



CIGAR BOX BULLETIN



Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc.

60 Years of Fellowship and Community Service
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Here are the volunteers who publish this Bulletin each week for your enjoyment. **Editor/Chairman:** Chet Risio. **Scribes:** Av Rivel, Gran Burgess, Kurt Schaffir, Arnold Gordon, Ed Farrell, Gerry Lessuk, Steve Elliot, Marshall Toppo, and George Stockbridge, **Archivist:** Harold Frost. **Format:** Jack Cuff, Gene Schwartz, and Andrzej Mazurek. **Graphics:** Av Rivel, **Print/Distribution:** Chet Risio.

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December 6, 2017

President DON CONWAY rang us to order at 10:00am exactly, but still had to cajole the stragglers from the back of the room to take their seats.

RALPH VIGGIANO, bounced to the lectern to lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance.

Accompanied by our entertaining pianist, GEORGE STOCKBRIDGE, song leader GRAN BURGESS with his mellifluous sort-of-baritone voice, led the group in a spirited *Star Spangled Banner*, followed by *Always and Anchors Aweigh* (the navy vets swooned).

JERRY SCHWENDEMAN announced some blush-making correspondence about a woman patient who did not know the difference between intercourse and BlueCross, and a warning about a scam perpetrated on old men by skimpily dressed then undressed cuties stealing wallets; many wallets were voluntarily lost.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. CHET RISIO introduced his cousin, Marie Wardell, who is the Program Coordinator for Reading Champions, a Greenwich United Way service since 2008 that helps students in our schools who are beneath reading fluency levels for their grade and age. There are currently 117 volunteers from around Town, but more are needed; each new volunteer will allow the program to help two more pupils. For more information, including videos see www.greenwichunitedway.org. You may also contact Marie directly at mwardell@greenwichunitedway.org or [203-869-2221](tel:203-869-2221).

2. ARNOLD GORDON reported that the esteemed panel of STURGES, UHRY and GORDON had chosen the speakers for the RMA meeting on December 27th, at which three of our own will relate personal stories that have helped shape their lives. Drum Roll Please: BOB ROBINS, TAD LARRABEE, and CHET RISIO will offer presentations

of about 10 minutes each, followed by what no doubt will be penetrating questions from the membership.

3. JOHN FEBLES reminded us about a change in the Salvation Army bell ringing program this year. Starting this past weekend of December 2-3, through each weekend in December until the weekend of the 23rd, brave souls who volunteer to ring the bell will do so in front of the Starbucks Coffee shop on Greenwich Ave. You should email alisonbrush@greenwich.ct.gov or phone her at [203-622-3715](tel:203-622-3715) to volunteer for either a one-hour stint, or two-hour duty. Those not willing to ring the bell should make their checks payable to Greenwich Salvation Army and give them to JOHN.

4. PAUL SETTELMAYER ([203 629-2616](tel:203-629-2616)) urged members to purchase a case of ruby red grapefruit all the way from Texas (\$24 each) to support the Lion's Club many charitable services around Town. He will be just outside the Cos Cob firehouse on Saturday mornings. Yes, they are delicious, say I, a grapefruit expert.

5. El Presidente DON told us

a. To continue to use our current yellow parking passes for the Municipal Lot and Lafayette Place spots until new passes for the coming year are issued.

b. He also informed us that MIKE FERRARESE and ABBEY SMOLER will retire as Special Event Planners at the end of 2018. They are anxious to indoctrinate their replacements, so if you are interested in taking over this very important and gratifying role, please contact either of them.

c. The DON then managed to give a passable pronunciation of the returnees: FRANK ZAVATTARO from Isle of Palms, SC; AV RIVEL from Australia and New Zealand; and RALPH VIGGIANO from Pinehurst, NC and Myrtle Beach, SC (where, tsk tsk, he reportedly played miniature golf).

COMMITTEES

PROGRAM: STEPHEN MYERS encouraged all to stay to hear **Lisbeth Gronlund**, PhD, a senior scientist and co-director of The Union of Concerned Scientists. Her timely topic: "The Trump Administration and Nuclear Weapons." PETER UHRY mentioned some serious challenges facing students and institutions in higher education that will be addressed next week by Thomas Schwarz, JD, President of SUNY Purchase since 2002.

MEMBERSHIP: HORST TEBBE mentioned that there are currently 5 candidates ready for induction, three of which have been scheduled; he urged the other two and their sponsors to do the same. In attendance today were 97 members and 1 guest: Bob Grayson (g/o GERRY GIBIAN). Those celebrating **birthdays** this past week were CARL VAN AKEN (95), HAROLD KUPELSKY (85) and TOM MORRISON (82).
SPECIAL EVENTS: MIKE FERRARESE brought us up to date on four upcoming events. Details Below.

VOLUNTEER HOURS: JOHN FEBLES provided the statistics: 363 outside hours by 110 men and 40 RMA hours by 18 men; ace for the week was BRIAN MAHER with 40 hours.

THE SCOREBOARD

BRIDGE: PETER STERN told us he had high score (5220) followed by FRANK LEE (5080) and BRUNO SCHRAGE (4380).

TENNIS: MIKE SMITH reported the winners. On Court 1 ANDRE MAZUREK and almost-member Michael McDonough, Court 2 PETER TUNLEY and MIKE SMITH. BILL FAKUNDINY is Captain next week.

HEARTS: JACK SWEGER passionately told us there were 12 players at 3 tables. Table 1 completed two games (ED FARRELL and MIKE AMBROSINO were winners), Table 2, one game (TOM MORONEY), Table 3, two games (TOM HEALY and GRANT PERKINS). Moon Shots were launched by ED FARRELL, JACK SWEGER, PETER BERG, GRANT PERKINS and JOHN KNIGHT.

TODAY'S SPEAKER

STEPHEN MEYERS introduced physicist **Dr. Lisbeth Gronlund**, a member of the Union of Concerned Scientists (UCS) since 1992. She outlined her presentation, which covered the status of nuclear weaponry and policy issues governing their use at the end of the Obama Administration and how the Trump administration is proceeding. Several pamphlets were made available for members about the UCS and specific issues about nuclear weapons. There is currently a "nuclear posture review" underway by the current Administration that will form the basis for any future plans affecting the current arsenal: long range strategic weapons (about 2000) consisting of land-based nuclear armed missiles with 10 times the power of the Hiroshima bomb, submarine missile stock, and air launched cruise missiles (e.g., from B2 stealth bombers) and bombs (dropped from a B52, e.g.). About 150 of such tactical weapons are stored in the countries of 5 allies.

There is an additional reserve of 2000 nuclear war heads in underground storage at Kirkland Air Force Base. The US and Russia are currently bound by the START Treaty of 2010 that limits the number of deployable strategic weapons to 1550. President Obama had proposed a 30-year program for replacing the current arsenal with new and improved weapons at an estimated cost of 1.2 trillion dollars but it was not implemented. President Trump believes that START favors the Russians and wants a bigger stockpile. However, the military strongly favors maintaining the current START treaty provisions. Dr. Gronlund predicts that we will do so and will not increase our arsenal. However, she believes that our previous submarine-launched missile capability, which was retired in 2013, will be redeployed.

She addressed the crucial issue of when a nuclear first or retaliatory strike should be considered and who has the ultimate authority to order an attack. In recent times there have been three near-catastrophic errors due to false or misinterpreted signals that could have triggered nuclear missile exchanges, one each originating in the US, Russia and Norway. Any missiles launched from Russia would be detected quickly but leave only about 10 minutes before the missiles would arrive for the President to react (e.g., do nothing, order interception of the missiles if possible, launch an immediate retaliatory strike in case some of the enemy missiles were targeted at the US missile sites which would disable them).

Presently, a first launch by the US is prohibited without a declaration of war by Congress. If retaliation is needed, there is a formal chain of command starting with the President, but the use of checks and balances involving other senior-most civilian or military decision makers is not necessarily clearly defined and the President appears to have sole authority to launch a nuclear attack. The UCS proposes that a decision by the President to use nuclear arms must be unanimously agreed to by the next two Government officials in succession order for the Presidency, viz., usually the Vice President and Speaker of the House.

Dr. Gronlund closed with some brief comments about the North Korea situation. As reported recently, they have missiles capable of reaching almost any US city, including Washington, DC and New York City. Surgical strikes against North Korean nuclear installations are nearly impossible and any military incursion will put South Korea in grave danger, even without the use of nuclear weapons. Negotiations with their regime are essential and use of an emissary to start the process is highly recommended. The usual lively Q&A session added additional piquancy to the occasion.

SPECIAL EVENTS

Open to all members, guests, candidates and spouses. Checks to be made out to RMA, and must be received within two weeks or the reservation will be cancelled. Contact MIKE FERRARESE (myagentmike@yahoo.com / [203-554-0678](tel:203-554-0678)) or ABBEY SMOLER (abbeysmoler@gmail.com / [203-531-0235](tel:203-531-0235)).

New York Philharmonic Rehearsal, January 11, 2018. Lunch at the Atlantic Grill, \$110. Bus departs from St. Catherine's parking lot at 7:45 a.m. Status: Wait Listed

Elmsford Dinner Theater, "A Chorus Line" February 22, 2018, Lunch at the theater, \$95. Status: Wait Listed

Bruce Museum, March 22, 2018, Lunch at the Millbrook Club, \$95. Transportation: Self. Arrive at Bruce Museum at 9:45 a.m. Status: 30 places available

West Point tour, April 19, 2018. Lunch at the Thayer Hotel, \$85. Bus departs 8:45am from St. Catherine's' Church parking lot. Status 35 places available.

NEXT WEEK'S SPEAKER

Thomas Schwarz, JD, "Major Challenges Facing Higher Education Today"

Scribe: ARNOLD J. GORDON

Retired Men's Association of Greenwich, Inc. · 37 Lafayette Place · Greenwich, CT 06830 · USA

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MEMBER PROFILE

This is the nineteenth in a series of Member Profiles intended to allow members to get to know one another beyond a face and a name tag

CARL VAN AKEN was born into a German-Jewish family on November 30, 1922 in Aachen, Germany. His mother was trained as a school teacher. Carl's family tree on his mother's side dates back to the 13th century. As a child he attended a Montessori School. His father owned a textile factory.

During the time of Kristallnacht in Nazi Germany Carl's father was put in a concentration camp. In one of the ironies of that terrible time the arresting officer, the local Chief of Police, was wearing a suit given to him by Carl's father. After two months he was released by the same chief after accepting a bribe by Carl's mother.

The family escaped to Holland where they lived for about a year. In 1940 they came to New York City aboard the Dutch liner Volendaam.

Prior to that Carl's uncle had bought a chicken farm in Vinland, New Jersey with the proceeds from a Picasso painting smuggled out of Germany. The name of the painting and its eventual destination has been lost to history. On weekends Carl would help out on his uncle's farm.



Carl, left, age 12 with his brother Dieter, in Germany, 1934

Carl obtained a job as an office boy in NYC doing typing and filing. He was proficient in German, French, Dutch and some English. Because he was drafted into the US Army in 1942, Carl could not complete high school. His typing ability landed him an assignment in the Headquarters section of the 10th Army Corps. He was stationed in New Guinea, the Philippines and Hiroshima, Japan. He attained the rank of Staff Sergeant and served in the Army Reserves for three years.

In a letter dated 17 October 1945 from Kure, Japan (eleven miles from Hiroshima) Carl wrote:

“ A friend and I took a small passenger boat to Eta Jima, an island in the Inland sea. We went straight through the immobilized Jap submarine fleet. There were still 8,000 Jap sailors aboard the anchored fleet. (Contrary to press reports that Jap forces were completely demobilized) We took a bus which was still running on charcoal. They are being reconverted to gasoline. The population looked at us curiously. No white man had been allowed to set foot in this area for over a decade because Japan was building warships in violation of the US Naval Limitation Agreement.



Sgt. Carl Van Aiken aboard the Japanese battleship *Haruna* in the Inland Sea, Eta Jima, Japan 1945

We boarded a huge 35-45,000 ton Japanese battleship* that had been beached close to shore. Everything below the main deck was under water. We Inspected the ship from bow to stern. It had been ransacked. Anti-aircraft guns, furniture and instruments had been removed. The control tower stood nine decks above the main deck but we could only climb up to the seventh deck. The top two were inaccessible

due to bomb damage. We settled down to our dinner of C-rations we had brought along. Thus I can truly say I had dinner on a Jap battleship”.

*Very possibly the *Haruna* which was damaged in two raids by US bombers in the Inland Sea July 24 & 28, 1945

After the war, with the GI Bill, Carl applied to Temple University. Because he lacked a high school diploma, he was accepted only with the proviso that he maintain a C average or he would be dropped. In three years he graduated Cum Laude. He majored in Business Administration and Marketing.

About this time, a girl and her family from his hometown looked them up in New York City. In 1957, Carl married Ursula Schopke and they raised two boys and two girls and now have five grandchildren. Carl's twin brother lives in California.



Carl, age 44, at a sales convention at the Hotel Astor in New York, May 1966

His first job out of college was as a salesman for Lever Brothers. However, he spent most of his career as a wholesaler of consumer products and sundries serving privately owned convenience stores. These were known as “tobacco wholesalers” in their day as that is how most of the businesses started. He worked for Mutual Merchandising Cooperative, a group of 60 tobacco distributors where he was responsible for determining merchandising, product range and selection, and pricing. He went on to serve as a full time consultant to a cooperative of over 200 tobacco wholesalers. The market for tobacco wholesalers shrank with the advent of large chain stores buying directly from manufacturers, replacing privately owned stores. This coincided with Carl's retirement in 1987 at age 65.

Carl and his family have resided in Cos Cob since 1973. As a youth he was an expert equestrian. Later on in life he swam at the YMCA and played badminton and volleyball.

Carl retired in 1987. He and his wife, Ursula, love travel and have visited over 30 countries.

He joined the RMA on June 14, 2000 sponsored by Derrick Otley. Being very active and knowledgeable in the stock and bond markets, Carl led the RMA Investments Club for several years. At age 95, Carl still enjoys the weekly RMA meetings.

Editor's note: Carl's son, Peter, supplied us with V-mail letters typed by Carl during WWII. Carl's English was somewhat limited prior to entering the Army. Because of his typing skills he was put into an accelerated learning program and he mastered English very quickly. That is very evident in the beautifully composed letters he wrote to his parents.

Sub note: The use of the contraction, "Jap", during WWII, was very common in referring to the enemy.
The proper term is Japanese.