 or early 2022.

The federal judge overseeing a lawsuit dealing with the homeless crisis said the slow pace of the County and the City of Los Angeles in moving indigents into housing was “disgraceful,” particularly in light of the coronavirus threat and increase in deaths in the street.

A&M Records co-founder Jerry Moss and his wife, Tina, gave a $25 million gift to the Music Center, the largest gift earmarked for programming in Music Center history.

Detroit Pistons owner Tom Gores, under fire over his investment firm’s ownership of a prison telephone company said to charge prisoners exorbitant rates for calls, resigned from the board of the County Museum of Art, where he had been a trustee since 2006.

Due to the pandemic, the annual public ceremony organized by the Department of Health Services to remember and honor the unclaimed dead, was held virtually this year, but streamed. More than 1,500 indigent/unclaimed bodies were buried in a single mass grave.

The County is creating the nation’s first Public Health Councils program, which will train employees to help monitor the safety of their workplace to improve adherence to health guidelines to stem the spread of COVID-19.

The Fire Department has accepted two trained peer support dogs to support firefighters who are dealing with post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety, and other behavior health conditions. Both dogs have already provided companionship and emotional support to first responders at the Bobcat Fire.

Sheriff Alex Villanueva authorized his deputies to cover their name tags at protests and other civil disturbances, saying some deputies had been harassed and had home addresses revealed by protesters.

And in other Sheriff Department news:

The Board of Supervisors on a 3-2 vote adopted a motion to explore ways that the Board could remove Sheriff Alex Villanueva. Supervisors Kathryn Barger and Janice Hahn said that though they have serious concerns, they feel the voters are the ones to decide whether he should remain.

The Civilian Oversight Commission, a watchdog appointed by the Board of Supervisors, voted unanimously (8-0) to call for the resignation of Villanueva, expressing no confidence in his leadership and condemning his failure to cooperate with civilian oversight.

At the request of the Board of Supervisors, the Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner held its first inquest in 30 years, investigating the death of 18-year-old Andres Guarado, who was shot five times in the back by sheriff’s deputies. Four sheriff’s officials refused to testify, invoking the Fifth Amendment rights against self-incrimination.

The Sheriff’s Department, upset that Chief Medical Examiner-Coroner Dr. Jonathan Lucas publically released the autopsy of Guarado, went to court to try to block his department from releasing an autopsy in another case in which deputies shot and killed a man who was running when shot. The court initially agreed, and then changed its mind.
**Cyber-Security: What is two-factor authentication, and should you use it?**

*by Joseph Kelly, RELAC Director*

We all use passwords and personal identification numbers (PINs) every day: from getting money from the ATM or using a debit card in a store, to logging in to e-mail or into an online retailer. Passwords are a mechanism to verify that those requesting access are the people they claim to be. As such, passwords serve to authenticate (or verify) the user. Use of a password alone to verify a user is referred to as one-factor authentication. Two-factor authentication is a validation of a person requesting access by using a second method of verification in addition to the password. As such, two-factor authentication strengthens access security. Typically, when you enroll in two-factor authentication with your bank or e-mail service provider, you request that, in addition to inputting your password for access, you input a code that the bank sends to your mobile device or that you obtain from an authentication app. The enrollment instructions are fairly easy to follow, and customer service staff are available to assist you when necessary.

Should you use two-factor authentication? Most, if not all, cyber security professionals would say yes. Use of a password alone to authenticate a user no longer provides the security it once did due to several factors, including data breaches and repetitive use of the same password for different applications. Think about it this way. How do you secure your personal residence? Well, most of us probably lock the windows and doors before we leave our homes. We might have security gates, security mirrors and motion sensor lights around the house. We install alarm systems with security cameras. We build walls and high hedges around the property lines, and about half of us probably have a WARNING: MEAN DOG ON PREMISE sign, even though we haven’t owned a dog in years. On average, there are probably six to eight deterrents that we establish to keep unwanted folks out of our homes. Yet, to keep unwanted fraudsters out of our bank accounts, most rely on a single password, of at least eight characters, one of which one must be an uppercase letter, one a number and one a special character. That password alone is the equivalent of locking your windows in your home. Think of two-factor authentication as allowing you to alarm the place as well.

I use two-factor authentication on every online service that provides it, including social media. I know it works as intended because during the Super Bowl earlier this year, I was at an event when my bank sent an access code to my mobile phone. However, I had not attempted to access my bank account. Because I was set up for two-factor authentication, I knew it had to be a fraudster attempting to access my account. Then the bank sent a second code and then a third code. For the bank to send me an access code, the fraudster knew my username and my password in the bank’s online system. I returned home to contact the bank, and while on the phone with the bank, I received a text message supposedly from the bank informing me to click on a link to “resolve your account access issues.” The bank agent with whom I was speaking informed me that the bank did not send that text, the fraudster likely did. If I had clicked on it, the link would have unleashed malware into my mobile phone that would have headed straight for a password manager. So, to recap: a fraudster attempted to gain access to my online bank account and the fraudster knew my username, my password and my mobile number. What is the one thing the fraudster didn’t have that he or she needed to gain access? The one thing was the two-factor authentication code that the bank sent to my mobile phone, which was with me.

Working with my bank, I implemented recommended actions to secure my accounts. These included maintaining two-factor authentication on my accounts. For more information, you can visit your bank or e-mail provider’s websites or the Department of Homeland Security at dhs.gov/topic/cybersecurity.

**County Video Features RELAC Member Ted Lumpkin, Jr.**

RELAC member Theodore “Ted” Lumpkin, Jr., born Dec. 30, 1919, was one of the veterans featured in “Unsung Heroes from the Greatest Generation” documentary film produced by the County Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, which aired on the County Channel in November and December 2020. Tuskegee Airman Lumpkin spoke about the brave flying missions of the Tuskegee, the first black military aviators in the U.S. Army Air Corps, a precursor of the U.S. Air Force.

During World War II, Lumpkin, a second lieutenant, served as an intelligence officer in Italy as part of the Tuskegee Airmen. This 99th Pursuit Squadron of more than 14,000 – composed of black and white instructors, black trainee fighter pilots, navigators, armorers, bombardiers and male and female support staff – was established in Tuskegee, Alabama, on orders from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt, who was pressured to create the unit to address criticism that African Americans lacked the skills to become fighter pilots or support staff, such as co-pilots, navigators or airplane mechanics.

In 1947, at the conclusion of his military career, Lumpkin earned a bachelor of arts degree in sociology at the University of Southern California and began working for Los Angeles County. Over a 32-year career, he worked for Regional Planning, the Bureau of Public Assistance, the Bureau of Adoptions, Probation and the Department of Community Development. He has been a RELAC member since retiring in 1979.

In 2019 Lumpkin received the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Tuskegee Airmen Scholarship Foundation, a group that was founded in 1978 to provide charitable services and educational scholarships to deserving students to honor deceased and living members of the Tuskegee Airmen.

**Hernandez continued from p 9**

truly were the ones that gave everything toward the development of a world-class coroner’s office.

I’ve been engaged in a number of activities since I retired March 31, 2012. I’ve been a musician most of my life, play piano, guitar and do a little singing. I play with a number of professional groups, albeit that has temporarily ceased with COVID. Like many other musicians, I hope to return to the stage soon after this pandemic is under control.

I continue to live with my family in the El Sereno area, which is only a few blocks from the RELAC office, lol! This location served me well during my tenure with the Coroner because I was only 10 minutes from the office, located on the LAC+USC Medical Center campus. It was also great for my musical ventures, which could branch out to a number of different locales. Up until recently, I used to walk several miles a day, but a heel injury has diverted me back to my road bike after 25 years, and I recently purchased an indoor exercise bike to avoid the winter weather. I also enjoy cooking and fixing things.

Since my childhood I have practiced my Catholic faith, which I believe has given me peace, happiness, and helped me through some of the most difficult times of my life.
DEATHS: RELAC member Keith Comrie, 81, former head of the County Department of Public Social Services and longest-serving chief administrative officer for the City of Los Angeles. Sandor “Sandy” Winger, 78, who retired in 2006 as executive officer of the Los Angeles County Local Formation Commission. Vincent Okamoto, 76, a deputy district attorney for five years, Superior Court judge, Gardena councilman, founder of the Japanese American Bar Association, and member of the County Veterans Commission who received the Distinguished Service Cross for extraordinary heroism in Vietnam; from sudden cardiac failure. Gayle Roski, 79, member of the Los Angeles County Arts Commission. Joyce Washington, who retired in 2018 as an assistant director in the administrative branch of the County Workforce Development, Aging and Community Services Department after a 46-year career that also included the District Attorney’s Office and the Department of Public Social Services. Mario Lopez, 83, one of the County Fire Department’s first paramedics, who retired as a captain after more than 40 years of service. Dr. Eugene Osher, 88, former member of the County Emergency Medical Services Commission, chair of the Emergency Medical Services Commission of the 1984 L.A. Olympics and chief medical officer of the 1994 World Cup Games in Los Angeles. Judge Dennis Aichroth, 75, appointed in 1995 to Citrus Court in West Covina, where he presided over the same courtroom he had served as bailiff while working as a deputy during law school, retiring in 2011; after long battle with cancer. Sally Grant Disco, 82, a Los Angeles Municipal and Superior Court judge between 1980 and 1992, who served as executive director of the County Counsels Association before retiring in 1997. Dr. Samuel Loring Biggers Jr., 84, one of the first black neurosurgeons in Los Angeles, who was in private practice for 40 years while serving as vice chairman of the Neuroscience Department at King-Drew Medical Center. Dr. William Hayling, 94, chief of ambulatory obstetrics and gynecology at King-Drew Medical Center, serving 17 years before retiring in 1998 and going into private practice. Susan Warschaw Robertson, 79, longtime member of the Blue Ribbon Society of the Music Center, from complications of ovarian cancer. John Francis Gilligan, 64, a former county deputy district attorney who prosecuted his office’s only successful case against a police officer in an unlawful on-duty shooting in the past 18 years, serving 29 years before finishing his career as supervising attorney in the County’s Inspector General’s Office; following lengthy battle with metastatic melanoma.

APPOINTMENTS: Rodrigo Castro-Silva named acting county counsel, at $366,198 salary, to replace Mary Wickham, who resigned to become a Superior Court commissioner. Castro-Silva, chief deputy of the County Counsel’s Office, has been with the office for six years and was previously a federal prosecutor for the U.S. Attorney’s Office.

Molly Rysman, housing and homelessness deputy to Supervisor Sheila Kuehl for past six years, named the program officer for the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. Rachel Simon promoted to replace Rysman.

COURTS: David Adams, 62, faces a Jan. 11 preliminary hearing after pleading not guilty to misappropriating and embezzling county funds. He is accused of using his position as chief stationary engineer in the Internal Services Department to buy more than $7,000 of radio equipment and motorhome parts with county funds between August 2016 and April 2017. Daniel Everts, 25, pleaded not guilty to charges that he sexually assaulted a woman in a jail cell in 2019 while he was a sheriff’s custody assistant at the Lancaster station. Carlos Antonio De Bourbon Montenegro, 53, aka Mark Anthony Gonsalves, and Marcos Raul Arevalowere, 34, were charged in a 41-count criminal complaint for allegedly submitting more than 8,000 fraudulent voter registration applications on behalf of homeless people between July and October 2020. Sheriff’s Deputy Miguel Cabrera, 38, arrested in a 2019 undercover sting, has pleaded not guilty to arranging to meet a teenage girl for sex and distributing pornography to a minor.

HONORS: The Board of Supervisors named two facilities in honor of outgoing Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomson: the pedestrian bridge on the Park to Playa Trail, a 13-mile multi-purpose trail that connects the Baldwin Hills Parklands to the Pacific Ocean, and the entrance plaza at the new Natural History Museum “Commons Project,” a 75,000-square-foot replacement-renovation building project on the southwest corner of the museum that will provide science, education and community programs free to the public.

ELECTIONS: George Gascon, 66, is the new district attorney, defeating two-term incumbent Jackie Lacey. Termed-out Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas won election to the 10th District seat on the Los Angeles City Council, where he last served 18 years ago. State Sen. Holly Mitchell beat out Los Angeles City Councilman Herb Wesson, former chief deputy to Supervisor Yvonne Brathwaite-Burke, to replace Ridley-Thomas, resulting in the first all-female Board of Supervisors. Former Supervisor Brathwaite-Burke aide David Ryu, 45, elected to the Los Angeles City Council in 2015, lost his re-election bid, the first council member in 17 years to be unseated by an opponent.

RELOCATIONS: RELAC member Patty Paul, former Health Department administrator and chief deputy in Coroner’s Office, sold her Studio City home and moved to Columbia, South Carolina to be closer to relatives.

FOR THE RECORD:
The photos of acting County Chief Executive Officer Fesia Davenport and the late Dr. Nancy Warner, the first woman chair at the USC School of Medicine, were inadvertently switched on the Passages page in the November/December 2020 edition. Mary Wickham was also incorrectly identified as the County’s first woman county counsel. In fact, she was the second; Andrea Sheridan Ordin served as county counsel from 2010 to 2012. We apologize for the errors.
Former DPSS Director Comrie, 81, Dies
by Judy Hammond, Newsletter Editor

Keith Comrie, former head of the County Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) and Los Angeles City’s longest-serving chief administrative officer, has died at age 81.

Comrie died Nov. 6. He leaves his wife, Sandy, and two daughters, Shannon and Colleen. He had weakened after experiencing complications from a back surgery, but the cause of death was not announced.

Long-time friend and former boss Harry Hufford, who as chief administrative officer recruited Comrie to work for the County, called him “brash, bright, and quick-witted. He had a boundless sense of humor and terrific people skills. His weakness was his drive; it was there always.”

Former County Supervisor Zev Yaroslovsky, who served on the L.A. City Council during Comrie’s 19-year tenure as CAO, called him “the pantheon of public servants with whom I have had the privilege to work with and learn from. A man of impeccable intelligence and integrity...and a friend I valued.”

RELAC member Tom Hibbard, former chief deputy to former County Supervisor Pete Schabarum, said Comrie “was delightful to work with, a real professional, a terrific county department head. I always hoped he might agree to become the county’s chief administrative officer.”

“I expected that he would have replaced me in the County had he stayed,” said Hufford, who maintained a 55-year friendship with Comrie and was his best man at his 1989 wedding to Sandy.

In a 2017 profile in RELAC’s newsletter, Comrie, a RELAC member, said he felt the most significant accomplishment when he was with DPSS was reducing the cost of fraud and mistakes in welfare grants from a nationwide average of 15-30% down to 2% -- saving hundreds of millions of dollars and thereby refocusing the welfare reform debate.

“The outstanding staff at DPSS changed welfare reform debate on a nationwide basis to a more positive approach and we simultaneously received praise from Republican President Ronald Reagan and the Democratic National Committee. I believe this was a very significant accomplishment in a highly partisan area that showed that solid management could make a significant contribution to policy,” he said.

When Comrie retired in 1999, he became a consultant and held various board positions. He said the most satisfying role was chairing the board that was charged with rebuilding the earthquake-damaged Exposition Park 1932 Olympics Swim Stadium complex. What was particularly satisfying about the project, he said, was that this was his recreation center for his first 10 years in Los Angeles, starting in 1941.

“It was a true pleasure rebuilding a lost facility that now has tens of thousands of young people using it.”

His board service included United Way of Los Angeles and the USC School of Public Administration. Awards included “best CAO” from City and State Magazine, Alumni Award of Merit from USC, plus many others. His education included a bachelor of art degree in accounting and masters of public administration from USC.

About 11 years ago, after almost 50 years of administrative work, Comrie decided to leave most of his consulting and board work and do something totally different -- painting. He and his wife moved full time from downtown Los Angeles to Rancho Mirage, and had a painting studio attached to their condo. “I started painting in the style of artists I like but could never afford to purchase, and I have attempted more than 20 different styles,” he said in the 2017 profile. “Some of my paintings, of course, were total failures, but that’s part of the learning process.”

Reflections:

Ed. Note: RELAC member Tom Hibbard, former chief deputy to Supervisor Pete Schabarum, lost his wife of 58 years, June, in August 2020. She experienced a serious setback 10 months earlier in a chronic lung condition she suffered since 1990. After being hospitalized for several months, she was released and returned home after unsuccessful efforts in finding a facility that could offer the intensive care she needed.

Losing a Spouse

Thank you for announcing June’s death. That is very kind of you. I have told few of the County staff I had contact with about her passing. It is simply too difficult to talk about, except with best friends. June and I were married 58 years. Actually, 58 wonderful years and eight months. Unfortunately, those last months, as June’s life ebbed away, were difficult to endure. June told me twice she felt as if her body was leaving her.

I am only now beginning to feel like a living human being. I simply have a large part of my life gone. I have trouble getting enough sleep and I am not highly motivated to do things that need to get done. I am beginning to work on getting my financial affairs back in order, but I am consciously avoiding making major financial decisions. It is too easy to make mistakes. The stock market really hit me hard, but has gotten better. I want to increase my estate for our daughter’s future needs. Other than fixing up our home, I have few needs. And I am not ready psychologically to tackle that anyway right now. I guess I am depressed, but I keep moving forward when ready. I enjoy sitting on the patio in the sun and that feels good.

Dr. James Haughton Dead at Age 95

A virtual memorial service was held Dec.13 for Dr. James Haughton, 95, who served as medical director of the County Department of Health Services (DHS) for eight years until his retirement in 2004 at age 78.

Haughton, executive medical director of New York City Health Department and the first deputy commissioner of hospitals in the New York City Department of Hospitals, came to L.A. in 1980 to run Charles R. Drew Postgraduate Medical School. He left in 1983 to head the Houston, Texas, health department, returned to L.A. in 1987 to become chief of staff at King-Drew Medical Center, became health policy advisor to DHS in 1993 and its medical director in 1996.
This list includes retired employees, both RELAC members and non-members.

Agricultural Comm./Wts & Meas. - William A. Edwards
Alcohol/Drug Pgms. Admin. - Kristine Henderson
Ambulatory Care Network - Vasant Patel
Auditor-Controller - Elizabeth Bowen
Beverly Hills Municipal Court - Marjorie M. Christensen
Board of Supervisors - Renee L. Quinn
California Children's Services - Charlotte Aseltine, Helen L. Stewart
Chief Information Office - Corinne T. Johnson
Child Support Services - Manoush Keshishian, Irma Montoya, Margaret J. Rhue, Gloria Silva
Correctional Health - Joseph Kazek, Jesus Dennis M. Maniago
County Counsel - Frances I. Boyle, Ruth Rockwell
District Attorney - Marion F. Arnezca, Katherine Beyer, Peter R. Bregman, Lucy Genian, Robert J. Gomez Jr., Margaret Jane Kwaauka, Edward W. Saxton
Engineer Facilities - Crael Champion, William N. Makshonoff, Theodore A. Roberts
Flood Control District - Richard E. Garrison
Health Plan Administration - Althea Jackson
Internal Services - Fred D. Adams, John S. Bederio, Anthony Blake, Harold E. Boswell, Feliciano Gomez, Connie Harris, Kyusu Jo, Benjamín T. Lara, Patricia P. Laxa, Rosemary Lui, Carl E. Martin, Carolyn E. Mc Dow, Ruthie Lee Norman, Thomas Parra, Reuben O. Primavera, Domingo Ramos, Adrienne L. Smith, Linda Jean Van Myers, Tom Wehling, Michael L. Woodard
Kings-Drew Medical Center - Omar E. Espinoso, William H. Hayling, Richard D. Haynes, George Huff Jr., Jared L. Hughes, Reginald Roberts, Dorothy L. Ross, Dorothy Stewart, Clementina A. Wareham
L.A. Municipal Court Reporters - Arthur B. Radon
LACERA - Janine D. Baloga, Thomas C. Sanders
Local Agency Formation Comm. - Sandor Lee Winger
Mechanical - James A. Costea
Mental Health - Nancy A. McCarthy, Theresa E. Nwosu, Monagayle Sparks, Carolyn A. West
Olive View/UCLA Medical Center - Barbara Alexander, Judith Lee Banta, Abigail Dara Basse, Dale E. Clark, Ronald B. Lamb, Filomena A. Sapinosa, Edger K. Singh
Parks and Recreation - James E. Elders, Angel Gonzalez, Albert Lopez, Martin L. Markham
Public Health Program - Gladys Bonilla, Guadalupe Castruita, B. C. Clark, Viet T. Ha, Carmen Martinez, Heman Meyersdierks, Vivian J. Parks
Public Library - Elaine M. Fukushima, Anis R. Nakha, Patricia L. Shaw, Shirley Si-Fon Shen
Rancho Los Amigos Hospital - Evelyn L. Bickerstaff, Mirko Cavka, Jane Hampton, Shahrouz Homayounpour, F. Jewell Langner, Alice Facelo Leuterio, Robert R. Miller, Margaret Minti Mos, Ernest Rosencares
Reg.-Recorder/County Clerk - Margaret P. Haywood, Gerald L. Jerome, Matilda E. Ramirez, Ernesto Solida, Kieunghoa Y. Vo
So. Cal. Air Pollution Control - William B. Krenz
South Bay Municipal Court - Wanda H. Tringham
Treasurer/Tax Collector - Maxine Greenfield, Raymond G. Hocking, Lillian G. Teruel
Whittier Municipal Court - Lois E. Palmer
Women's Hospital - Virginia Adkins, Marjorie Robinson
Unidentified County Agency - Idah M. Buckner, Muriel N. Statcopule, Orville B. Stoltz
IMPORTANT!

Are you moving? Did you change your name, address or e-mail address?

Cut out the address portion of this newsletter, correct it and mail to:
RELAC
1000 S. Fremont Ave., Unit 15 Alhambra, CA 91803-8802 or
Phone:
(800) 537-3522
(626) 308-0532
Fax: (626) 308-2901
E-mail: admin@relac.org
website: www.relac.org

Note: It is important that you mail this to RELAC or contact RELAC by phone as we DO NOT receive your address change from LACERA.

RELAC Congratulates Newly Elected
County Supervisor Holly Mitchell
District Attorney George Gascon

And Thanks for Their Dedicated Service
County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas
District Attorney Jackie Lacey

Like Us on Facebook

RELAC FACEBOOK PAGE: Did you know that RELAC had a Facebook page? Well we do, and we would love to have our members visit our page. We are working to provide posts of interest as they happen.

Find us on Facebook at https://www.facebook.com/RetiredEmployeesofLosAngelesCounty, and be sure to LIKE our page and get notifications whenever we post.

Like Us on Facebook

RETIRED EMPLOYEES
of LOS ANGELES COUNTY
1000 South Fremont Ave. Unit 15
Alhambra, CA 91803-8802

Return Service Requested