

# BREA News



Volume 4, Issue 1

September 16, 2004

## BREA Executive Board Meetings

The BREA executive board meets monthly in building 475, room 107. All BREA members are invited to attend. We would like your participation in our meetings.

### *Executive Board Meeting Schedule:*

- Sept. 14 (Tuesday)
- Oct. 13 (Wednesday)
- Nov. 16 (Tuesday)
- Dec. 15 (Wednesday)

## Web Reminder

As more people get network access, the importance of the various Web pages grows. We would like to remind you not only of our page: <http://www.brea.bnl.gov> but you can read the Lab Bulletin at: <http://www.bnl.gov/bnlweb/pubaf/bulletin.html> And it is usually ready on Friday with color pictures. And for those still living locally check out the activities on the BERA page at: <http://www.bnl.gov/bera>

## AND A GOOD TIME WAS HAD BY ALL...

On May 27th, BREA hosted a luncheon for BNL retirees and other guests. Over 170 people attended. Praveen Chaudhari, the director of BNL spoke to the attendees about the current state of the Laboratory. Congressman Timothy Bishop spoke about the implications of the new Medicare law. A two-person band provided music for dancing. BREA had

previously hosted a luncheon in 2001. Both of these luncheons were held at Villa Lombardi. In order to keep the cost of the luncheon at \$30, BREA used monies from its treasury to make up the difference.

Renee Flack, a recent retiree, organized the BREA luncheon. She and her committee, Alyce Daly, Flo O'Brien, George Rabinowitz and Sonya Santos did an outstanding job. BREA T-shirts were offered for sale at the luncheon. They incorporate the new BREA logo. T-shirts are also for sale at the BERA store in BNL's Berkner Hall.



## An Insurance Tip

If you have both Medicare and CIGNA PPO Medical coverage, then here is a procedure to save you some money. The current BNL CIGNA PPO medical plan has a \$500 annual deductible per person if you don't use in-network

providers. Medicare has a \$100 annual deductible (\$110 beginning 2005). If you use a PPO in-network provider, the co-payment is \$15 for many services.

If you routinely see certain physicians once or twice a year, go to

the PPO providers first in the calendar year and submit first to Medicare and then to CIGNA - this way you use up your \$100 Medicare deductible (\$110 beginning 2005) and pay only \$15 per PPO in-network visit.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## The Early Days

Graham Campbell

*(Ed. Note: We normally do not have by-lines in the Newsletter. I added the by-line to emphasize that this is personal recollections)*

I want to say thank you to BREA for the recognition at the luncheon of my role in forming BREA. I started thinking about the early days after that and I want to share some of my recollections. I retired on Sept. 30, 1995, jumped in my boat and spent the following winter in the Caribbean. When I returned I then faced the problem of readjusting the rhythm of my life to being retired. John Denes had gathered the local retirees from AMD/CCD/ITD for a once a week meeting at a local coffee house and I joined them. Somehow, with only a half-day's work, once a week, we managed to solve not only all the Lab's problems, but also most of the world's problems. Then, in the late spring of 1997, DOE secretary Peña abruptly fired AUI over the issue of a leaking spent fuel pool for the HFBR. Now there was only one problem for us to solve.

AUI was well respected in the Lab community. It was regarded as protecting the academic research environment of the lab from the Washington politicians. It also had a high regard for the quality of life of employees and was generous in its contributions. As retirees we felt sure that AUI would defend our

benefits. Many of us felt that DOE treated AUI unfairly.

As we discussed the prospects for a new contractor, we came to realize that there was a real possibility that the new contractor would be a company that was less interested in academic research than in profiting from the association. Since there was (and still is) a corporate environment that wants to reduce health care benefits, we felt this possibility was a problem. More discussion and we decided that the only path was to organize the retirees and take part in the process. So we composed a letter asking if people were interested, got hold of a list of the retirees, and several of the group sat around my dining room table folding and stuffing envelopes and putting on address labels. I had put my address and phone number on the letter as a response point. We put it in the mail (about 1400 letters!) on June 1 and waited to see what happened.

Well what happened was dramatic. My poor, cheap little answering machine was overwhelmed in a few hours after the letters started being delivered. I had seen something on my new computer about answering machine software, so I scrambled around trying to learn something about it. In a few hours I had the computer answering the phone and

recording the messages. This gave us a little breathing space. The response was so prompt and plentiful that by June 8 we decided to go ahead with an association.

Meanwhile there was great turmoil at the Lab. The anti-nuclear activists were holding rallies calling for shutting down the Lab (some right at the Lab gate). Senator D'Amato and Representative Michael Forbes introduced legislation to shut down the HFBR, and Rep. Forbes was calling a series of town meetings to discuss BNL, which he characterized as a major polluter. Lab employees formed a couple of organizations: Friends of Brookhaven, and The Brookhaven Organization of Scientists (originally Brookhaven Scientists Association until the new contractor with almost the same name was chosen). BREA and both these organizations were active in defending the Lab in various public forums. The D'Amato/Forbes legislation would short cut an ongoing DOE evaluation and force a political decision on a rational review process. This generated considerable anger among the Lab community and led to a rally outside Forbes office attended by over a thousand people.

*(To be continued, next Newsletter)*

## CAC Happenings

The Community Advisory Council (CAC) consists of approximately 32 member organizations representing a broad spectrum of the community interested in BNL (the current jargon word is “stakeholders”). Members meet monthly, set their own agenda, and work to reach consensus recommendations on issues of concern to them.

BREA is a founding member of this organization and played an important role in its establishment. Much more information is available at <http://www.bnl.gov/community/CAC.asp>

Previously the CAC has provided important input to the groundwater cleanup and soil cleanup efforts. It took a very active role in design of the Peconic River cleanup plan, working with the Lab on a new technology workshop and pilot project. It also played an important role in support of a

pollution prevention workshop for the Long Island community that was hosted by the Lab.

Currently, the main thing being considered is the decommissioning of the BGRR. There is a “Proposed Remediation Action Plan” and the CAC is considering which of the alternatives (if any) to support. The primary things that make this job difficult are the very long-lived isotopes that are present and the limited experience with dismantling this type of reactor. In addition there is a question of how far to go with the cleanup since there have been leakages of radioactive isotopes into the ground in locations that are inaccessible without dismantling Bldg. 701 entirely. It should be pointed out that the reactor has long been out of operation, all fuel rods removed long ago. The 3 major areas requiring remediation are the reactor core, the bioshield, and the ductwork that carried

away cooling air. (The BGRR was an air-cooled, graphite-moderated reactor). Work is well underway on the ductwork. The graphite core poses a problem because it now contains a large amount of C<sup>14</sup>, which has a very long lifetime. This renders the prospect of just leaving it in place to decay naturally very questionable.

Graham Campbell is the BREA representative to the CAC and Arnie Peskin is the alternate representative. If you have any comments on these issues please contact one of them ([gc@bnl.gov](mailto:gc@bnl.gov) or [peskin@bnl.gov](mailto:peskin@bnl.gov)) Or come to a meeting if you are on Long Island. The meetings are at 6:30PM on the second Thursday of each month in Berkner Hall. Meetings are open to the public and you are encouraged to come.

## Insurance Tip—contd.

If your non-network visits come after you have used up your Medicare deductible, they will be reimbursed at 80% by Medicare but also will count against the \$500 deductible in the CIGNA plan or your out-of-pocket maximum.

The CIGNA plan provides for an annual general physical

examination if you use an in-network provider. If you have orders for lab tests, be sure that the tests not covered by Medicare are provided at a participating Quest Diagnostics laboratory. Also, for such tests, be sure to provide Quest with your Medicare insurance information (not your CIGNA

information). Quest will not submit to more than one insurance company and must first submit your expenses to Medicare. Medicare will deny the costs and then you must submit the itemized laboratory bill and the Medicare explanation of benefits along with a CIGNA claim form to CIGNA for reimbursement.

## From the President

This is the second and last BREA newsletter of this year. Sending these newsletters out involve a good deal of work and expense but we feel it is the best way to ensure that we reach all of you. We also post information on our web site (www.brea.bnl.gov) but we realize that not all of you have access to the Internet. In the past, BNL via BERA (the BNL Employee's Recreational Association)\* to which BREA belongs has paid for the printing and mailing of the newsletters and also for the printing and mailing of invitations to our luncheons. Unfortunately BERA is no longer able to bear all these costs but they have paid for the costs associated with the last newsletter and with this one. We had to pay the costs of sending invitations to our luncheon to our members this year. We also paid for a portion of the luncheon costs for our attendees so that we could keep the charge to \$30. In addition, we paid for the guests

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paid approximately \$1,300 out

of pocket for the luncheon.

The above discussion is to answer the question: "Why are we asking you to pay annual dues?" The BREA board decided that this would be the best way to ensure we could continue to send out newsletters, sponsor functions and respond to situations that may arise that could affect BNL retirees. We hoped that the \$10 dues would not be a financial hardship for any of you.

From many discussions with our members we know that you are all concerned that your medical insurance benefits continue as they are. We have indicated these concerns to both the BNL director and to the head of Human Resources.

In June, Human Resources Manager W. Hempfling informed me via email that there are no current plans to change the retiree health benefits. The relevant section from Hempfling's email to me reads:

> "... mentioned to me that there is some concern about the Lab changing  
> retiree medical benefits. I can assure you that there is nothing on the  
> horizon that we're presently contemplating. The changes we made a few  
> years ago seem to be holding down the amount of our increases to a  
> manageable level. If that should change, you have my assurance that I  
> will meet with BREA before we implemented any changes."

Further news about health care benefits appeared in the Monday

Memo that is sent to all BNL employees on alternate Mondays. W. Hempfling writes of the Laboratory's concerns on increasing costs and states in part:

*"In the Human Resources & Occupational Medicine Division, we're looking into ways to help mitigate this projected increase. For instance, we are in the process of re-competing all of our employee insurance coverages, i.e. medical, dental, life and long-term disability insurances. In addition, we're looking into the possibility of implementing a pharmacy benefits management system that will obtain deeper discounts for prescription drugs. I will keep you posted on our progress on these initiatives."*

BREA has had a busy and successful year. We hope to continue at the same level in the coming year. The BREA Executive Board meets every month. The dates of the

meetings for the rest of this year are included elsewhere in this newsletter. You are all invited to attend our Board meetings and to participate in helping us set our future course.

**BREA MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL**

To renew your membership for 2005, please complete the form below and return it with your check for \$10 payable to BREA, Bldg 475C, Brookhaven National Lab., Upton NY11973. (However, please note that if you already paid \$10 to join or renew at or since the annual luncheon held on May 27<sup>th</sup>, no payment is necessary – you will automatically be credited with membership for 2005. In this case we request that you still complete and return the membership form so that our records are fully up-to-date.) This will ensure that you will remain part of the BREA community and will continue to receive newsletters and announcements of special events. Also, if you run into any of your old BNL friends or colleagues, please let them know about BREA. Additional membership forms and information can be obtained from the BREA website ([www.brea.bnl.gov](http://www.brea.bnl.gov)) or by calling Joyce Tichler (631-563-0989) or Dave Cox (631-286-9725).

-----Detach here-----

**MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM**

Type of membership (check one):

- 1 Regular (BNL retirees, spouses of deceased retirees, employees on long-term disability)
- 2 Associate (all other members of the BNL community)

Retirement date: \_\_\_\_\_

Last name: \_\_\_\_\_ First name: \_\_\_\_\_ MI \_\_\_\_\_

Street address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Town: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP (+4) \_\_\_\_\_ - \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Membership dues (check one):

- 2 Check for \$10 enclosed (make out to BREA)
- 3 Paid \$10 dues 5/27/04 or after
- 4 Check for \$20 enclosed (two retirees at same address receiving the newsletter)

Return to BREA, Bldg 475C, Brookhaven National Lab., Upton NY11973

**BREA**

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Upton, NY 11973-5000

Phone: 631-344-2707  
Email: [brea-l@lists.bnl.gov](mailto:brea-l@lists.bnl.gov)

Mailing Address Line 1  
Mailing Address Line 2  
Mailing Address Line 3  
Mailing Address Line 4  
Mailing Address Line 5



*BNL Retired Employees Association*

*On the Web at  
[www.brea.bnl.gov](http://www.brea.bnl.gov)*