

“Keeping in Touch”

Quarterly Newsletter by/for Idaho Dept. of Fish & Game
Retirees/Families & Interested Former Employees
July 2008, Vol. 4, No. 3

Dates to Remember:

Retiree Luncheon Schedule

Golden Corral on Emerald in Boise, 11:30 a.m.
September 11, November 13, 2008

Mark Your Calendars!

Write or Send News Items to:

IDF&G Retirees
PMB 401
3313 W. Cherry Lane
Meridian, ID 83642

or E-mail: fisherjj@interplus.net

**All donations should be sent
to the above address.**

IDFG Retiree Committee

Ralph Pehrson, tiffy@aol.com
Jack Fisher, jfish@msn.com
Joe Greenley, josgreenley@aol.com
Bill Goodnight, idaholc@aol.com

Corinne Barlow, rogcor22@cableone.net
Judy Fisher, fisherjj@interplususa.net
Jo Toomey, jset1932@hotmail.com

Thank You!

To **Mel Branch** for his recent donation to help keep the Newsletter going. It is much appreciated.

New Retirees!!!

We are happy to welcome the following to the esteemed group of Fish and Game retirees:

Carl Anderson, Regional Wildlife Manager, Southeast Region, effective June 30, 2008, after 30 years of service; **Kevin Ware**, Senior IT programmer Analyst, IT Section, Boise HQ, effective July 25, 2008, after 12 years of service; and **Tracey Trent**, Chief of Natural Resources Policy Bureau effective June 28, 2008, after 35 years of service.

IPEA Needs Your Help!!

I received some extensive information from **Dale Tankersley** regarding the 2008 legislative session and the Governor's office request to throw Medicare eligible retirees off the State plan, letting retirees secure other insurance coverage. Idaho Public Employees' Association (IPEA) is asking for your support by joining the association (not a labor union) for just \$4.25

per month for PERSI deductions or payment to IPEA Headquarters for \$25.50 semi annually or \$51.00 annually.

*(Since the information is so extensive and we cannot include the IPEA application in this newsletter, we suggest that you contact IPEA direct at 336-2841 or 1-800-632-6679; or e-mail: ipeassociation@qwest.net; or Dale Tankersley at 938-1455. Dale's letter about IPEA and the last legislative session will appear on page 9 of this newsletter. **Title: 2008 Legislation RE: Retirees' Insurance Plan.**)*

SOS from Gary Gadwa

As Executive Director (volunteer) of the Sawtooth Interpretive and Historical Association here in Stanley and Retired Conservation Officer, I would like to ask if any Retirees have any photos or stories of early life of IDFG here in Stanley as a C.O. or even Wildlife or Fish stocking history. We are doing a Historic Walking Tour Guide of Stanley and Lower Stanley and the historic Stanley Fish and Game Cabin in Lower Stanley (now in private ownership) will be included in the Walking Tour Guide; we also would very much like to do a display in the

Stanley Ranger Station Museum depicting and interpreting early Fish and Game activities and “Life” here in the coldest spot in the lower 48 states.

Any folks with stories or photos they are willing to share, please contact Gary at: ggadwa@ruralnetwork.net.

He's Back . . . !!!

Royce Williams has finally landed back in Idaho! He missed us!! Royce says: “Got here about three weeks ago (the end of May), but have been too busy unpacking, getting rid of furniture and buying replacement stuff (used). Took some time to recover from 1,800 miles in a U-haul (gas bill was nearly \$750!). Bush's rebate didn't quite cover the gas bill, but I'm sure he'll take credit for it! And I'm going to be working part-time for Idaho Public Television (IPTV) I have an apartment at 2018 North 8th, Apt. C, Boise, 83702. Phone is 344-0230. E-mail: royce.williams@q.com.”

(Welcome Back, Royce!!!)

It Pays to Stay in Shape!

Bill Platts set a new National Record in the Masters Javelin at the recent USA Track and Field Snake River Championships at Northwest Nazarene University. Bill threw 12 feet over the present National Javelin Record, but less than 2.5 feet than the present World Record. Bill's goal is to break the World Record at the coming USA Nationals in August or the World Games in October. *(Wow, Bill! Congratulations again!)*

News from Georgia

Received a “l-o-n-g” hilarious letter from **Frank NeSmith** last month. Seems he thinks I've been hobnobbing with “a certain politician” from Idaho. HAH! It wasn't me, Buddy!! *(I can't put all of the letter in this issue but will include it on the website under Frank's columns. I apologize for being so slow to get your columns up on the website, Frank, but the older I get the slower, or is it lazier, I get! The website address is: <http://fishandgame.idaho.gov/retiree/>.)*

Anyway, here is an update on Frank's trip to New Zealand: “When I finished up my documentary and research for the Animal Planet on the Great Barracuda's wintering habits on the lower Great Barrier Reef, they sent me to New Zealand to visit my good friends who were with us in Boise in September 1996. That was when Ian took a paid sabbatical and worked with our officers while Jo *(must be Ian's wife?)* Lived with Judy and me. It was so great on the beautiful South Island. Ian took me down to the highly secretive and restricted ice caves of the prehistoric giant birds of the Pleistocene. Seeing those well preserved huge skeletons and skulls with huge beaks makes me thoroughly believe in the theory that T-Rex really did evolve into birds.

“Ian also told me that there was another retired Idaho Fish and Gamer on the North Island last fall that he heard about from the northern game wardens. They said he wasn't much of a fisherman though, he had to helicopter into the rivers and never caught much of anything of any size. They said he used some kind of little fly pole they had never heard of and that had he tied into a lunger it would have come apart in his hands. They said he was about average for most fishermen who came down from Idaho, though. *(Idaho fishermen might take exception to this, Frank!)*

“Ian and I caught several big browns on huge dry flies in the upper river that went into the thirty pound category. We tagged and released them for their studies. While we were boat fishing on one of Ian's under-fished lakes, though, we boated several rainbows above 20 pounds and kept them for a rural community barbecue that Ian put on in honor of my visit. Those Kiwis know how to make a mate feel welcome, leather hat and all. It was a grand time and maybe some day I'll go back. But Ian's retiring and it's taken me a while to rest up from it all and I missed my life's mate for three months, who wasn't up to the strains of the trip, so maybe not.” *(I didn't dare put the rest of the story in this newsletter! Of course, if you know Frank, you know what I mean!)*

Retiree News Updates

My last plea for news really netted lots of replies. I really wasn't that desperate but I just wanted all of you to realize that everything you are doing, etc., is really NEWS to the rest of us. Most everything is of interest to us so keep it coming. Thanks so much!)

Many of you are keeping busy and really not "retired." **Jack McNeel** sure isn't sitting back and taking it easy: "I'm really keeping on the go with freelance writing. During the past two years (06 and 07) I wrote and sold a total of 175 articles to magazines and newspapers. Recently, it seems like we've been continually on the go and that looks to continue into the fall months. I flew to Billings, then took a rental to Miles City to cover the Miles City Bucking Horse Sale for an airline magazine. Home a few days and then Jackie and I left for Alberta on another fact and photo trip. Spent 11 days there and visited such places as Waterton (first time back since I was there in the '60s with IDFG collecting Mysis shrimp for transplant in Idaho), Calgary, Banff, Icefields Highway, Rocky Mountain House, Drumheller, Red Deer, etc. Saw lots of really spectacular scenery, dinosaur digs and museums, etc., took tons of photos and have been getting about one story a day written and off since we returned.

"I'm leaving for Oklahoma City on the 23rd of June for a travel writers conference. It will be my first trip to Oklahoma since I got my M.S. from Oklahoma State many years ago. I've been to New Mexico literally dozens of times since but never seem to get farther east. Then home three days and we're off to Wyoming to cover some rodeos and other events for other publications. Going down via Jackson and home via Yellowstone so should be fun and will be gone two weeks this time.

"I have nearly a month break from long trips, time hopefully to get lots of writing done, yard work caught up on, and some relaxing time. Whoever said retirement was easy?"

"Mid-August it's back to Montana and Crow Fair. I do a lot of Native American subjects and throughout the year spend lots of time with Native people so Crow Fair is part of that but also a story for a magazine in the UK. I'm on the Board for the Northwest Outdoor Writers Association and a fall board meeting will take me to Lewiston for a long weekend.

"Nothing else on the planning board at present other than a muley hunt in southern Idaho with my son Brian. Some Boise folks know Brian as he's an optometrist there but is opening his own business in Eagle later this summer. That also provides a chance to see two grandkids and the oldest grandchild, Lauren (now 12) will visit from Madison, Wisconsin this summer as well."

Wayne Melquist isn't lying around either. He reports: "We are gearing up for another summer working on ospreys -- banding nestlings and translocating another 20 juveniles to South Dakota in an effort to establish a nesting population in the area of Yankton (SD). Along with Dr. Don Johnson, Professor Emeritus, University of Idaho, I've been banding nestling ospreys in northern Idaho each July since 1972, when I started working on nesting ospreys for a Masters degree at the University of Idaho with Don as my advisor. But Don has done even better than me; he started banding nestling ospreys 2-3 years earlier. Interestingly, his graduate student working on ospreys prior to me was Senator Gary Schroeder, Moscow. Gary and I were undergraduates at the University of Wisconsin, Superior, graduating in 1969. Gary came to Idaho upon graduation to work on ospreys for his MS, while I did a tour of duty with the Marines (Gary had previously been in the Navy) prior to moving out west. Just a little bit of trivia! Cheerio!"

On the Surgery List (or about to be): I forgot to mention in the last newsletter (*senior moment? hmm!*) that **Barbara Alverson** was home recovering from knee surgery which was done in April, I believe. And Barb will be heading for the coast next week for a much needed vacation. And, **Jack**

Fisher will be entering the hospital this month for hip surgery. We wish you both a fast recovery.

Kate Bethke passed along the following tidbit: **Helen Langworthy**, widow of **Ed Langworthy** (who worked for fisheries in hatcheries) has moved back east to be near her daughters.

News from Gooding Idaho: "Gooding is celebrating its Centennial during 2008. To honor the City of Gooding, retirees **Phyllis Kochert** and **Ardella Reinke** were involved in the design and creation of a commemorative quilt as members of Wood River Quilters guild. The quilt will be gifted to the City and displayed permanently in the new Gooding County Historical Society Museum." (see photo page 11)

(News from the Panhandle and Karen Huber: "Last week I had the rare opportunity to visit with **Ardella Reinke** (retired Administrative Assistant - Magic Valley) who was here just for the weekend. She and Bob drove to north Idaho for the wedding of their granddaughter! She was so busy being the #1 tailor and #1 Grandmother, that I was only able to talk to her while she was getting her hair done! She looks great and is as wonderful a lady as she ever was. Husband Bob is retired now too, so there will be no stopping them!!!!

"Jerry Neufeld (retired Land Manager, Panhandle), wife Addie and **Paul Hanna** (also retired Land Manager, Panhandle) along with his significant other Inez Graetzer joined my husband and me for dinner and a summer theater production. It is fun encouraging these retirees to get some culture in their lives!!!! Both Jerry and Paul are doing well.

"Paul Hanna and I walked Bloomsday again this year! I was celebrating my 20th year - Paul's 18th -- and I decided I would retire in 2008 from the 7.4 mile walk. When the information came out afterwards, this was my 21st Bloomsday!!!! Sheesh. I can't even count any more! We do have the answer to doing the race now though. We don't try to make any time; we stop often for Advil and ice cream bars; take a lot of pictures along the way and still end up with a T-shirt just like 50,000 other people!"

A Chuckle or Two!

Sometimes I thought I was the only crazy one who once worked at Fish and Game. However, I found out that no one can hold a candle to **Darlene "Skip" Howard** and some of her antics. When asked if she had any news for the newsletter, she said all she "had were a few old photos of a Christmas party back in the '50s. One of them is a quartet singing -- Bob Salter, Kliess Brown, Marshall Edson (and I can't think of the other guy . . . maybe it was a TRIO).

"Most of my stories are not too interesting. Just funny things that happened to me . . . like scaring the heck out of **Bob Salter** when I told him that not only had I dusted his office (which he demanded of me), but that I had washed his pipe out with soap and water. It's a good thing I was just kidding or he might have killed me.

"Claude Clapsaddle also reminded me that I put pencil shavings in his pipe. It obviously made quite an impression, because he's never forgotten it all these years (45 years), although I had forgotten it!

"I do have a great photo of me sitting on **Bill Hoffman's** lap at one of the Christmas parties. Actually, his wife was in the picture, but someone cropped it and put an 8 x 10 on the bulletin board the next work day. I just wish I had kept the poem I wrote complaining about the guys storing their dead animals, birds and fish in the same refrigerator that we gals kept our lunches in. It got pretty gross at times. See, I told you. Just dumb office stuff!"

In Memoriam

From the Panhandle Region: Retiree **Bill Carter** passed away April 18. Bill was the Conservation Officer in the Calder district for many years and he retired in 1993. According to CO **Joe Blackburn**, Bill had been battling cancer for several months and was being cared for by his neighbor lady who is a nurse. At Bill's request, there were no services. Also, he asked that his ashes be mixed with salt and put at Snow Peak for the goats.

After a long and courageous battle with emphysema and COPD (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease), **Doris A. Jockumsen** passed away on June 1 at the age of 84. Doris was the widow of retired CO **Norman Jockumsen** who passed away October 1989 in Jerome. Memorial services will be held August 2 at 11 a.m. at Hove-Robertson Funeral Chapel, 629 E. 3rd Street, Jerome, phone 324-4555.

A funeral mass was held June 20 at the Holy Apostles Catholic Church, Meridian, for **Geoff Hardy**, 53, who was struck down and killed by a drunk driver. Geoff was the brother of retiree **Barbara Alverson** (License Section). Geoff was riding his motorcycle to work (to save gas money), wearing a helmet, when he was hit by a drunk driver with a history of two past offenses. Memorial contributions may be sent to the local chapter of MADD, P.O. Box 44333, Boise, ID 83711-0333.

Also, a former Fish and Game employee who used to work at the IDFG warehouse, **Dana Messenger**, passed away sometime in April. He was 80 years old. Thanks to **Darlene "Skip" Howard** for the information.

Our heartfelt condolences go out to all the families.

Peru

January 7 – February 8, 2008

By Ted Chu

Received the following from Ted Chu regarding his trip to Peru to help out the earthquake victims. It is very interesting!

I departed Portland Airport in the early morning January 6, traveling with a friend from Astoria. We arrived in Lima late that night and after failing to catch a bus to Pisco spent the night in a nice motel in the Mira Flora section of Lima. This is considered the safest part of the city, with much of Lima being off limits especially at night. After a leisurely morning we caught a bus headed south down the coast toward our destination, Pisco – approximately a four-hour trip. The bus stopped frequently to pick up more passengers as we worked our way out of town, but then made good time down a good highway – the Pan American highway to be exact.

The Peruvian coastal desert receives no measurable annual precipitation. Parts of most days were overcast but only rarely did it rain and only a sprinkle or two when it did. There was a nice breeze off the ocean on most afternoons which was a blessing. We crossed a few substantial rivers draining the Andes and towns and agriculture are located near them – for many centuries I assume. Some of the irrigated land looked quite productive and I noted asparagus, yucca, grapes, cotton, alfalfa and a variety of fruit trees along the way. There were also many large chicken farms just a few yards from the ocean. Unlike the generally lean and chewy chickens I was accustomed to eating in rural Honduras,

these were as grossly fat as those in US markets.

Approximately three hours into our trip the bus made a stop in Chincha. It was there that dramatic signs of earthquake damage became evident. We traveled on to Pisco and took a taxi down Avenida de las Americas to Pisco Playa and the headquarters of the Hands On Disaster Response (HODR) organization. They were housed in a large building which appeared to have been a restaurant at one time or another. The HODR folks gave us directions to the Burner's Without Borders (BWB) house where we were greeted by Kendall from California who had arrived just hours before us. We selected places to sleep, me upstairs in an unfinished room and my friend in a downstairs bedroom. The Burner's house, although not finished, was new, expansive and well built with some very nice tile work. It had suffered very little damage from the earthquake. We had cooking facilities, a refrigerator and a washing machine available to us.

HODR's original plan was to shut down their operation and turn it over to Burner's on Jan. 20; however, because a couple of their volunteers had been mugged in broad daylight in the town market they had decided to leave early. A goodbye party was planned for that Friday night, Feb. 10 at the Burner house. The Burner house was, well a Burner house, and there was a fair amount of partying going on there every night. Most of the volunteers were in their twenties and fully capable of working hard all day and then partying into the night. Not me. I participated until about 1 a.m. but the party lasted all night and then moved to the beach the next day. This was the final straw for my friend who left early the next morning and returned to Oregon. HODR turned their house and all their equipment and tools over to BWB and their leadership and left to go directly to Bangladesh to assist with the flooding that had just occurred there. Most of their remaining volunteer crew stayed on, including two of the hardest partiers, a Russian and an Australian, who were eventually unceremoniously poured into taxis and banished!

About this time I learned of a very nice ocean front hostel about 1.5 miles down the beach from Pisco in San Andreas. For about \$7 US a night I had my own room and shower and TV although there were only a couple English language channels that carried either sports or old dubbed in English movies. Having had enough of communal living while in college, I hopped on it gratefully. In Chincha I lived on the grounds of a vacant senior center with two other volunteers. We slept in tents to be cooler. Very satisfactory.

Every morning I walked from my hostel to the job site along the beach and a narrow fresh water wetland where there were a variety of birds. Still there isn't a lot of diversity in the area and I only identified 48 bird species (23 lifers). I did see a number of old friends -- peregrines, ruddy turnstones, common moorhens, kestrels, little blue herons, etc. One morning I assume the bait fish had moved in close to shore because as far as you could see up and down the beach and about a half mile out there was a dense swarm of feeding birds over five miles wide -- mostly cormorants and boobies -- that was truly impressive in number.

About a half mile in the other direction was a small market and several restaurants and on the ocean side a pier where fishermen brought their catches in daily. The majority of the fish were bonita and there were lots of shell fish -- crabs, clams, scallops and snails. I ate major quantities of seafood chifa (fried rice) and ceviche during my time in Peru.

I spent my first 20 days or so in Pisco and my last 10 in Chincha. Combined, the towns had a human population of approximately 300,000 people. Reports were that 80% of homes were destroyed or made unsafe by the earthquake and after shocks. I would agree with that assessment. It was common to see a house here and there that looked undamaged while all houses around it were

flattened. A large church collapsed in Pisco during a funeral killing 150 people. Reports on actual deaths were inconsistent but 500 seemed to be a common estimate. Had the earthquake occurred in the night I'm sure the figure would have been much higher. Although I arrived five months after it happened many people were still living in tents and will be for some time yet – years in many cases. The epicenter of the 8.0 quake was a short distance off shore but it only generated a 4-5 foot tsunami that caused relatively little damage by comparison.

Clearing rubble was hard, dirty and sad work as you uncovered personal belongings, especially those of children, and you wondered at their fates. Fortunately, I didn't do much of that. I saw a number of 10-40 acre areas that were nothing but the mounds of rubble dumped from trucks. Almost all dump trucks in the area were Volvos! In the initial rush to clear roads a great deal of rubble was dumped in less than ideal places. One of the first projects BWB completed was the repair of a bridge which allowed truck access to an abandoned mine pit for rubble disposal. Along my daily walk was an area where rubble had been dumped in a wetland but while I was there they began moving it to another location.

We also built temporary living shelters in cooperation with an outside funded but locally administered Catholic relief organization. Our most common building materials were eucalyptus posts for the frame, corrugated plastic for the roof and bamboo mats for the sides. There apparently is a large amount of bamboo not too far away because it is a very common building material, much of it 6 inches or so in diameter and used for roof beams.

In Pisco HODR started and BWB took over the complete rebuilding of a small school. In Chincha most of the work was repairing schools with the cost of materials supplied by UNICEF. It was hard to feel like we were having much impact due to the magnitude of the destruction; however, the individuals we helped were very appreciative. The locals seemed to take the situation in stride and the only real complaining I heard was aimed at the government. There was a common refrain that Peru had received many millions in aid from all over the world but that none of it was reaching ground level. At the same time, there was a lot of evidence of work being done by the government but I guess it all depended on who was being helped first.

I mentioned several volunteers had been mugged in Pisco before I arrived but I had no trouble there or in Chincha. It sounded like a couple of the victims had violated some common sense rules. I worked with volunteers from all over the world – UK, Belgium, Germany, Brazil, France, Australia, New Zealand -- really great people for the most part with a few slackards who mostly wanted to party. Many seemed to be members of the ubiquitous international group of 20 somethings who seem to be able to travel indefinitely, interesting, fun, hard workers with good hearts but maybe a little lost. I don't know.

We often ate with the Peruvians whose diet is lacking in anything green.

Fish or chicken with boiled or baked potatoes, sweet potatoes or rice was the normal fare -- not nearly as many beans as in Honduras. They do make excellent papas fritas which are hard to pass up. I did find there is a sizable Chinese population in Peru and many excellent restaurants where I could get a huge plate of stir fry with broccoli, bean sprouts, snow peas etc. Also there was very good seafood, excellent fruit and good cold beer.

I was definitely not in an area that would attract the average tourist but there were some great places to visit. I did a morning boat trip to the seabird nesting Ballestas Islands just a few miles offshore. En route we got an excellent look at the famous ancient candelabra figure on a hillside. There are an incredible number and variety of seabirds there and the upwelling of the cold Humboldt current

apparently provides for a very productive ocean environment. They harvest guano from different parts of the islands on a seven rotation. When you get close, the smell is powerful. There are acres of quaney cormorants crammed together like sardines. I particularly enjoy pelicans and there were both browns and Peruvians. The Peruvian pelican looks much like a brown pelican but it is white pelican size and far more numerous than the brown pelicans. There were also a number of Humboldt penguins on the islands.

I also visited Paracas National Preserve a couple times, once on a tour and again on an overnight beach camping trip I organized for the volunteers. The desert there was literally lifeless. There were some lizards living on the beach that foraged in the inter-tidal zone and it made me wonder if they will eventually evolve to be like the iguanas on the Galapagos Islands. I made the acquaintance of the brother of one of our cooks at the HODR – then BWB house who worked part time as a nature guide. When I pulled out my brand new Birds Of Peru book, Harold became very excited. We were in a group of volunteers and everyone was looking the book over and Harold said pointing at me and himself that for us “this was like our bible.” I thought that significant because I suspect he is a devoted Catholic like 99% of Peruvians. His family lost their house in the earthquake and subsequent fire. He even lost his binoculars. I ended up leaving the book for him in exchange for the promise of a guaranteed Andean condor viewing if I could come back in late February - early March when the sea lions pup and the condors come to the coast to feed on placentas.

So, all in all, it was a good experience. I was frustrated with the litter, the obvious lack of birth control being employed by people and dogs, although trying to guess the ancestry of some of the dogs was entertaining. An interesting side note – in the absence of fenced yards, dogs that were not essentially feral were often relegated to the flat roofs of houses.

The local people were friendly and generous even when they had very little, which seems to be the case wherever I go outside the US. I might have stayed longer but it would have cost quite a bit to change my flight reservations. At the same time, I was looking forward to getting home.

And for those of you of morbid curiosity, as usual I ate the local food with abandon and, yes, I did come down with Inca revenge a couple times, but so did the more cautious eaters. It was not debilitating and it worked itself out eventually. :o)”

Happy Birthday!!

Lois Lunday, July 10

Jo Toomey, July 25

Mick Hoover, August 5

Lorrie (Spiker) Parrish, August 24

(If you want to sneak in a Birthday Wish for someone, just let me know!)

Dale Tankerly's Letter

Dear State Employee/Retired State Employee,

The 2008 Legislative session is over. And what a session it was for public employees in general and state employees in particular.

Legislation proposed by the Governor's office would have thrown Medicare eligible retirees off the state plan, and out into the street, so to speak, to find the best they could on their own, to secure other insurance coverage.

This legislation was crafted essentially behind closed doors. With little to no input from the people most affected – the retirees. Also very little input was provided by active employees, even though they too would be affected by this legislation upon their own retirement.

When the administration presented its legislation on January 4, 2008, to the Change in Employee Compensation Committee (CEC), it was obvious that a comprehensive, methodical, and competent analysis of such a dramatic change had not taken place.

At that hearing, Idaho Public Employees Association (IPEA) members testified on the very limited information available, that the legislation left too many unanswered questions and issues hanging.

During the rest of the legislative session there were additional meetings where retirees had the opportunity to testify. At those meetings it became abundantly clear that the usual and customary research and analysis of the impact of such legislation had not been done. Through the continuing efforts of Dona Van Trease, Executive Director of IPEA, and other members, constant attention and pressure were placed on the germane legislative committees and the bill was finally held in committee and died. The major thrust to stop such short-sighted legislation can be attributed to IPEA's Executive Director Dona Van Trease and its members. Call 336-2841 for more information.

IPEA needs your help. As an active or retired public employee you can be a member and belong to IPEA for a very nominal monthly contribution (\$4.25 per month for retirees and \$7.54 per pay period for actively employed members).

You might ask, "What is IPEA?" Good question. Contrary to the thinking and beliefs of a lot of people, IPEA is NOT – is NOT a labor union!

IPEA is an association of individuals who have like needs and interests in promoting their goals for the betterment of the whole group. IPEA is not unlike many other associations who lobby and promote their agenda to the legislature and the Governor's office.

An example of such associations includes, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Idaho Association of Commerce and Industry (IACI): This is probably the most powerful and influential association engaging the administration and the legislature. Its membership encompasses many of the major businesses and industries in Idaho – such as: Washington Group International, formerly M-K, Micron Technology, Hewlett-Packard, Simplot Company, Potlatch and the like. This association is well funded and has a well paid lobbying staff to do its bidding in the political arena.
2. Idaho Farm Bureau: This is an organization composed primarily of farmers. Some members are not direct farmers but are in the farm related businesses and activities, such as farm supply companies, farm implement and machinery sales, etc. Again, their purpose and mission is to promote their agenda in the political arena.
3. Idaho Medical Association: Members, in addition to doctors, includes many in related industries. Again, they are advocating for their needs and wants in the political arena.

And this list could go on, but you've got the idea.

Individuals only get what the collective power of a recognized organization can get them. A single person alone, without a recognized organization behind him/her will just swing in the wind when trying to influence legislation on their behalf.

Why IPEA needs your help: IPEA was started in 1959 by a group of dedicated and interested state employees to advance the cause of state employees. These members included management personnel as well as rank and file employees. At that time, it was the Idaho State Employees Association; in later years it was changed to the Idaho Public Employees Association to allow membership from county, city schools and employees of other political subdivisions of the state.

In 1959 there was no Public Employees Retirement System of Idaho (PERSI). There was very limited, if any, comprehensive medical insurance coverage. Vacation and sick leave was very limited, and it varied between and among different departments of state government. Employer-sponsored life insurance was nonexistent and the state merit system was nonexistent. Some departments had a merit system of sorts, depending a great deal on their relationship with the Federal Government and Federal funding. Many areas of state government were staffed under the old political spoils system.

Nearly all of the major improvements in employee benefits came about as a concerted effort of the IPEA (ISEA) and its success with the 1965 legislature. That's when the legislation was passed that created PERSI, the Idaho Personnel Commission (Merit System), and laid the ground work for future enhancements with respect to health insurance, expanded vacation and sick leave accrual, and other benefit package improvements.

All of the above were gained by hard work and dedication of IPEA staff and members. Without a good-growing and strong membership, all that has been gained can be lost. We need additional members to continue the fight. This recent legislative session regarding medical insurance is proof of that.

The medical insurance issue will be back again next year. What that plan will look like and how it will affect every retiree and future retirees will depend a great deal on how successful IPEA can be in helping direct that activity.

Additionally – and perhaps a more crucial issue coming up – this administration's sights are on changing PERSI from a defined benefit program to a defined contribution program (401k type, the state would contribute less and it would not be a lifetime monthly payment). This would be a major change and put retirement into a very perilous situation.

Therefore, in the interests of all active employees and those retired or soon to be retired employees, I ask you – no, I beg you – to join IPEA if you are not now a member and continue your membership after retirement.

Without a strong and active employees' association, your voice and interests before the administration and the legislature will be lost.

Sincerely,

Dale R. Tankersley
Former: Personnel Supervisor, ITD
Chief Exam and Recruitment, Idaho Personnel Commission
Personnel Manager, Idaho Department of Fish and Game

CONTACT: IPEA
336-2841 or 1-800-632-6679
1434 W. Bannock
Boise, ID 83702
FAX: 344-2325
E-mail: ipeassociation@qwest.net
Website: ipeaonline.org

