

UCRAB Newsletter

University of California Retirees' Association at Berkeley

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UCRAB Luncheon and Annual Meeting

Thursday, June 15, 2006

Spenger's Fresh Fish Grotto, 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.

Jesse H. Choper

Earl Warren Professor of Public Law, Boalt Hall

"The New Supreme Court"

This is an event you won't want to miss! Mark your calendars for June 15 when Jesse Choper will be the speaker at UCRAB's Summer Luncheon at Spenger's Fish Grotto.

Professor Choper is one of UC Berkeley's most distinguished faculty members. He began his legal career with a bang as the law clerk to Earl Warren, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court. Choper started teaching at the Boalt Hall School of Law in 1965 and served as its dean from 1982 to 1992. He received the UC Berkeley Distinguished Teaching Award in 1998 and was presented with the Faculty Lifetime Achievement Award in 2005 by the Boalt Hall Alumni Association. Currently Professor Choper is vice president of the American Association of Arts and Sciences.

Most importantly for us UCRABers, Professor Choper has long been a very popular and engaging public speaker. The thousands who have had the good fortune to hear him have invariably come away feeling stimulated, informed, and entertained. He is looking forward to speaking to us on June 15 when his topic will be the "new" Supreme Court.

With the recent appointments of Chief Justice John Roberts and Associate Justice Samuel Alito there is much to discuss regarding future "hot button" cases that might come before this court. Our Summer Luncheon will thus be a wonderful opportunity for all of us. We'll enjoy the always-convivial social hour starting at 11:00 a.m., followed by lunch and our very brief annual meeting and election, and then, best of all, we'll be truly privileged to listen to Jesse Choper.

Please reserve your places early by filling out the enclosed form. And remember, spouses and friends are always welcome!

Milton Elbogen, Events

Inside...

President's Message....p.2

Now I Lay Me Down.....p.3

UCRS Report.....p.3

Letters from Mosul...p.3

**Luncheons, Trips and
Membership.....Insert**

Aging at Home.....p.4

This organization would not exist without dedicated volunteers.

The UC Berkeley Retirees' Association invites its members to attend the executive board meetings, which are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 10:30 a.m. in Room 256, University Hall.

The coming schedule:

June 21
July 19
September 20
October 18
November 15

Please note that no meetings are held in August or December.

The UC Berkeley Retirees' Association is located at:

Two Boalt Hall, # 7200
Berkeley, CA 94720-7200

Hours: 9:00am—4:00pm
Closed Noon—1:00pm

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to UCRAB:

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Administrative Specialist

The UCRAB Newsletter is published approximately three weeks before each quarterly luncheon.

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President's Message

CUCRA, the Council of University of California Retiree Associations, met in San Diego in late March. Our vice president, Iola James, represented UCRAB and returned with several bits of information that I want to pass along to you.

The Joint Benefits Committee (JBC), a group that monitors events and policies at the state and university level for both staff and emeriti organizations, reported on its findings. Randolph Scott, Executive Director, Policy and Program Design for UCOP Human Benefits and Resources, also reported on recent developments. Both reiterated the University's commitment to its retirement program, while anticipating some potential changes for current and future employees; present retirees' benefits will not be affected by any of these changes. One such development is the decision of The Regents to require employees to begin to pay into the retirement fund as most of us did prior to the early 1990s. Since then UCRP has been over-funded to the extent that no employee contributions have been required in recent years. Now the funding level is decreasing and in order to keep it at the desired level (between 90 and 110% funded), contributions will be resumed in 2007. No contributions will be asked of those already retired, only from current employees, at a level yet to be determined.

The University also reiterated its commitment to providing annuitant health care benefits while making no promises that benefits will remain at the present level indefinitely. One encouraging feature is the apparent desire of the administration to consult widely with all constituents before any proposals for change are put forward or implemented. As most of you know, the University will soon be subject to new accounting rules that require it to carry on its books the unfunded liabilities for annuitant health care, now amounting to some \$7.6 billion. Health benefits, unlike retirement payments, are not pre-funded but are paid out of current revenues so they are not guaranteed to remain at any particular level. However, the JBC noted that Medicare annuitants have met with extra low costs in the past two years due to changes in federal government payments to providers. Randy Scott stated, "In general, UC subsidizes annuitant health care more than competitors."

On another front, let me remind you that our June luncheon is also UCRAB's annual membership meeting at which we will elect half of our board members. If you have suggestions for retirees who might wish to serve, please give their names to the Retirement Center for forwarding to our Nominating Committee. We are especially seeking a nominee to replace (as if that were possible!) August Manza as Membership Chair. Hope to see you at the luncheon!

Marian Gade, UCRAB President

*Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
I pray the Lord my soul to take*

Many of us recall this tender little prayer from childhood days. Maybe you recited the prayer at bedtime, prompted by your mother. Indeed, it's easy to picture a six-year-old kneeling at his or her bed, small hands clasped in prayer. "That's CORNY!" you say. Perhaps, but think Norman Rockwell.

Corny or not – and I haven't decided that question myself – I can say this prayer took on special meaning for me several months ago following a rather frightening experience. Late one night, while brushing my teeth before going to bed, without warning the room began to spin around me. Not understanding what was happening, I held onto the marble vanity and stared at my image in the mirror as the room continued to spin. Looking back on the incident, I realize the dizzy spell possibly lasted no more than fifteen or twenty seconds. Nonetheless, I was terrified. What was happening to me? A stroke? A heart attack?

Once the spinning stopped, I made my way cautiously into the bedroom and sank onto the bed, undecided what I should do. Should I call a neighbor, or send for an ambulance? Feeling somewhat better by this time, I made up my mind to sweat it out until morning. "What's a little dizzy spell?" I asked myself, settling down for the night.

It was at that exact moment an inner voice seemed to speak the words, "If I should die before I wake, I pray the Lord my soul to take." Even then I was struck by the absurdity of my reciting a child's prayer. However, I asked myself, is this ONLY a child's prayer? Didn't I need this prayer more than a six-year-old?

In any event, I'm happy to report I've had no recurrence of the vertigo I experienced that scary night. Yet I confess I find myself every so often returning to that line, "If I should die before I wake," before drifting off to sleep. Those words are not so much a prayer as a mantra, and they bring a certain peace and tranquility.

Dorothy Snodgrass

The Office of the President is busy working on the transition of the Los Alamos National Laboratory to the Los Alamos National Security, LLC. As you may remember this change was mandated by the Department of Energy. It will not affect any of us who are retired or those who still work on the campuses. If you are interested in the particulars you can find them at <http://labs.ucop.edu/index.html>.

The July 1, 2006 Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) has been set and is as follows:

Retirement Date:	
On or before 7/1/2002:	2.01%
7/1/2002 to 7/1/2003:	2.29%
7/2/2003 to 7/1/2005:	2.01%

The COLA is based on the average increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) for urban consumers in the metropolitan areas of San Francisco and Los Angeles between February 2005 and February 2006.

Toni Sweet

Letters from Mosul

UCRAB's own Dorothy Snodgrass has written a play, *Letters from Mosul*, which was produced and presented at BareStage Theater in Red Bluff in 2005. Now, with modern technology, you can hear Dorothy's play, and others, online through streaming audio or by podcast.

Letters from Mosul is about the letters between a mother and her son -- a soldier in Iraq. These letters cause the mother to question the veracity of her government and the safety of its citizens.

If you have Internet access and a web browser that handles RSS (Really Simple Syndication) feeds you can hear the play at feeds.feedburner.com/NewStages. Browsers that support RSS are Safari (Mac), Opera and Firefox (PC and Mac - free download at mozilla.com). Microsoft Internet Explorer 7, due out soon, will have this capability.

Reminder: It is membership renewal time. Your address label has a code above your name. If your code is "05-06" your membership expires on June 30. See the enclosed membership insert for renewal information.

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Aging at Home: A Successful Project in Boston

One of our readers has called my attention to a very interesting article published in the *New York Times* in February. Titled "Aging at Home: For a Lucky Few, a Wish Come True," the article describes an ambitious undertaking by Beacon Hill Village, a nonprofit organization created by and for local residents who are determined to grow old in familiar surroundings and to make that possible for others.

"Aging in place" is the wave of the future, experts say, an alternative to nursing homes and assisted living centers. At Beacon Hill Village, members live in one of two large neighborhoods and pay dues to belong. The program was started by a dozen or so residents who wanted to remain at home even after transportation and household chores became difficult. They also wanted to avoid dependence on adult children and were unwilling to move into senior housing.

Membership dues can be based on personal income and cover weekly trips to the market, rides from volunteers, group exercise classes, relevant lecture programs and much more. Paid services such as home repair or home health aides are generally discounted anywhere from 10 to 50 percent from the going rate. Members are very appreciative of helpers who take them shopping, volunteers who carry animals to the vet, people who water their plants, and meals that are delivered regularly.

Beacon Hill has recently published a how-to manual which they will sell for \$300 to \$500 to guide others through the complexity of creating a business plan and surveying community needs. The article can be seen in its entirety at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/09/garden/09care> (free registration with nytimes.com required).

What a good idea!

Sondra Jensen