

COMARA Newsletter — May 2010

First COMSAT and INTELSAT Retirees' Family Picnic Set for Saturday, June 26

The COMARA and Intelsat Retirees Association will hold a joint family picnic on Saturday June 26th at 11:30 am until 2:30 pm at the Glen Echo Park on McArthur Blvd near Cabin John. All are welcome since this is a BYOB affair (Bring Your Own box lunch and drinks). Glen Echo Park is located on MacArthur Blvd. by the Potomac River between Chain Bridge and Cabin John (American Legion) Bridge. Come early to claim tables and to be ready for the carousel to be open for grandkids and the young at heart (tickets are \$1.25). Currently the rain date is Sunday, June 27th. We hope you and your family can come. The best part is the cost is FREE, but you do need to make a reservation (go to <http://www.comara.org> and click on Picnic Reservation Form.



COMSAT Annual Reunion Returns to Maryland



Our Fall/Winter time outside look.

The COMSAT Annual Meeting and COMARA Reunion will be held at the Golden Bull in Gaithersburg, MD, on September 19, 2010. The restaurant is easily reached from 270. Details will be provided later. Irv Dostis and Denis Curtin negotiated the contract after hearing preferences from many of you. Of course, some of the preferences were mutually exclusive (you can't please all of the people all of the time). They also spoke to a number of different venues in Maryland, Virginia and the District to find the best deal for us.

Latest on Satellite Communications Exhibit Sponsored by SSPI, COMARA, IRA and Others

by Joseph Pelton

Progress continues on the concept of creating one or more satellite communications exhibits at space and science museums. Students at the Corcoran School of Design will work on specific design concepts for an exhibit during the Summer and Fall of 2010. We are looking for volunteers to work on the project and to help us identify artifacts from the satellite industry for the exhibits. Please contact Joe Pelton at joepelton@verizon.net or Robert Bell of the SSPI at rbell@sspi.org

Concept: There is currently a Space Hall in the National Electronics Museum (NEM) near BWI Airport in complex owned by the Northrop Grumman Corporation. The concept is to design a new exhibit for an expanded Space Hall under the "headline" Satellite Serving Humanity". This will expand the current exhibit and help to give the visitors to NEM a more integrated story about all the ways that "outer space" has served and continues to serve humanity. Within that vision there will also be an attempt to present in clear and visually powerful ways how the technology works and where and how the various satellites systems are and why they are there.

We are also in contact with the Cradle of Aviation Museum at Mitchell Field in Long Island, New York and discussions about an exhibit and a MOU are underway. Please let us know if you can help with satellites or satellite models, earth station equipment, or other artifacts of interest.

Member Communications

If you receive this newsletter in the mail, **we don't have a working email address for you**. After two attempts to send you new using email, we flag your email address and stop sending any future email news to the non-working email address.

There are two reasons that we use email for communications. One is cost. The other is the time required to mail a newsletter to each of our members. We don't use a commercial service to handle mailing (too expensive), so Board members stuff the envelopes and attach labels. **So, if you have an email address, please send it to webmaster@comara.org.**

If you are a former COMSAT employee or surviving spouse, you are welcome to join COMARA by filling out the registration form at <http://www.comara.org> (click on the "Register for Membership" link in the left menu bar). Two email addresses can be entered in the form and newsletters will be emailed to both addresses. At registration, we request that the new member pay the current dues (\$10/year). Your dues payment does two things: it validates you as a member (spammers don't pay dues), and it supports the objectives of COMARA.

Protecting your personal information: Many pages on the COMARA web site are available to anyone. However a few are restricted to members who have paid dues. The listing of contact information becomes available only after you sign in.

Note: We only mail newsletters to registered members who have paid dues. We continue to email newsletters to anyone who has registered.

The next newsletter is planned to be published in August. Send us your news and your photos by the first of August. Let us hear from you!

Check your dues status at <http://comara.org>. After you sign in, your dues status is displayed at the top of the page. If you then click the "Edit My Profile" link at the left, you'll find more detail. If your dues payment is not current, why not send a \$20 check for 2010 and 2011? Make checks payable to COMARA; put "Dues" on the memo line; and send to COMARA, PO Box 34594, Bethesda, MD 20827.

Benefits

Both of the stories that appear below are continuing to evolve. For the latest news, stay tuned to <http://www.comara.org>, where you'll find the latest news analysis from COMARA's benefits expert, Jack Hannon, as well as comments and discussions posted by your COMARA colleagues. You must be a registered member (with dues paid through 2010) to access these updates.

Health Care Bills Passed by the House on March 21

Jack Hannon

These Bills are extremely dense, constituting nearly 4,000 pages of legislative verbiage. I have done the best I can to understand what's going on but make no guarantee to have "caught everything."

I cannot find any direct and major impact on health coverage through Lockheed Martin except possibly for the plan introduced last year, entitled "Medicare Direct Access 850", which I believe would fall into the category of a "Medicare Advantage" plan. Those plans may be significantly reduced in coverage or even eliminated, as a result of major reductions in payments from the government, to wit:

"Insurers have also complained that the legislation calls for the government to begin paying them much less in federal payments for the private Medicare Advantage plans that they sell to older people as an alternative to traditional Medicare." *NY Times, March 22, 2010, p. B2.*

"Medicare Advantage, a form of Medicare provided by private insurance companies to about 11 million seniors, will lose nearly \$120 billion over the next decade, probably forcing providers to drop popular benefits such as gym memberships." *Washington Post, March 22, 2010, p. A10.*

Presumably if the government pays less to the insurers for these plans, some of which even offered free gym memberships, then the insurers will offer less to their customers, or plow those plans under.

I find nothing to indicate that the other Aetna plans, notably "Medicare Plus Catastrophic Plan 076", in which so many of us are enrolled, have been affected in any direct way.

Of course, as Bob Kinzie notes, the entire reform presumes a \$500 billion cut in Medicare, and sooner or later that is going to affect us, one way or another.

There are a lot of "goodies" in the Health Care Reform Bill that come almost right away. Consult the excellent table in the Post on March 22 at p. A11 on the principal features and when they "kick in." Here are some examples:

Immediately After President Signs

- No more co-pays for "Preventive Medicine." (This is not in the *Post's* table.)

90 days after "Enactment"

- Adults with pre-existing conditions that perhaps have prevented them from obtaining any insurance will be able to go to "high risk pools" and obtain coverage. (An MSNBC report today said that the whole pre-existing condition rigamarole that has plagued us for decades will be barred even for adults.circa 2014.)

180 Days After Enactment

Bars insurers from

- Denying people coverage when they get sick;
- Denying coverage to children with "pre-existing conditions"
- Imposing lifetime maximums on the amount covered per individual

Also, allows children to remain on their parents' health coverage until age 26.

Most of the detriments in the legislation, like higher taxes on individuals and couples who earn more than \$200,000/250,000 a year, and on "high-end" insurance policies - the so-called "Cadillac plans" - come much later in the 2010 - 2018 time period.

We need to remain watchful, but my first look is reasonably positive.

Prescription Costs

Jack Hannon

Lockheed Martin and other companies have announced a drop in earnings that they attribute to the Medicare Part D (Prescription Drug) coverage provisions in the healthcare bill.

You will recall that John Scully wrote an article in the WSJ in early December 2009 indicating that some Congressional sources wanted to "pull" the subsidy the federal government was paying to employers who continued employer-provided prescription drug plans rather than dump them all into the new Medicare

Plan D when it became law several years ago, which Scully asserted would have had far greater cost to the government for each employee than the subsidy the government was proposing. I asked everyone at the time to contact their Senators and House member to urge continuation of that subsidy, thereby retaining current levels of employer-provided prescription drug plans. From the text you have just read on-line, I draw several conclusions.

Medicare Part D 'Reforms' Will Harm Seniors

The subsidy discussed above, at least in terms of dollars paid to employers by the government, has not been withdrawn.

However, although this totally amazes me, when the Plan D program became law, the employers receiving the subsidy were also allowed to deduct this "free money" -- the subsidy -- as a business expense!!

Under standard accounting rules, employers were also allowed to roll several future years of such tax benefits forward and deduct it all at one time. This is what many did, including, it appears, Lockheed.

The health care bill removed "only" the ability of corporations to deduct this government subsidy as a tax expense. But because of #3, many then had to back out all of the deductions they had claimed for future years. That is why the level of the write-downs are so large, and, for example, the increase in Lockheed's "effective tax rate" is so large (7 - 8% or so).

Every employer who has had to do this has now said that as a result, they have to study all the implications of the health care bill. Lockheed is no exception.

Bear in mind that this particular dust-up relates only to prescription drug services, not to the broader health care coverage.

Who knows what else the employers will find lurking in the bill!

It is certainly possible that Lockheed, who won't comment on my inquiry of last week (I can't blame them), will decide to eliminate prescription drug coverage at some future date.

We will then have the option of buying Medicare Plan D coverage from a variety of insurers. We would not pay a penalty for failing to subscribe when it was first offered, because Lockheed has been certifying "comparable coverage" each year since then (i.e. the Lockheed plan is equal to or better than Plan D). There is of course the matter of the "doughnut hole" in Plan D (you are totally on the hook for \$2,000 - \$3,000 of drug costs per year if you reach a certain expense level in a given year above somewhere near \$2,000). (This is general, not specific - I frankly don't know that much about this.) But once you do that, you are covered for nearly 100% of any additional drug costs in a given year. Anyway, while providing only some limited benefits in this regards in the early years (cash payments to seniors, discounts on drugs), the new health care law closes the "doughnut hole" over a period of at least several years.

I hope this is accurate, but remember, I'm "just a guy with a computer and a little time." You can do your own research on this, and perhaps should.

News From Colleagues—Keeping In Touch

Stephen Day writes: After leaving COMSAT at the end of 1990, I started a management consulting company, International Ventures Associates, LTD, focusing on selective domestic and international Telecoms and IT markets. We had a great run - until the dot com meltdown in 2002! I have remained involved with an organization that Burt Edelson started in 1990, called the Japan-U.S. Science, Technology & Space Applications Program (www.justsap.org), and am now in my seventh year as chairman, after taking over from Burt. Other activities are a couple of for-profit boards, the corporation board of the Woods Hole Oceanographic Institute (WHOI), and practicums for AU's Kogod business

school over the last decade. Therapy comes from painting, and I am just about to close a 3-month exhibition at the T. Moser showroom (33rd & M) in Georgetown, called Chesapeake Rhythms (see <http://www.callowayart.com/>). For those remembering me as a rather button-downed Brit, I have just published a book called [BONKERS!! Ballooning, guddling and other wild stories](#) that should reverse those perceptions. My wife Sara worked for the Library of Congress (LOC) for many years, and is now working toward a book contract.

Rosemary Calvit, wife of **Tom Calvit**, writes that Tom has been at the Potomac Valley Nursing Home, 1235 Potomac Valley Rd, Rockville, MD 20850-2799, since Easter and will probably be there a while longer, although they're considering a move to Brighton Gardens on Tuckerman Lane. He has made good progress with physical therapy, and would enjoy visits from friends. Visiting hours are 11 am until 8 pm and the phone number is 301-762-0700.

Joe Bulko writes, Everyone has a story to tell. This is my story, it is about me, my trip through this life, my memoirs. He's referring to his two new books, **Walls of Illusion**, Books 1 and 2. Here's an excerpt from Book 1:

We come into this world surrounded by Walls of Illusion. Some go through their entire lifetime, and die, surrounded by these walls. While for others these walls come crumbling down as a result of life's experience, knowledge, and the wisdom that comes from both, allowing the sea of reality to come flooding in, and life is different!

Well here I am in Wily Ford West Virginia. I started out in 1931 from Monessen Pennsylvania. A distance of about 85 miles. It took 67 years to get here.

Michael Vaughan, one of COMARA's newest members, writes that he's now living in what was the



Bartlett Earth Station Manager's house in the Bartlett Park Subdivision. William Patterson and then Harry Gross were station managers

Michael sent the photo at left, taken at the Bartlett Earth Station Dedication in June 1970. People identified in the photo include Bill Miller, Bill Patterson, Governor and Mrs. William Egan, Michael Vaughan, ?? Clay, and Carl D. Gleason.

Joe Pelton, (COMARA President), remains busy as an author these days. He has managed to produce 5 books in the last 18 months and

bring his total books published up to 33. His latest include: "Future Cities", "The Farthest Shore: A 21st Century Guide to Space", "MegaCrunch: Ten Survival Strategies for the 21st Century" and "License to Orbit: A Guide to Commercial Space Travel". Out in August will be "Space Safety Regulations and Standards". Anyone interested can go to www.Amazon.com

Tom Kirkendall, COMARA Treasurer, reports that he and his family had some unplanned excitement during a recent bareboat sailing cruise in the British Virgin Islands. While he and his crew were ashore,

their chartered 44-foot sloop broke loose from its mooring and drifted across Cane Garden Bay headed for the shallows and crashing waves on the rocky shore at the west end. Impending tragedy was avoided by quick action of his son, Bob, who launched the dinghy and reached the boat just in time. The pennant of the mooring had broken loose from the mooring chain with bow lines still intact. Ironically the name of the boat was *Vela Via*, meaning “sail away” in Italian. Tom invites anyone interested in bareboat chartering to contact him at Treasurer@comara.org.

In Memoriam

Larry Weekley, former senior information officer at COMSAT passed away on February 24, 2010, at age 84, at his home in Brinklow near Olney, MD. He joined COMSAT in 1966, and became communications director of Satellite Business Systems in 1977. He joined the American Bankers Association in 1985 and retired in 1990.

Jim Taylor, husband of Shirley Taylor, was born on October 2, 1925, and died on January 3, 2010. Jim served aboard the aircraft carrier USS Boxer in the South Pacific during World War II. With the help of the G.I. Bill, he received a B.A. from Hiram College in Ohio, and then took graduate courses at Gallaudet College so that he could teach children with special learning needs. Jim and Shirley were married in 1966. They later bought land in West Virginia, where Jim built their one-of-a-kind solar home. Astronomy was Jim's true passion, and he spent hundreds of hours at his home observatory. He was cofounder and active member of Tristate Astronomers, and two of his proudest achievements were earning Messier and Herschel observation certificates and pins.

Terrence Ul Jung King, son of Chris King and husband Terrence, died on March 31, 2010. Born in Korea on May 14, 1986, “Terry” was a 2004 graduate of Gonzaga High School and a 2008 graduate of the University of Maryland Baltimore Campus. He enjoyed theater and was a talented musician who played guitar and piano. Memorial contributions may be made to the Gonzaga High School Theater Association, 19 I Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20001-1425.

Mike Hulley lost his fight with a rare form of cancer on February 20, 2010. It was the third recurrence of the cancer that had begun in his neck six years ago, but this time had spread to his lungs and bones. Mike's wife Kathie notes that Mike was always grateful for the opportunity to work at Comsat and enjoyed interacting with his colleagues and friends, and she and children Erinn and Elliott thank everyone for condolences and kind thoughts. Details will follow about the celebration of his life, which will take place later in the year.

Anuradha Sapru Kohls, wife of Eric Kohls, departed on April 12, 2010. She was born in Ranchi, India on February 27, 1967. In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions may be made in her honor to The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society Donor Services, P.O. Box 4072, Pittsfield MA 01202 (Leukemia.org) or National Marrow Donor Program, 3001 Broadway Street, NE, Suite 100, Minneapolis, MN 55413 (marrow.org).

Pat Kiernan died Saturday, March 13, 2010. Pat was the Executive Staff Assistant to General George Sampson, VP, Operations, in the early years of COMSAT's history, and thereafter held many senior posts among the company's administration staff. Pat also served for years on the COMSAT Credit Union Board, was a founding member of COMARA, and participated in many of COMARA's earliest deliberations and decisions. In lieu of flowers, the family has asked that donations be given to the American Cancer Society (<http://www.cancer.org/>) [1-800-227-2345]. She was a consummate professional and a good friend to many.

Dave Collins (*Gyfford Davidson Collins, II*) 1938–2010, of Rockville, MD, died Tuesday, May 4, 2010 at Suburban Hospital, Bethesda, MD. A devoted husband, father and grandfather, Dave is survived by his wife, Virginia; daughters, Cynthia and Sarah; four grandchildren, Megan, Timothy, Tucker and Lucas; as well as a great-grandson, Desmond. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in memory of Dave Collins to Christ Episcopal Church, Rockville, MD.