COMARA Newsletter – September 2012

COMARA prepares and distributes about four newsletters each year to all members. Members with an email address receive copies through email. Copies are mailed to members without an email address in our records. If you receive this newsletter in the mail or didn’t receive one by email – it means that we don’t have an email address for you. Please take the time now to update your email address with us. You can do this yourself by signing in to the COMARA web site (http://comara.org/) and select the “Edit My Profile” link (on the left menu), or send an email to webmaster@comara.org containing your current email address. Contact the webmaster if you have problems updating your profile.

"Oktober FEST at the Pelton House!!"

Sunday, October 7, 2012 -- 3:30pm - 6:30pm  
http://comara.org/social/2012-Social.htm

Please RSVP to the Comara web site as soon as possible if you or you and a guest are coming to the Annual COMARA Meeting and Social. You do not have to send a check by the deadline of Sept 30th although this is encouraged, but please just let us know you are coming at the web site or call Joe Pelton at 703-536-6985.

Come and enjoy Bratwurst, Weisswurst, Potato salad, German beers and pretzels, wine and soft drinks. Admission is $15 per person and $28 per couple. Time is Sunday Oct 7th from 3:30pm to 6:30pm.

- The address is 4025 40th St. North in Chain Bridge Forest, (near Chain Bridge in Arlington right across the line from McLean, just off of Glebe Road at River Street.)
- Take Rte 123 exit North off Geo. Washington Parkway toward Chain Bridge
- Turn onto Glebe Road (Route 120)
- Go up the hill about 3/4th of a mile
- Turn right on River Street (There is no left) into Chain Bridge Forest
- Turn right on 40th Street. 3rd house on the left

First Wednesday in December 2012 - December 5

This is an informal event held at Roys Place in Gaithersburg starting about 6:30pm. Ron Johnson has been the organizer for this event for a number of years. We do have photos available from last year’s event:  
http://tinyurl.com/first-wed-2011

Newly Elected COMARA Directors

The three Directors elected in the class of 2012 are:
- Maury Mechanick
- Paul Schrantz
- Peter Jacxsens

In addition to these three Directors Geza Serenyi has been appointed to fill the remaining term for Bob Yamazaki who is retiring and moving to South Carolina. Thanks to Bob for two years as Director.

Thanks to Brent Jacocks for all her work with newsletter preparation during her term. Also, thanks to Joe Pelton who is retiring as President. (He may think his term as Director is also over - but he still has two years on the Board.)

Other News...

We ran out of room for several items. Check the web site - and especially the newly updated links to previous newsletters (the Newsletters link in the left menu) for items that wouldn't fit in this issue.
Dues

Annual dues for 2012 are $15. The COMARA Board has a goal of encouraging at least half our members to pay dues for 2012. Dues support the modest operating expenses of the organization, and website; the key to most of the services we provide for communications to help you stay in contact with your former colleagues. Short newsletters are emailed as needed throughout the year to publicize activities and news to members with an email address. Paid members can get contact information for any of our members.

One of our biggest expenses is the mailing of newsletters (like this one) to members who do not have an email address or who do not use the computer. We do want to keep in touch with our former colleagues and surviving spouses even if they are not active on the internet. These quarterly newsletters may be the only communications some members receive, so they contain news you may have already seen because of the wider distribution.

You can view your dues status after you sign in. If you don’t remember your PIN (used to sign in), go to the sign in form and click the link to have your PIN sent to one of the email addresses we have on file for you. Or, feel free to send an email to treasurer@comara.org or a letter to the mailbox.

Send a check for your 2012 dues to: COMARA, PO Box 34594, Bethesda, MD 20827

COMSA Legacy Activities

Significant Progress on the Space Gallery and Hall of Fame Exhibit at the National Electronics Museum

by Joe Pelton, Chair of Space Gallery Organizing Committee at the National Electronics Museum

There has been some significant progress on the National Electronics Museum Space Gallery Exhibit. There is now an active committee working on the project along with the NEM's Director Michael Simon as well as a fund raising consultant Karen Footner that has been hired on a part time basis to help with the project. To date we have raised over $105K in funds plus a number of exhibit elements such as satellite models, launcher models, plus a VSAT and live feed from the Echostar DBS satellite. Initial funding commitments have come from John Puente former head of Hughes Network Systems, from David Lee, Chair and CEO of Globalsatcom, and Pradman Kaul, CEO of Hughes Network Systems. This is in addition to contributions from COMARA, Intelsat Retirees Association, Satellite Interference Reduction Group, the Arthur C. Clarke Foundation, the Corcoran School of Design, Denis Curtin and myself.

We have a number of other pending visits with key satellite officials and organizations pending in coming weeks. The objective is to raise $400K to complete not only the exhibit, but also to put together a 50 page book on satellites and the history of the industry as well as an educational website. Currently we are seeking a grant from the IEEE to support the booklet and website that will be aimed at students and to foster interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education and careers--including the satellite field of course. The active working committee included: Denis Curtin, Former COMARA President and former COO of XTAR, Ramesh Gupta, CTO of Light Squared, Ellen Hoff, President of Wilbur Pritchard and Associates, Ed Martin, Retired, and former COMARA President, Maury Mechanick (former chair of the Intelsat Board of Governors), and myself as Chair of the Organizing Committee. We could always use more recruits so if you have something to donate to the exhibit or if you could help with the Organizing Committee please call me at 703 536 6986 or e-mail me at joepelton@verizon.net

Submitted by Joe Pelton, Chair of Space Gallery Organizing Committee at the National Electronics Museum.

COMARA Website Features

Look up Contact Information for a Member

If you want to send an email directly to another member, you can look up the email address your self after you sign in. After you sign in, a new menu selection appears in the left menu: "View Members". You can use this
feature to look up the address, phone, or email address for most members. Note, you can only see or select this feature after you sign in. This prevents anyone outside COMARA from getting your contact information. You can keep your contact information up to date either by sending the webmaster an email with any changes, or do it yourself. Sign in, then look for the "Edit My Profile" link that appears on the left menu of the home page.

Surviving Spouse Provisions
We received an email from a recent widow - asking that we remove her late husband's email address from our newsletter distribution. While we honor these requests to stop sending newsletters, our first response was to explain that when a COMSAT Alumnus dies, the surviving spouse is eligible to become the member. We normally try to do this automatically. Many of our surviving spouses may have future questions about benefits, and many enjoy reading news of former friends from the Comsat period. In our registration table, we simply swap the names of alumnus and spouse. We do have a field to record the death. (If you look at the contact information

I would be happy to receive further correspondence from Comara. However, it needs to be sent to my email address as I am in the process of discontinuing my late husband's email address.

Monitoring Incoming COMARA Email
Have you wondered what happens to an email you send to one of the email addresses for COMARA? Will it ever be seen? Will it be seen by the person you want to see it? Our web hosting site provides a webmail feature along with hosting the COMARA web pages. One feature of the comara.org webmail accounts is that they can automatically forward any incoming email to one or more external email addresses.

- treasurer@comara.org is forwarded to personal email address of the Treasurer and the assistant Treasurer
- members@comara.org is forwarded to the webmaster's personal email address.

Benefits
One of the main objectives for COMARA is preservation of benefits. There are a couple of ways this is done. One is to monitor and evaluate changes in the benefits plan from Lockheed Martin. Several of our members (principally Jack Hannon, Maury Mechanick, Bob Kinzie, and Irv Dostis) watch out for the rest of us. So far, there have been no problems; Lockheed Martin has continued to honor all of the commitments made by COMSAT. We try to maintain contact information so that if this situation were to change, you can be notified and asked to join an effort to protect these benefits.

Sometimes however, even if benefits are provided as promised, it can be difficult for an alumnus or surviving spouse to make contact with the right person in the Lockheed Martin organization. Many of the people who answer phones aren't aware of the role played by COMSAT, and may be unaware that we are part of their benefits pool. Here are some examples where COMARA made a difference by having a web site and dedicated members who respond to questions.

Pension Benefits
A COMSAT Alumni recently sent this email.

I was employed by COMSAT for 11 years prior to the merger with Lockheed Martin. I received a letter several years ago stating that I was eligible for pension benefits upon retirement age. Due to a lot of moving around the letter was misplaced.

I am now looking into those benefits and have hit a wall. Phone extensions are cut off and Lockheed Martin links are dead. Could you please provide contact information for COMSAT pension benefits?
We can report that one of our volunteers, Jack Hannon, was able help her make contact with Human Resources and the Lockheed Martin Service Center.

**Life Insurance Benefit**

We recently received an email from the daughter of a recently deceased member. *My father was a proud COMSAT employee and retired 4/1/1988. He recently and unexpectedly passed away in March and I am researching a retirement summary of benefits statement that includes life insurance payout. Do you have contact information for a retiree relations office through which I could pursue this benefit?*

Once again, Jack Hannon was able to work his magic and the life insurance benefit was paid promptly.

**Important Information Regarding “Survivor Benefits”**

We recently had a case where a newly-widowed spouse received a “Summary of Benefits” letter from Lockheed Martin (LM) stating that she could continue participating in the LM medical plan as long as she is “eligible” (undefined) and pays the premium.

The letter said nothing about life insurance on the deceased, payable to the beneficiary, presumably the spouse. And it was followed only a few days later by a latter from an insurer, assertedly acting by direction of LM, offering her COBRA insurance (only) for 36 months. COBRA is the insurance gap-filler in which the insured pays ALL of the cost of medical insurance, usually over $10,000 per year, rather than the 20% of total cost we pay under the LM plan. And at the end of the 36 months, the policyholder is completely on their own as to obtaining further medical coverage. Neither letter said anything about the other letter, and she assumed by the manner and timing of presentation that she was being forced to take the COBRA insurance despite the earlier letter from LM offering a much lower-cost continuation of benefits.

Though shaken by this turn of events, she made contact within former COMSAT people and found her way to the COMARA Benefits Chair, Jack Hannon, who made inquiries at LM. He was told that LM was required by federal law to give the “COBRA Notice,” but that she could choose between the two coverages, one from LM and one from the insurance company. He was also told that, as expected, there was $10,000 in life insurance that would be paid out to the widow. Finally, the LM representative initiated a “process improvement plan” to ensure that all COMSAT beneficiaries are treated properly from the very start.

Here is a checklist to help you avoid confusion and receive the promised benefits:

1) The COMSAT retiree should find the “Summary of Benefits” letter COMSAT issued to him/her immediately upon retirement, which is an important asset of the family, brief his or her spouse on the contents, and file the letter with the family’s most important papers, in a safe deposit box or at least a readily accessible “Very Important Papers” file.

2) The COMSAT retiree should review each “Annual Enrollment Confirmation Statement” with your spouse, and ensure that it lists not only your choice of medical and dental coverage, but also lists the amount of life insurance for which your potential survivor is eligible. You should also ensure that you have a beneficiary designation on file with LM. (Call the Service Center at 866-562-2363.)

3) You should ensure that your spouse has a copy of all your computer IDs and pass codes, and if you change any of them, change the list your spouse has.

4) You should also ensure that your spouse has the phone number for the Lockheed Martin Service Center (see #2 above) and has instructions to contact them promptly if you should predecease your spouse.

5) Remember that LM is required to arrange for a COBRA coverage letter, but that COBRA coverage is only one of the choices the survivor will have available, and usually the least preferable choice.
6) In the event “things just don’t seem to be coming out right,” your spouse can contact COMARA by sending an email to members@comara.org. This will be forwarded to our Benefits specialist (mind you, a volunteer, just like all of us) who will contact you and attempt to clarify and assist.

News From Colleagues – Keeping in Touch

Stephen Day

Bumped into Betty Alewine yesterday on a flight back from London to Washington. I hired Betty back in ~1985 - and the rest, as they say, is history!
My wife Sara and I continue to love living in DC, overlooking the Potomac River in the Palisades. We have lived in DC since 1982, and can’t see that changing any time soon. I keep stimulated with various projects, including a variety of for profit and not for profit boards, teaching MBA students at AU's Kogod Business school, painting, gardening, etc., and fly fishing at our club in the Catoctin Mountains (Friends Creek). Sara has written a "big book" on the Gilded Age American patriot Dr. Edward Everett Hale (wrote "Man without a country, mentor to Teddy Roosevelt while at Harvard, chaplain to the U.S Senate, etc.). Sara unearthed ~3000 love letters at the Library of Congress, partially written in code (which Sara cracked), between the married Boston Brahmin Edward Hale (nine children) and a Unitarian parishioner of his, twenty five years younger - resulting in a twenty five year plus "relationship." Some things never change!

Robert Brown Gallery celebrates 30 years in D.C.

Note from Ellen Haff: The Post had a great story on 30th anniversary of Comsat alumnus Robert Brown's art gallery

Robert Brown Gallery opened in 1978 in New York and moved to Washington three years later. It’s the D.C. run that the space is marking with “Robert Brown Celebrates the First 30 Years,” a show that’s impressive in range and quality. It includes work by more than a dozen artists, most of whom Brown has represented for years.
Read the entire article from the following link.

http://www.washingtonpost.com/entertainment/museums/robert-brown-gallery-celebrates-30-years-in-dc/2012/06/28/gJQAwXOw9V_story.html

David Belanger

The town of Andover, Maine plans to dedicate it's annual Olde Home Days celebration to the 50th anniversary of the successful transatlantic broadcast of television, voice, and data by the first commercial communications satellite, Telstar. Andover is the location of the original AT&T earth station, the subsequent Comsat operation via Early Bird, Intelsat II, III, IV IVA, V, VI Etc. later MCI and now a very successful Verizon Business communications site. I had the privilege of serving with all the above companies at Andover and Washington except Verizon who took over the site a few days after I retired from MCI. For more info feel free to contact me at anchored@megalink.net
Dave Belanger
Andover Olde Home Days Committee, AT&T Andover Employees Group, Comsat Retired, MCI Retired

Carrie Devieux

As you know, I live in Chandler/Arizona. Let me know if you have any socials around Thanksgiving and / or Christmases time...Thanks a lot..
Jim Whitworth

Here is some news Ron, but not all news is good news:. First the good news:

I retired from my faculty position at Georgia Southern University June 1, 2012. This was my second retirement, I retired from Fedex August 1998.

On June 8, 2012 I was diagnosed with Non Small Cell Lung Cancer (Adenocarcinoma), stage 4 (lung, adrenals, back bone). I have completed radiation therapy on my back and started chemo this week. Other wise I am in excellent health, actually feeling good, enjoying my life and feeling more optimistic every day!

George Dill

I am still alive and well. My wife and I live in a small community called Granite Bay, CA. It is located between Sacramento and Lake Tahoe. I enjoy reading the Comara notices and try to keep up but because I have been so far away for so long I am having a hard time recognizing Comsat people in photographs now. It would help me and perhaps many others to put a name tag on the photographs.

I remember reading that you have had a 16 mm movie of the Early Bird launch activities transferred to an S-VHS master and a VHS review copy and you were going to transfer it to DVD. Did this Comsat video ever get made? How can I get a copy of this DVD?

I also read that there is an annual gathering of Intelsat and Comsat people at a park somewhere around Gaithersburg every year. What is the proposed date of that gathering for 2013. I have tentative plans to be in Maryland next year during the week of 19-25 May, 2013. If it is around that time we may be able to stay over a few days and attend this gathering.

I know it is several years away (2015) but the 50th anniversary of the launch of Earlybird would be a great time to bring the Comara people back together. I remember that about six or seven of us who were doing the Earlybird launch at 2100 L Street went to see the Washington Senators play their opening game that year after Earlybird was in its synchronous orbit. Are there any thoughts about doing something to celebrate this event in 2015?

Christine Seville Sherrer

As a member of Comara, and former employee from 1968 – 1978 and then with Intelsat from 1978 to 1990, I am always interested in reading about members of both organizations (COMARA & IRA) and love to look at the photographs, most especially of the old Comsat organization. I respectfully suggest if there is a way possible for the Comara Web page design be structured so that members can upload photographs into an area designed for the this. I am sure there are some wonderful old photographs (along with stories) in files just getting old and faded. I know this would be somewhat complicated project to design and get started, but as Web Master I am sure you would know how it could be done of course, with the support and approval of the governing body and a call out for photographs and the stories behind the photographs. I was a very young woman when I started working initially for Comsat Labs in 1968 for Andy Werth and John Puente and do remember so many of the employees. Unfortunately, with time, so many members are no longer around and so many of younger ones are now seniors so reading stories and seeing old pictures would be wonderful. Such a wonderful period the 1960s and 1970s.

Henri Suyderhoud

As an ex-Comsat Labs employee, I would like to find out if Intelsat is still headquartered in Washington, DC, and how I can reach their summer employment office. My grandson Peter Suyderhoud is a sophomore at Washington University in St Louis, MO, where he is majoring in engineering. He is very interested in a summer intern job of some kind in the technical area, and I thought that Intelsat or the Lockheed owned Labs might be a good place for him to try for such a summer job. Could you provide me with a telephone number in the Washington area related to Intelsat or Lockheed Martin. I tried the various web sites but didn't get close to getting a telephone number.
**Ethel Jean (Kowan) Saltz**

Are their sufficient members in Leisure World of Maryland to start a group? I moved in on 9/2010. I do not receive mail there. I use USPS PO Box which miraculously now has reformatted their addressing system so that it’s just like any old multi-residential building. So no one can identify me as living in Leisure World of Maryland. Except in the phone book. Because of the complexities of infrastructure here, I am now sort of caught up as a home owner, so am refreshing my COMSAT life. In addition to being a resident, they could also be employed here.

**George Huson**

*From the Montgomery Gazette.*

The Olympics may be over, but for 83-year-old swimmer George Huson they are just beginning. Huson — a resident of Asbury Methodist Village, a retirement community in Gaithersburg — and hundreds of other athletes in the state are gearing up for the Maryland Senior Olympics, a statewide competition with 180 events for 22 sports for anyone 50 and older. On Sept. 8, Huson will step up to the block and compete in the 50-yard freestyle, 200-yard backstroke, 50-yard backstroke and the 100-yard individual medley swimming events at the Germantown Indoor Swim Center in Boyds.

**Jim Thomas**

I'd like to know the status of the Labs building, both in general (the latest on its future), and more specifically, whether I can get explicit permission to use it for a small gathering to observe the Transit Of Venus on June 5th. The nominally public access and open space, together with a fairly low western horizon, make it a potentially good venue for this event. *We don't know if Jim was able to hold this gathering, but it's good to know of his interest.*

**In Memoriam**

**Lorraine Callaway - Jul 26, 2012**

My dear wife since 1955, Lorraine L. Callaway, died on July 26, 2012. To those of you who did not know me, I joined COMSAT less than a year after it was incorporated by an act of congress and served as Manager of Administration, Manager of Personnel, Purchasing, General Services and later as Controller.

[http://comara.org/members/notices/LorraineCallaway.pdf](http://comara.org/members/notices/LorraineCallaway.pdf)

**Mary McGaha - May 2, 1937 -- Aug 21, 2012**

Mrs. Mary Matilda Maust McGaha, age 75 of Frederick, passed away on Tuesday, August 21, 2012 at NMS of Hagerstown. Born on May 2, 1937 in Somerset, PA. She is a 1992 retiree from COMSAT Corp in Clarksburg, MD after 20+ years of service. Mrs. McGaha is survived by one daughter and five sons, She is also survived by a former daughter-in-law Sherri McGaha.

[http://comara.org/members/notices/MaryMcGaha.pdf](http://comara.org/members/notices/MaryMcGaha.pdf)

**Margaret Thorne - July 1, 2012**

My Dear Comsat Friends, I am saddened to report to you the death of my wife and lifelong friend, Margaret "Peg" A. Thorne, on Sunday July 1, 2012. After a medium intensity stroke in 2008 she had become increasingly handicapped and suffered a number of falls and injuries. Still I was able to keep her riding her horse from time to time. We met in 1962 after I returned home from the US Navy and we have been together since. Everything good thing that came to me in my life arrived while we were partners

[http://comara.org/members/notices/MargaretThorne.pdf](http://comara.org/members/notices/MargaretThorne.pdf)
William D Houser Internment at Arlington - June 28, 2012

VADM Houser, a resident of Middleburg, Virginia died on Sunday, February 5, 2012. Funeral services will be held at Fort Myer Old Post Chapel on Thursday, June 28, at 11 a.m. Interment will follow at Arlington National Cemetery with full military honors.

Thanks to Ed Martin for providing the information.

For more information, visit ADM Houser's website: http://www.jilasting.com/vadmwilliamhouser.php

Shirin F. Haidari Services June 7


She was born in New York, NY, May 16, 1947. She graduated from Bishop O'Connell High School in Arlington, VA and attended Catholic University and George Washington University. She is survived by her two sons Ian Robinson and Keith Robinson and her sister Azar Attura.

John A Gordon - April 10, 2012

Note from Mike O'Hara: Just to let you know that John A. Gordon passed away this past Tuesday.


John worked at the Comsat Labs M&S Service Center in the 80s. John and I worked together at the Orion (later Loral) Mt Jackson VA Earth Station through 2006.

Coleman Guthrie Service was held March 3, 2012


http://www.comara.org/members/notices/ColemanGuthrie.htm

Coleman joined Communication Satellite Corp. in 1968, where he was promoted to VP and general manager of Comsat World Satellite Systems. His design contributions include Comstar, Marisat and Intelsat satellite systems. He retired from Comsat in 1987.

Edith Ford Funeral - March 10, 2012

Edith G Ford -- Aug 19, 1918 - Mar 5, 2012

http://comara.org/members/notices/edithgford.pdf

Mrs. Edith G. Ford, 93, of Frederick, died at home on March 5, 2012, from complications following a fall. She was born Aug. 19, 1918, in Shenandoah County, VA,

She worked at COMSAT Labs in Clarksburg, MD from 1969 until her retirement in 1983, she was secretary to the director of Spacecraft Lab and later the first manager of the newly created Word Processing Center.

Dilip Paul

I recently learned that Dr. Dilip Paul, who worked in the optics group at COMSAT Labs for some years, passed away last March while visiting relatives in Kolkata, India. A brief obituary may be found at:

http://sanskriti-dc.org/cms/node/1326

Thanks to all of you who sent information and photos. We hope we didn’t miss any. If we did, send it for next issue.

Work is underway to add some of the features suggested by our members in the "News from Colleagues" section. In particular, we want to enable direct posting of photos and stories from your browser.